



# **Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 7: 1861**

by

*Charles Spurgeon*

## About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 7: 1861* by Charles Spurgeon

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## Consolation in Christ

A Sermon

(No. 348)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 2nd, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies.”—Philippians 2:1.

THE language of man has received a new coinage of words since the time of his perfection in Eden. Adam could scarce have understood the word consolation, for the simple reason that he did not understand in Eden the meaning of the word sorrow. O how has our language been swollen through the floods of our griefs and tribulations! It was not sufficiently wide and wild for man when he was driven out of the garden into the wide, wide world. After he had once eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as his knowledge was extended so must the language be by which he could express his thoughts and feelings. But, my hearers, when Adam first needed the word consolation, there was a time when he could not find the fair jewel itself. Until that hour when the first promise was uttered, when the seed of the woman was declared as being the coming man who should bruise the serpent's head, Adam might masticate and digest the word sorrow, but he could never season and flavour it with the hope or thought of consolation, or if the hope and thought might sometimes flit across his mind like a lightning flash in the midst of the tempest's dire darkness, yet it must have been too transient, too unsubstantial, to have made glad his heart, or to soothe his sorrows. Consolation is the dropping of a gentle dew from heaven on desert hearts beneath. True consolation, such as can reach the heart, must be one of the choicest gifts of divine mercy; and surely we are not erring from sacred Scripture when we avow that in its full meaning, consolation can be found nowhere save in Christ, who has come down from heaven, and who has again ascended to heaven, to provide strong and everlasting consolation for those whom he has bought with his blood.

You will remember, my dear friends, that the Holy Spirit, during the present dispensation, is revealed to us as the Comforter. It is the Spirit's business to console and cheer the hearts of God's people. He does convince of sin; he does illuminate and instruct; but still the main part of his business lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. Whatever the Holy Ghost may not be, he is evermore the Comforter to the Church; and this age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Christ cheers us not by his personal presence, as he shall do by-and-bye, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Now, mark you, as the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Christ is the comfort. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of his own things, but of the things of Christ. We are not consoled to-day by new revelations, but by the old revelation explained, enforced, and lit up with new splendour by the presence and power of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. If we give

to the Holy Spirit the greek name of *Paraclete*, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the *Paraclesis*. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the comfort.

I shall try this morning, first, to show how *Christ in his varied positions is the consolation of the children of God in their varied trials*; then we shall pass on, secondly, to observe that *Christ in his unchanging nature is a consolation to the children of God in their continual sorrows*; and lastly, I shall close by dwelling awhile upon the question as to *whether Christ is a consolation to us*—putting it personally, “Is Christ a present and available consolation for *me*.”

I. First, CHRIST IN HIS VARIED POSITIONS IS A CONSOLATION FOR THE DIVERS ILLS OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Our Master’s history is a long and eventful one; but every step of it may yield abundant comfort to the children of God. If we track him from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe, and then through the grave up again the shining steeps of heaven, and onward through his meditorial kingdom, on to the day when he shall deliver up the throne to God even our Father, throughout every part of that wondrous pathway there may be found the flowers of consolation growing plenteously, and the children of God have but to stoop and gather them. “*All his paths drop fatness, all his garments which he wears in his different offices, smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby he makes his people glad.*”

To begin at the beginning, there are times when we look upon the past with the deepest grief. The withering of Eden’s flowers has often caused a fading in the garden of our souls. We have mourned exceedingly that we have been driven out to till the ground with the sweat of our brow—that the curse should have glanced on us through the sin of our first parent, and we have been ready to cry, “Woe worth the day in which our parent stretched forth his hand to touch the forbidden fruit.” Would to God that he had rested in unsullied purity, that we his sons and daughters might have lived beneath an unclouded sky, might never have mourned the ills of bodily pain or of spiritual distress. To meet this very natural source of grief, I bid you consider Christ in old eternity. Open now the eye of thy faith, believer, and see Christ as thine Eternal Covenant-head stipulating to redeem thee even before thou hadst become a bond-slave, bound to deliver even before thou hadst worn the chain. Think, I pray thee, of the eternal council in which thy restoration was planned and declared even before thy fall, and in which thou wast established in an eternal salvation even before the necessity of that salvation had begun. O, my brethren, how it cheers our hearts to think of the anticipating mercies of God! He anticipated our fall, foreknew the ills which it would bring upon us, and provided in his eternal decree of predestinating love an effectual remedy for all our diseases, a certain deliverance from all our sorrows. I see thee, thou fellow of the Eternal, thou equal of the Almighty God! Thy goings forth were of old. I see thee lift thy right hand and engage thyself to fulfil thy Father’s will—“In the volume of the book it is written of me, ‘I delight to do thy will, O God.’” I see thee forming, signing, and sealing that eternal covenant by which the souls of all the redeemed were there and then delivered from the curse, and made sure and certain inheritors of thy kingdom and of thy glory. In this respect Christ shines out as the consolation of his people.

Again, if ever your minds dwell with sadness upon the fact that we are at this day absent from the Lord, because we are present in the body, think of the great truth that Jesus Christ of old had delights with the sons of men, and he delights to commune and have fellowship with his people now. Remember that your Lord and Master appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre under the disguise of a pilgrim. Abraham was a pilgrim, and Christ to show his sympathy with his servant, became a pilgrim too. Did he not appear also to Jacob at the brook Jabbok? Jacob was a wrestler,

and Jesus appears there as a wrestler too. Did he not stand before Moses under the guise and figure of a flame in the midst of a bush? Was not Moses at the very time the representative of a people who were like a bush burning with fire and yet not consumed? Did he not stand before Joshua—Joshua the leader of Israel's troops, and did he not appear to him as the captain of the Lord's host? And do you not well remember that when the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace, *he* was in the midst of the fire too, not as a king, but as one in the fire with them? Cheer then thy heart with this consoling inference. If Christ appeared to his servants in the olden time, and manifested himself to them as bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, in all their trials and their troubles, he will do no less to thee to-day; he will be with thee in passing through the fire; he will be thy rock, thy shield, and thy high tower; he will be thy song, thy banner, and thy crown of rejoicing. Fear not, he who visited the saints of old will surely not be long absent from his children to-day; his delights are still with his people, and still will he walk with us through this weary wilderness. Surely this makes Christ a most blessed consolation for his Israel.

And now to pursue the Master's footsteps, as he comes out of the invisible glories of Deity, and wears the visible garment of humanity. Let us view the babe of Bethlehem, the child of Nazareth, the Son of Man. See him, he is in every respect a man. "Of the substance of his mother" is he made; in the substance of our flesh he suffers; in the trials of our flesh he bows his head; under the weakness of our flesh he prays, and in the temptation of our flesh he is kept and maintained by the grace within. *You* to-day are tried and troubled, and you ask for consolation. What better can be afforded you than what is presented to you in the fact that Jesus Christ is one with you in your nature—that he has suffered all that you are now suffering—that your pathway has been aforetime trodden by his sacred foot—that the cup of which you drink is a cup which he has drained to the very bottom—that the river through which you pass is one through which he swam, and every wave and billow which rolls over your head did in old time roll over him. Come! art thou ashamed to suffer what thy Master suffered? Shall the disciple be above his Master, and the servant above his Lord? Shall he die upon a cross, and wilt not thou bear the cross? Must he be crowned with thorns, and shalt thou be crowned with laurel? Is he to be pierced in hands and feet, and are thy members to feel no pain? O cast away the fond delusion I pray thee, and look to him who "endured the cross, despising the shame," and be ready to endure and to suffer even as he did.

And now behold our Master's humanity clothed even as ours has been since the fall. He comes not before us in the purple of a king, in the garb of the rich and the respectable, but he wears a dress in keeping with his apparent origin; he is a carpenter's son, and he wears a dress which becomes his station. View him, ye sons of poverty, as he stands before you in his seamless garment, the common dress of the peasant; and if you have felt this week the load of want—if you have suffered and are suffering this very day the ills connected with poverty, pluck up courage, and find a consolation in the fact that Christ was poorer than you are—that he knew more of the bitterness of want than you ever yet can guess. You cannot say, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but I have not where to lay my head;" or if you could go as far as that, yet have you never known a forty-day's fast. You have *some* comforts left to you; you do know at least the sweet taste of bread to the hungry man, and of rest to the weary; but these things were often denied to him. Look at him, then, and see if there be not to you comfort in Christ.

We pass now, O Jesus, from thy robe of poverty to that scene of shame in which thy garments were rent from thee, and thou didst hang naked before the sun. Children of God, if there be one place more than another where Christ becomes the joy and comfort of his people, it is where he

plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come, see him, I pray you, in the garden of Gethsemane; behold him, as his heart is so full of love that he cannot hold it in—so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of his body, and falls in goutts of gore upon the frozen ground. See him as all red with his own blood, wrapped in a bloody mantle of his own gore, he is brought before Herod and Pilate, and the Sanhedrim. See him now as they scourge him with their knotted whips, and afresh encrimson him, as though it were not enough for him to be dyed once in scarlet, but he must again be enwrapped in purple. See him, I say, now that they have stripped him naked. Behold him as they drive the nails into his hand and into his feet. Look up and see the sorrowful image of your dolorous Lord. O mark him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and make it the blood-red diadem of the King of misery. O see him as his bones are out of joint, and he is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death. “Behold and see, was there ever sorrow like unto his sorrow that is done unto him?” All ye that pass by, draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief. Behold the Emperor of woe who never had an equal or a rival in his agonies! Come and see him; and if I read not the words of consolation written in lines of blood all down his side, then these eyes have never read a word in any book; for if there be not consolation in a murdered Christ, there is no joy, no peace to any heart. If in that finished ransom price, if in that efficacious blood, if in that all-accepted sacrifice, there be not joy, ye harpers of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore. I am persuaded, men and brethren, that we have only to sit more at the Cross to be less troubled with our doubts, and our fears, and our woes. We have but to see *his* sorrows, and lose *our* sorrows; we have to see his wounds, and heal our own. If we would live, it must be by contemplation of his death; if we would rise to dignity it must be by considering his humiliation and his sorrow.

“Lord, thy death and passion give  
Strength and comfort in my need,  
Every hour while here I live,  
On thy love my soul shall feed.”

But come now, troubled heart, and follow the dead body of thy Master, for though dead, it is as full of consolation as when alive. It is now no more naked; the loving hands of Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and the Magdalene and the other Mary, have wrapped it in cerements, and have laid it in the new tomb. Come, saints, not to weep, but to dry your tears. You have been all your lifetime subject to fear of death: come, break your bonds asunder; be free from this fear. Where your Master sleeps, you may surely find an easy couch. What more could you desire than to lie upon the bed of your royal Solomon? The grave is now no more a charnel-house or a dark prison; *his* having entered it makes it a blessed retiring-room, a sacred bath in which the King's Esthers purify their bodies, to make them fit for the embraces of their Lord. It becomes now not the gate of annihilation, but the portal of eternal bliss,—a joy to be anticipated, a privilege to be desired. “Fearless we lay us in the tomb, and sleep the night away, for thou art here to break the gloom, and call us back to day.”

I am certain, brethren, that all the consolations which wise men can ever afford in a dying hour will never be equal to that which is afforded by the record, that Jesus Christ ascended from the tomb. The maxims of philosophy, the endearments of affection, and the music of hope, will be a very poor compensation for the light of Jesus' grave. Death is the only mourner at Jesus' tomb, and while the whole earth rejoices at the sorrow of its last enemy, I would be all too glad to die, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection. Heir of heaven! if thou wouldst be rid



once for all of every doubting thought about the hour of thy dissolution, look, I pray thee, to Christ risen from the dead. Put thy finger into the print of the nails, and thrust thy hand into his side, and be not faithless but believing. He *is* risen; he saw no corruption; the worms could not devour him; and as Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, he has become the first fruits of them that slept. Inasmuch as he has risen, thou shalt rise. He has rolled the stone away, not for himself alone, but for thee also. He has unwrapped the grave-clothes, not for his own sake, but for thy sake too, and thou shalt surely stand in the latter day upon the earth, when *he* shall be here, and in thy flesh thou shalt see God.

Time would fail us, if we should attempt to track the Master in his glorious pathway after his resurrection. Let it suffice us briefly to observe that, having led his disciples out unto a mountain, where he has delighted often to commune with them, he was suddenly taken up from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. We think we may conjecture, by the help of Scripture, what transpired after that cloud had covered him. Did not the angels

“Bring his chariot from on high  
To bear him to his throne,  
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,  
His glorious work is done?”  
Do you not see him, as he mounts his triumphal chariot,  
“And angels chant the solemn lay,  
Lift up your heads, ye golden gates,  
Ye everlasting doors give away?”

Behold angels gazing from the battlements of heaven, replying to their comrades who escort the ascending Son of Man. “Who is the King of Glory?” And this time those who accompany the Master sing more sweetly and more loudly than before, while they cry, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” And now the doors

“Loose all their bars of massy light,  
And wide unfold the radiant scene,”

and he enters. “He claims those mansions as his right,” and all the angels rise to “receive the King of Glory in.” Behold him, as he rides in triumph through heaven’s streets; see Death and Hell bound at his chariot wheels. Hark to the “Hosannas” of the spirits of the just made perfect! Hear how cherubim and seraphim roll out in thunders their everlasting song—“Glory be unto thee; glory be unto thee, thou Son of God, for thou wast slain and thou hast redeemed the world by thy blood.” See him as he mounts his throne and near his Father sits. Behold the benignant complacency of the paternal Deity. Hear him as he accepts him and gives him a name which is above every name. And I say, my brethren, in the midst of your tremblings, and doubtings, and fearings, anticipate the joy which *you* shall have, when you shall share in this triumph, for know you not that you ascended up on high in him? He went not up to heaven alone, but as the representative of all the blood-bought throng. *You* rode in that triumphal chariot with him; you were exalted on high, and made to sit far above principalities and powers in him; for we are risen in him, we are exalted in Christ. Even at this very day in Christ that Psalm is true—“Thou hast put all things under his feet; thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands.” Come, poor trembler, thou art little in thine own esteem, and but a worm and no man! Rise, I say, to the height of thy nobility; for thou art in

Christ greater than angels be, more magnified and glorified by far. God gives you grace, ye who have faith, that ye may now, in the fact of Jesus Christ's exaltation, find consolation for yourself!

But now to-day methinks I see the Master, as he stands before his Father's throne, dressed in the garments of a priest; upon his breast I see the Urim and Thummim glittering with the bejewelled remembrances of his people. In his hand I see still the remembrance of his sacrifice, the nail mark; and there I see still upon his feet the impress of the laver of blood in which he washed himself not as the priest of old with water but with his own gore. I hear him plead with authority before his Father's face, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." O my poor prayers, ye shall be heard! O my faint groans, ye shall be answered! Oh, my poor troubled soul, thou art safe, for

"Jesus pleads and must prevail,  
His cause can never, never fail."

Come, my poor heart, lift up thyself now from the dunghill; shake thyself from the dust; ungird thy sackcloth and put on thy beautiful garments. *He* is our advocate to-day, our eloquent and earnest pleader, and he prevails with God. The Father smiles—he smiles on Christ; he smiles on us in answer to Jesus Christ's intercession. Is he not here also the consolation of Israel?

I only remark once more that he who has gone up into heaven shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. He ascended in clouds, "Behold he cometh with clouds." He went up on high with sound of trumpet and with shout of angels. Behold he cometh! The silver trumpet shall soon sound. 'Tis midnight: the hours are rolling wearily along; the virgins wise and foolish are all asleep. But the cry shall soon be heard—"Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." That same Jesus who was crucified shall come in glory. The hand that was pierced shall grasp the sceptre. Beneath his arm he shall gather up all the sceptres of all kings; monarchies shall be the sheaves, and *he* shall be the kingly reaper. On his head there shall be the many crowns of universal undisputed dominion. "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth." His feet shall tread on the mount of Olivet, and his people shall be gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Lo, the world's great battle is almost begun; the trumpet sounds the beginning of the battle of Armageddon. To the fight, ye warriors of Christ, to the fight; for it is your last conflict, and over the bodies of your foes ye shall rush to meet your Lord—he fighting on the one side by his coming, you on the other side by drawing near to him. You shall meet him in the solemn hour of victory. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and you that are alive and remain shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last triumphant sounding of the dread tremendous trump. *Then* shall you know to the full how Christ can console you for all your sorrows, all your shame, and all your neglect which you have received from the hand of men. Ay, to-day bethink you, there awaits the recompense of an earthly splendour for your earthly poverty; there awaits you earthly dignity for your earthly shame. You shall not only have spiritual, but you shall have temporal blessings. He who takes away the curse will take it away not only from your soul, but from the very ground on which you tread. He who redeems you shall redeem not only your spirit, but your body. Your eyes shall see your Redeemer; your hands shall be lifted up in acclamation, and your feet shall bear your leaping joys in the procession of his glory, in your very body in which you have suffered for him you shall sit with him upon the throne and judge the nations of the earth. These things, I say, are all full of the purest and highest consolation to the children of God.

II. Having taken nearly all my time upon the first point, I can only say a word or two upon the second and on the third. The second point was to be this—CHRIST IN HIS UNCHANGING NATURE; a consolation for our continual sorrows.

Christ is to his people a *surpassing* consolation. Talk of the consolations of philosophy? We have all the philosopher can pretend to; but we have it in a higher degree. Speak of the charms of music which can lull our sorrows to a blessed sleep?

“Sweeter sounds than music knows,  
Charm us in our Saviour’s name.”

“Jesus, the very thought of thee,  
With rapture fills my breast.”

Speak we of the joys of friendship? and sweet they are indeed; but “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”—“a brother born for adversity.” There is one who is better than all friends, more able to cheer than those who are dearest and nearest to our hearts. Or, speak we of the joys of hope? and certainly hope can console us when nothing else can do it. *He* is our hope. We cast the anchor of our hope into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered. The consolations of Christ are unrivalled by any which can be offered by wit, by wisdom, by mirth, by hope itself; they are incomparable, and can never be surpassed.

Again, the consolations of Christ, from the fact of his unchanging nature, are *unfailing*.

“When every earthly prop gives way,  
He still is all our strength and stay.”

Look you at Job, and see the picture of how Christ can console. The messenger rushes in—“The Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses!” “Well, well,” Job might console himself and say, “but the sheep are left.” “But the fire of God hath fallen on the sheep! and the Chaldeans have carried away the camels and slain the servants!” “Alas!” the good man might say, “but my children are left, and if they be spared, then I can still have joy.” “The wind has come from the wilderness, and smitten the four corners of the house, and all thy sons and daughters are dead!” Ah! well-a-day, penniless and childless, the patriarch might weep; but, looking on his wife, he would say, “There still remaineth one sweet comforter, my well-beloved spouse.” *She* bids him “curse God and die;” “speaking as one of the foolish women speaketh.” Yet might Job say, “Though my wife hath failed me, there remaineth at least three friends; there they sit with me on the dunghill, and *they* will console me.” But they speak bitterness, till he cries, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” Well, but at least he has his own body in health, has he not? No, he sits down upon a dunghill, and scrapes himself with a potsherd, for his sores become intolerable. Well, well, “skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.” He may at least cheer himself with the fact, that he lives. “Why should a living man complain?” Yes, but he fears he is about to die. And now comes out the grandeur of his hope: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though the worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” All the other windows are darkened; but the sun shines in at the oriel window of redemption. All the other doors are shut; but this great door of hope and joy still stands wide open. All other wells are dry; but this flows with an unceasing stream. Brothers and sisters, when all things else depart, an unchanging Christ shall be your unchanging joy.

Furthermore, the consolations of Christ are *all powerful* consolations. When a poor soul is so deep in the mire that you cannot lift it with the lever of eloquence, nor draw it up with the hands of sympathy, nor raise it with wings of hope, *he* can touch it with his finger and it can spring up from the mire, and put his feet upon a rock, and feel the new song in its mouth and its goings well

established. There is no form of melancholy which will not yield before the grace of God; there is no shape of distress which will not give way before the divine energy of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, when he uses Christ as the consolation.

Again: this consolation is *everlasting* consolation. It consoled you, O aged sire, when as a youth you gave your heart to Christ; it was your joy in the mid-winter of your manhood; it has become your strength and your song in the days of your old age; when tottering on your staff you shall go down to Jordan's brink, he will be your consolation then. In the prospect of your coming dissolution, yea, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you shall fear no evil, for he is with you; his rod and his staff shall comfort you. All other things shall pass away as a dream when you awaketh; but this substantial support shall abide with you in the midst of the swellings of Jordan, in the hour of the departure of your spirit from your body.

And then remember that this is a consolation which is always within the believer's reach. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." Ye may always cheer your heart with Christ when other things are far away. When a friend visits you not, and your chamber becomes lonely—when spouse has forgotten to speak the kind word to you, and children have become ungrateful, he will make your bed in your sickness, he will be your never-failing friend and abide with you in every dark and gloomy hour, till he brings you into his dear arms, where you will be emparadised for ever and ever.

III. I close now with my last point—the grave and serious question, IS CHRIST AN AVAILABLE CONSOLATION FOR ME?

Who art thou, friend? Art thou one who needs no consolation? Hast thou a righteousness of thine own? Let me put it in thine own words. You are a *good* man, kind to the poor, charitable, upright, generous, holy. You believe there may be *some* faults in yourself, but they must be very few, and you trust that what with your own merits and with God's mercy you may enter heaven. In the name of God, I do solemnly assure you, that Christ is not an available consolation for *you*. Christ will have nothing to do with you, so long as you have anything to do with yourself. If you are trusting in any measure whatever upon aught that you have ever done or hope to do, you are trusting in a lie, and Christ will never be friends with a lie. He will never help *you* to do what he came to do himself. If you will take his work as it is, as a finished work, well and good; but if you must needs add to it your own, God shall add unto you the plagues which are written in this Book, but he shall by no means give to you any of the promises and the comforts which Christ can afford.

But instead thereof, I will suppose that I address myself this morning to a man who says, "I was once, I think, a believer in Christ; I made a profession of religion, but I fell from it, and I have lost for years all the hope and joy I ever had; I think I was a presumptuous man, that I pretended to have what I never had, and yet at the time I really thought I had it. May I think that there is consolation in Christ for a backslider and a traitor like me? Often, sir, do I feel as if the doom of Judas must be mine—as if I must perish miserably, like Demas, who loved this present world." Ah! backslider, backslider, God speaks to thee this morning, and he says, "Return ye backsliding children of men, for I am married to you;" and if married, there has never been a divorce between Christ and you. Has he put you away? Unto which of his creditors has he sold you? Where do you read in his Word, that he has divided from the affection of his heart one whose name was ever written in his Book? Come, come, backslider, come again to the cross. He who received you once will receive you again. Come where the flood is flowing; the blood that washed you once, can wash you yet once more. Come, come, thou art naked, and poor, and miserable; the raiment which was

given to thee once, shall array thee again with beauty. The unsearchable riches which were opened up to thee aforetime, shall be thine again.

“To thy Father’s bosom press’d,  
Once again a child confess’d,  
From his hand no more to roam,  
Come, backsliding sinner, come.”

But I hear another say, “I am not a backslider, but simply one who desires to be saved. I can say honestly, I would give my right arm from its socket if I might but be saved. Why, sir, if I had ten thousand worlds I would freely cast them away as pebble stones, and worthless, if I might but find Christ.” Poor soul, and does the devil tell thee thou shalt never have Christ? Why, thou hast a warrant to lay hold on Christ to-day. “No,” sayest thou, “I have no right whatever.” The fact that thou sayest thou hast no right should at least comfort the minister in addressing himself freely to thee. The right of a sinner to come to Christ does not lie in the sinner, nor in any feelings which the sinner may have had; it lies in the fact that Christ commands him to come. If one of you should receive as you went out of yonder door a command to go at once to Windsor, and have an interview with the Queen, as soon as you had received the order and were sure it came from her, you might say, “Well, but if I had known this, I should have put on other clothes;” but the order is peremptory, “Come now; come just as you are;” you would, I think, without any very great doubt, though greatly wondering, take your place and ride there at once. When you came to the gate, some tall grenadier might ask you what you were at. “Why,” he might say, “you are not fit to come and see Her Majesty; you are not a gentleman; you have not so many hundreds a year; how can you expect to be admitted?” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. You come to another door, and there is an usher there. “You are not in a court dress,” says he; “you are not properly robed for the occasion.” You show the command, and he lets you pass on. But suppose when at last you should come into the ante-room you should say, “Now I dare not go in; I am not fit; I feel I shall not know how to behave myself.” Suppose you are silly enough not to go, you would be disobedient and ten times more foolish in disobeying than you could have been by any blunders in behaviour if you had obeyed. Now it is just so with you to-day. Christ says, “Come unto me.” He does not merely invite you, because he knows you would think you did not deserve the invitation; but he gives the *command*, and he bids me say to you, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you;” he bids me command you in his name, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Of his grace and mercy he puts it as a command. “*But*,” you say. Ah! what right have you to say “*but*” to the Lord’s commands? Again, I say, away with your “*buts*.” What right have you to be “*butting*” at his laws and his commands. “*But*,” you say, “do hear me for a moment.” I will hear you then. “Sir, I cannot imagine that if such a hard-hearted sinner as I am were really to trust Christ I should be saved.” The English of that is, that you give God the lie. He says you shall be, and do you think he speaks an untruth? “Ah!” says another, “but it is too good to be true. I cannot believe that just as I am, if I trust in Christ, my sin shall be forgiven.” Again, I say, the simple English of that is, that you think you know better than God; and so you do in fact stand up and say to his promise, “Thou art false.” He says, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” “Ah!” you say, “but that does not mean me?” Can any language speak more plainly? “*Him*. What him? Why, any “*him*” in the world.

“Yes,” says one, “but the invitations are made to character—’Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden;’ I am afraid I am not heavy laden enough?” Yes, but you will mark, while the invitation is given to character, yet the promise is not given to the character; it is given to those

who come—"Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" and while that one invitation may be confined to the weary and heavy laden, yet there are scores of others that stand as wide and free as the very air we breathe. If you have that qualification, do not come even with it, because you are unqualified when you think you are qualified; you are unfit when you think you are fit; and if you have a sense of need, which you think makes you fit to come to Christ, it shows you are not fit and do not know your need; for no man knows his need till he thinks he does not know his need, and no man is in a right state to come to Christ till he thinks he is not in a right state to come to Christ. But he who feels that he has not one good thought or one good feeling to recommend him, he is the man who may come. He who says, "But I may not come," is the very man that is bidden to come. Besides, my friends, it is not what you think, or what I think; it is what Christ says; and is it not written by the hand of the Apostle John, "This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Men who say it is not the duty of sinners to believe, I cannot think what they make out of such a text as that—"This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;" and that one where God expressly says, "He that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he believeth not." Why, I should think I was addressing heathens, if I addressed a company of men who thought that God did not command men to repent; for Scripture is so plain upon the point, and I say, if God commands thee to do it, thou mayest do it. Let the devil say "Nay," but God says "Yes." Let him stand and push you back; but say to him, "Nay, Satan, nay, I come here in God's name;" and as devils fear and fly before the name of Christ, so will Satan and thy fears all fly before his command. He commands thee to believe—that is, to trust him. Trust him, soul, trust him; right or wrong, trust him.

But some of you want a great temptation, and a great deal of despair, before you will trust him. Well, the Lord will send it to you, if you will not trust him without it. I remember John Bunyan says he had a black temptation, and it did him a great deal of good; for, said he, "Before I had the temptation I used always to be questioning a promise, and saying, 'May I come, or may I not come?'" But at last he said, "Yea, often when I have been making to the promise, I have seen as if the Lord would refuse my soul for ever: I was often as if I had run upon the pike, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, to keep me from him as with a flaming sword." Ah! and perhaps you may be driven to that. I pray you may; but I would infinitely rather that the sweet love and grace of God would entice you now to trust Jesus Christ just as you are. He will not deceive you, sinner; he will not fail you. Trusting him, you shall build on a sure foundation, and find him who is the consolation of Israel and the joy of all his saints.

## The Wailing of Risca

A Sermon

(No. 349)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 9th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.”—Jeremiah 4:20.

THE sorrow of the weeping prophet was exceeding heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning, that we cannot spare so much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land, and his strokes have been exceeding hard. We are constrained to take up a wailing, and cry aloud, “Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys, the breathing of its air refreshes the body, and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills, I have seen the ever widening landscape, the mountains of Wales, the plains of England, and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women, and worshipped God in their assemblies. These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they have listened to the Word. Well doth my soul remember one night, which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ’s minister, with their “gogonians” encouraging me to preach the Gospel, and crying “Glory to God” while the message was proclaimed. I remember how they constrained me, and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons, one after another, almost without rest, for they loved to listen to the gospel. God was present with us, and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night’s labour. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God’s blue sky, I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot; when the Spirit of God was poured upon us, and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message, as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands, and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard. But now our visitation of that neighbourhood must ever be mingled with sorrow. How hath God been pleased to smite down strong men, and to take away the young men upon a sudden! “How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.” Oh! vale of Risca, I take up a lamentation for thee: the Lord hath dealt sorely with thee. Behold, and see if there be sorrow in any valley like unto thy sorrow which is done unto thee. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon thee; the awful reaper hath gathered to himself full sheaves from thy beautiful valley.

You all know the story; it scarce needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week some two hundred or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long, their wives and their children had risen, and their little

ones had gone to their schools, when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit;—it was an explosion,—all knew what it meant. Men's hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself. They wait awhile, the foul gas must first be scattered, brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit, and when they are able to see with the dim miner's lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive, and scarce alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame; but the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death. Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire; but many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit, flaming both night and day, the thick mist, the pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley. Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit, shrieking for their sons, and their husbands, and their fathers. Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul; and there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now alas taken from her for ever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers, and who know not where they are, and feel a thousand deaths themselves because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description; those who have witnessed it, fail to be able to picture it. As the cry of Egypt in the night when the destroying angel went through all the land and smote the firstborn; as the wail of Rachel when she could not be comforted for her children, because they were not; such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley.

My friends, this judgment has a voice to us, and the scarce buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision, have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow, and of the childless mother, shall come up into our ears to-day; and, O Lord God of Saboath, may it so arouse us that we may hear, and fear, and tremble, and turn unto thee—that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men.

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon *sudden bereavements*; then I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of *sudden death*; and afterwards we will say but a little, for we know but little, of the *sudden exchange* which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

#### I. Our first sorrowful theme is SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS.

Alas! alas! how soon may we be childless; how soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, thou hast shown to us this day, how soon thou canst blast our gourds and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood, how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us—our children, the offspring of our loins, how soon canst thou lay them beneath the sod. We have not a single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All that are dear and precious to us are only here by God's good pleasure. What should we be to-day if it were not for those whom we love, and who love us? What were our house without its little prattlers? What were our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our trials? Ah! this were



a sad world indeed, if the ties of kindred, of affection, and of friendship all be snapped; and yet it is such a world that they must be sundered, and may be divided at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible—not only to miners and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but *to us also*—I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first let us *learn to set loose by our dearest friends* that we have on earth. Let us love them—love them we may, love them we should—but let us always learn to love them as dying things. Oh, build not thy nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe. “Set not thine affections on things on earth,” for the things of earth *must* leave thee, and then what wilt thou do when thy joy is emptied, and the golden bowl which held thy mirth shall be dashed to pieces? Love first and foremost Christ; and when thou lovest others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying—love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold thy friend that thou shalt not wonder when he vanishes from thee; so view the partakers of thy life that thou wilt not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See thou the disease of mortality on every cheek, and write not *Eternal* upon the creature of an hour.

*Take care that thou puttest all thy dear ones into God's hand.* Thou hast put thy soul there, put them there. Thou canst trust him for temporals for thyself, trust thy jewels with him. Feel that they are not thine own, but that they are God's loans to thee; loans which may be recalled at any moment—precious benisons of heaven, not entailed upon thee, but of which thou art but a tenant at will. Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them, and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of God. You shall find it greatly mitigate the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things that are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God.

Further, then, you who are blessed with wife and children, and friends, take care that you bless God for them. Sing a song of praise to God who hath blessed you so much than others. You are not a widow, but there are many that wear the weeds, and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaven of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is rent in twain by such a calamity,—why is it not your portion too? You have not to follow to-morrow your little ones to their narrow graves—early flowers that did but bud and never ripened, withering alas! too soon. Oh! by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them. We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that he spared them to us so long. Oh! be not ungrateful, lest thou provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which thou dost not value. Sing unto the Lord, sing unto his name. Give unto him the blessing which he deserves for his sparing favors which he has manifested towards you in your household.

And then permit me to remind you that if these sudden bereavements may come, and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment, and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat thy hoary father as thou wouldst behave to him if thou knewest he would die to-morrow. When thou shalt follow him to the grave, amidst all thy tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of thine ill behaviour to him. And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message—your children are committed to your care; they are growing up, and what if after they be grown up they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent! Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder,—“Oh that I had prayed for my children! Oh that I had taught them before they departed.” I pray you so live, that when you stand over your child's dead body you

may never hear a voice coming up from that clay, "Father, thy negligence was my destruction. Mother, thy want of prayer was the instrument of my damnation." But so live, that when you hear the funeral knell, for a neighbour even, you may be able to say, "Poor soul, whether he is gone to heaven or to hell, I know I am clear of his blood." And with double earnestness be it so with your children. "Yes," says one "but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ, and being more earnest in prayer for them bye-and-bye," but what if they should die to-morrow? "Yes," says the wife, "I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband, and trying to induce him to attend the house of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two." Ah! what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children's souls. Gather them together around you this afternoon, and say to them, "My dear children, I have learned to day that you may die; I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you, that as you must die, I am anxious that God's Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Saviour." And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks, and bid the little ones kneel down and pray, "O God! upon their infant hearts, stamp thou, the image of thyself. As they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly, that at the last I may be able to say, 'Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.'"

II. The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, **SUDDEN DEATH, AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.**

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have, nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how very many had gone up and down and had not perished. Nay, they had grown so fearless of danger, that some of them even thrust themselves into it, and in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life, they were bold and careless, and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all. We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident—God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed, and have to answer before their God—but, at any rate, sure it is that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous, and those who are most exposed are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. "Why need I be so careful? I have done this fifty times before. Why may I not do it again?" But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up, quick in a moment the gas explodes and they stand before the Eternal God. It was but the twinkling of an eye, even as though the last trump had sounded (and indeed it did sound as far as they were concerned), and down fell the lifeless corpse, and the spirit returned to God who made it. And you and I are in danger too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death. How many there be who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their

own homes? I stayed but a week or two ago with an excellent Christian man, who was then in the halest and most hearty health. I was startled indeed when I heard immediately after that he had come home, and sitting down in his chair had shut his eyes and died. And these things are usual, and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation. Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after long sickness, but probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it be so, if there be a thousand gates to death, if all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life, if really, after all, spiders' webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life, if we are but a vapour, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness, what then? Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men, let us not reckon on to-morrow. Oh! let us not procrastinate, for taken in Satan's great net of procrastination we may wait, and wait, and wait, till time is gone and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution. To-day is your only time. O mortal men, the present moment is the only moment you may call your own, and oh! how swift its wings! This hour is yours; yesterday is gone; to-morrow is with God, and may never come. "To-day if ye hear his voice harden not your hearts." Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death, and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office, that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know even that children might die. I did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household. What better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in, than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal. They ought to live in a world where they can never die, for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan. There are infidels on earth, but there are none in heaven, and there can be none in hell. They are convinced—convinced by terrible facts—convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath his vengeance, and made to tremble at his eternal power. But I pray you, sirs, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race; let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a sea shore. That hour-glass yonder contains all the sands of your life. Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass, and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passway of its days. Ah! and that glass shall never be turned again; it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out and you will die. Oh! live as though you meant to die. Live as though you knew you might die to-morrow. Think as though you might die now, and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death, and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb.

And then take care, I pray you, that you who do know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh what a work we have to do, and how short the time to do it! Millions of men unconverted yet, and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach the Word! My soul, shalt thou ever condemn thyself in thy dying moments for having preached too often or too earnestly? No, never. Thou mayest rebuke thy soul, but thou canst never bemoan thy excessive industry. Minister of Christ! in thy dying hour it will never be a theme of reproach to you that you preached ten times in the week, that you stood up every day to preach Christ, and that you so preached that you spent yourself, and wasted your body with weakness. No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studyings, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them; our huntings after

popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up, and saying to the people, "Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ;" preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come and of the love of Christ. Oh! there are some of you members of our churches, who are living, but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money—that is the worldling's object. Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast's delight. Oh! how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their might. Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ's service as much time as we give to many of our trifling amusements? Why, we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability, who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else, but as Christians they have nothing to do. They can be energetic in parish vestries or in the rifle corps, but in the church they give their name, but their energies are dormant. Ah! my dear hearers, you who love the Saviour, when we shall come before Christ in heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here. I think as we fall down before his feet and worship him, if we could know a sorrow, it would be because we did not bring him in more jewels for his crown—did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked—did not give more to his cause, and did not labour more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live; while it is called to-day, work, for the night cometh wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people whether they may go to the theatre, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come. You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you; but if you would dread to die in any spot, go not there; if you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lip, utter not that word; or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the judgement-day, seek not to think that thought. So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go. Happy is he that dies in his pulpit. Blessed is the man that dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him serving his Master; but, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder, and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched, when God shall appear in judgment. Power supreme; thou everlasting King; permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me rapt in meditation high; hymning my great Creator; proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow-sinners. Let me but serve my God, and then, Death, I will not say to thee when thou mayest come—come when thou wilt; but if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls; come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lip, and when I am weeping over the souls of men. Come to me, then, that men may say,

"He did his body with his charge lay down,  
He ceased at once to work and live."

But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but ah! sirs, I cannot stir your hearts, for I cannot stir my own as I would. The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event, we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalogue of deaths and take the average, and we say, "Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average," but *our* dying never comes home to us. All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London, which every day ate ten of the

inhabitants of London alive, we should be dreadfully miserable, especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten too. If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-bye, but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster's den, and say, "When will it be my time?" and that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog. But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal; and with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps crying out for more; its greedy and insatiable maw never being filled; its teeth never being blunted; its ravenous hunger never being stayed. And here we are, and though it will be our turn by-and-bye to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do we think about it! One reason I think is, because we so seldom visit the dying. I stood once by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday-school teacher; he had received very little good training at home, and though he was but a lad of seventeen, he became a drunkard and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him, and talked to him, and tried to point him to the Saviour, and heard at last the death-rattle in his throat, and as I went down stairs I thought everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die. I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street, the men who were busy at their shops, and those who were selling their wares, as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business, and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ, and inviting them to trust in his precious blood. And yet in an hour or so all things took their usual shape, and I began to think that I was not dying after all, and I could go away and be I fear as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were after all wise in thinking of this world, and not the next; I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so; the impression of the dying-bed was so soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders, whose canoe being disabled, floated upon a raft, and they were attacked by sharks; they disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenances of these few? If they knew a God, do you not think they would then indeed call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them, were they different from us? Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring monster. Friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep, and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. You gray-haired man may be the next that is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood; some have already passed it and are singing the eternal song, and

"We are to the margin come,  
And soon expect to die."

God help us so to live in the expectation of death, that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake, and that we may be able to say, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

III. I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, **THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.**

You see yonder Christian man, he is full of a thousand fears, he is afraid even of his interest in Christ, he is troubled spiritually, and vexed with temporal cares. You see him cast down and exceeding troubled, his faith but very weak; he steps outside your door, and there meets him a messenger from God, who smites him to the heart, and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears, his tears are wiped away once for all from his eyes; and, to his surprise, he stands where he feared he should never be, in the midst of the redeemed of God, in the general assembly and church of the first-born. If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for thinking so much of his trouble, and for looking into a future which he was

never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk, he has a hundred pains in his body, he says he is more tried and pained than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him, and he dies. How marvellous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit, he then is supremely blest, the decrepid has become perfect, the weak has become strong, the trembling one has become a David, and David has become as the angel of the Lord. Hark to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now groaned; look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man just now racked with pain and tormented with anguish! Was ever change so surprising, so marvellous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it to come across myself this morning; to go from the thousand eyes of you that look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ, and to go from your songs, to the songs of spirits before the throne, to leave the sabbath work on earth for an eternal sabbath of rest: to go from unbelieving hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered and sinners to be convinced, to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one eternal song, sing “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb.” I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly, one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be *surprise*. I can conceive that the spirit knows not where it is. It is like a man waking up from a dream. He looks about him. Oh, that glory! how resplendent you throne! He listens to harps of gold, and he can scarce believe it true. “I, the chief of sinners, and yet in heaven? I, a doubting one, and yet in paradise?” And then when he is conscious that he is really in heaven, oh! what *overwhelming joy*; how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it, scarcely able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal weight of glory. And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself, and open its eyes from the blindness caused by this dazzling light, and to think—when its thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss,—the next emotion will be *gratitude*. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head, and with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Saviour’s throne. Hear how he sings; was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had the fulness of Paradise and perfection in it—“Unto him that loved me and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory.” And how he repeats it, and repeats it again, and looks round to cherubim and seraphim, and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the harps of heaven re-taught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the one faithful heart, send up another hallelujah, and yet another, and another; while the floods of harmony surround the eternal throne of God.

But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are over for ever. His death is the death of his happiness—his funeral is the funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups; he has another cup to drain, which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the harp and the viol, and the music of them that make merry; an eternal dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of damned souls. What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! “Good God,” he says, “I thought it was not so, but lo, it is. What the minister said to me is true; the things I would not believe are at last really so.” When the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends, and lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments so hot, so feverish, so thirsty, that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a million years, what will be his surprise! “And am I,” he will say, “really here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago; I was singing a song but an instant before, and here am I in hell! What! so soon damned? Is the sentence of God like a lightning-flash? Does it so instantaneously rive the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?” And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in hell, can you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it. It, too, will be stunned with a mighty

flood, not with a flood of glory but with a flood of anger, of wrath, of divine justice. Oh! how the spirit is tormented now—tormented beyond thought. And then at last, when the wave recedes a moment, and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon the spirit! Have you ever seen men die without a hope? I read but yesterday a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times, and at last she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden stroke of God, and she prayed—prayed till she fell back fainting, and her lips were livid and her cheek was pale, while she cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her, and bade her trust in Christ; but she said, “It is of no use for you to comfort me; no, it is too late. I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the world, and that resolve destroyed by soul.” And then she rose up in bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets, and prayed again till she was breathless, and groaned and cried, and fell down again in a faint, needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with ghastly look—an awful look of horror—as though she felt the anguish of another world, she expired.

Now if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God—if the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope and beat in pieces all our boastings, what will the eternal hail be—what will the everlasting sleet of divine wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from heaven shall be nothing compared with the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner. Do you think I love to speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it. No, I would sooner preach of other things by far, but it is needful that men may be awakened. Oh! I implore you, men and brethren, ye that know not God, and are still condemned, because you believe not in Christ, I pray you think of these things. Oh that I had a Baxter's heart, that I could weep over sinners as he did; but my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever Baxter felt. Oh that you would be saved! My eyes ache; my brow is full of fire now, because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you. Oh that God would take up the work and send that truth right home. I know I shall soon die and you too, and I shall face each of you, and your eyes shall stare on me for ever and ever, if you be lost through my unfaithfulness. And shall it be—shall it be? Oh that we had a hope that all of us might see the face of God and live! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

Spirit of God, convince of sin, and bring the heart to Christ, and may we all without exception see thy face in joy and glory, and praise thee, world without end. Amen.

## A Blow at Self-Righteousness

A Sermon

(No. 350)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 16th, 1860, by the

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At Exeter Hall, Strand.

“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.”—Job 9:20.

EVER since man became a sinner he has been self-righteous. When he had a righteousness of his own he never gloried of it, but ever since he has lost it, he has pretended to be the possessor of it. Those proud words which our father Adam uttered, when he sought to screen himself from the guilt of his treason against his Maker, laying the blame apparently on Eve, but really upon God who gave him the woman, were virtually a clame to blamelessness. It was but a fig leaf he could find to cover his nakedness, but how proud was he of that fig-leaf excuse, and how tenaciously did he hold to it. As it was with our first parents so is it with us: self-righteousness is born with us, and there is perhaps no sin which has so much vitality in it as the sin of righteous self. We can overcome lust itself, and anger, and the fierce passions of the will better than we can ever master the proud boastfulness which rises in our hearts and tempts us to think ourselves rich and increased in goods, while God knoweth we are naked, and poor, and miserable. Tens of thousands of sermons have been preached against self-righteousness, and yet it is as necessary to turn the great guns of the law against its walls to-day as ever it was. Martin Luther said he scarcely ever preached a sermon without inveighing against the righteousness of man, and yet, he said, “I find that still I cannot preach it down. Still men will boast in what they can do, and mistake the path to heaven to be a road paved by their own merits, and not a way besprinkled by the blood of the atonement of Jesus Christ.” My dear hearers, I cannot compliment you by imagining that all of you have been delivered from the great delusion of trusting in yourselves. The godly, those who are righteous through faith in Christ, still have to mourn that this infirmity clings to them; while as to the unconverted themselves, their besetting sin is to deny their guiltiness, to plead that they are as good as others, and to indulge still the vain and foolish hope that they shall enter into heaven from some doings, sufferings, or weepings of their own. I do not suppose there are any who are self-righteous in as bold a sense as the poor countryman I have heard of. His minister had tried to explain to him the way of salvation, but either his head was very dull, or else his soul was very hostile to the truth the minister would impart; for he so little understood what he had heard, that when the question was put, “Now then, what is the way by which you hope you can be saved before God?” the poor honest simpleton said, “Do you not think sir, if I were to sleep one cold frosty night under a hawthorn bush, that would go a great way towards it?” conceiving that his suffering might, in some degree at least, assist him in getting into heaven. You would not state your opinion in so bold a manner; you would refine it, you would gild it, you would disguise it, but it would come to the same thing after all; you would still believe that some sufferings, or believings of your own might possibly merit salvation. The Romish Church indeed, often tells this so very plainly, that we cannot think it less than profanity. I have been informed that there is in one of the Romish chapels in Cork, a



monument bearing these words upon it, "I. H. S. Sacred to the memory of the benevolent Edward Molloy; a friend of humanity, the father of the poor; he employed the wealth of this world only to procure the riches of the next; and leaving a balance of merit in the book of life, he made heaven debtor to mercy. He died October 17th, 1818, aged 90." I do not suppose that any of you will have such an epitaph on your tombstones, or ever dream of putting it as a matter of account with God, and striking a balance with him, your sins being on one side and your righteousness on the other, and hoping that a balance might remain. And yet the very same idea, only not so honestly expressed—a little more guarded, and a little more refined—the same idea, only taught to speak after a gospel dialect—is inherent in us all, and only divine grace can thoroughly cast it out of us.

The sermon of this morning is intended to be another blow against our self-righteousness. If it will not die, at least let us spare no arrows against it; let us draw the bow, and if the shaft cannot penetrate its heart, it may at least stick in its flesh and help to worry it to its grave.

I. Endeavouring to keep close to my text, I shall start with this first point—that THE PLEA OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS CONTRADICTS ITSELF. "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me."

Come, friend, thou who dost justify thyself by thine own works, let me hear thee speak. "I say that I have no need of a salvation by the blood and righteousness of another, for I believe that I have kept the commands of God from my youth up, and I do not think that I am guilty in his sight, but I hope that I may be able in my own right to claim a seat in paradise." Now, sir, your plea and this declaration of yours is in itself a condemnation of you, because upon its very surface it is apparent that you *are committing sin while you are pleading that you have no sin*. For the very plea itself is a piece of high and arrogant *presumption*. God hath said it, let Jew and Gentile stop his mouth, and let all the world stand guilty before God. We have it on inspired authority, that "there is none righteous, no, not one." "There is none good, save one, that is God." We are told by the mouth of a prophet sent from God, that "all we like wandering sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." And thou, in saying that thou art righteous, dost commit the sin of calling God a liar. Thou hast dared to impugn his veracity, thou hast slandered his justice. This boast of thine is in itself a sin, so great, so heinous, that if thou hadst only that one sin to account for, it would be sufficient to sink thee to the lowest hell. The boast, I say, is in itself a sin; the moment that a man saith, "I have no sin," he commits a sin in the saying of it,—the sin of contradicting his Maker, and making God a false accuser of his creatures.

Besides, dost thou not see, thou vain and foolish creature, that thou hast been guilty of *pride* in the very language thou hast used? Who but a proud man would stand up and commend himself? Who, but one who was proud as Lucifer, would in the face of God's declaration declare himself to be just and holy? Did the best of men ever speak thus? Did they not all of them acknowledge that they were guilty? Did Job, of whom God said that he was a perfect and an upright man, claim perfection? Did he not say, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me?" Oh! proud wretch, how art thou puffed up! How hath Satan bewitched thee; how hath he made thee lift up thine horn on high and speak with a stiff neck. Take heed to thyself, for if thou hadst never been guilty before, this pride of thine were quite sufficient to draw Jehovah's thunderbolts out of the quiver, and make him smite thee once for all to thine eternal destruction.

But further, the plea of self-righteousness is self-contradictory upon another ground; for all that a self-righteous man pleads for, is *comparative* righteousness. "Why," saith he, "I am no worse than my neighbours, in fact a great deal better; I do not drink, or swear; I do not commit fornication

or adultery; I am no Sabbath breaker; I am no thief; the laws of my country do not accuse, much less condemn me; I am better than the most of men, and if I be not saved, God help those who are worse than I am; if I cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, then who can?" Just so, but then all that you claim is that you are righteous as compared with others. Do you not see that this is a very vain and fatal plea, because you do in fact admit that you are not *perfectly* righteous;—that there is *some* sin in you, only you claim there is not so much in you as in another. You admit that you are diseased, but then the plague-spot is not so apparent in you as in your fellow-man. You admit that you have robbed God and broken his laws, only you have not done it with so desperate an intent, nor with so many aggravations as others. Now this is virtually a plea of guilty, disguise it as you may. You admit that you have been guilty, and against you the sentence comes forth—“*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*” Take heed to thyself that thou find no shelter in this refuge of lies, for it shall certainly fail thee when God shall come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity.

Suppose now for a moment that a command is issued to the beasts of the forest that they should become sheep. It is quite in vain for the bear to come forward and plead that he was not so venomous a creature as the serpent; equally absurd would it be for the wolf to say that though stealthy and cunning, and gaunt, and grim, yet he was not so great a grumbler not so ugly a creature as the bear; and the lion might plead that he had not the craftiness of the fox. “It is true,” saith he, “I wet my tongue in blood, but then I have some virtues which may commend me, and which, in fact, have made me king of beasts.” What would this argument avail? The indictment is that these animals are not sheep, their plea against the indictment is that they are no less like sheep than other creatures, and that some of them have more gentleness and more docility than others of their kind. The plea would never stand. Or use another picture. If in the courts of justice, a thief, when called up, should argue, “Well, I am not so great a thief as some; there are to be found some living in Whitechapel or St. Giles’s who have been thieves longer than I have, and if there be one conviction in the book against me, there are some that have a dozen convictions against them.” No magistrate would acquit a man on such an excuse as that, because it would be tantamount to his admission of a degree of guilt, though he might try to excuse himself because he had not reached a higher degree. It is so with you, sinner. You have sinned. Another man’s sins cannot excuse you; you must stand upon your own feet. At the day of judgment you must yourself make a personal appearance, and it will not be what another man has done that will condemn, or acquit you, but your own personal guilt. Take heed, then, take heed, sinner; for it will not avail thee that there are others blacker than thyself. If there be but a spot upon thee thou art lost; if there be but one sin unwashed by Jesus’ blood, thy portion must be with the tormentors. A holy God cannot look even upon the least degree of iniquity.

But further, the plea of the self-conceited man is, that he has done his best, and can claim a *partial* righteousness. It is true, if you touch him in a tender place he acknowledges that his boyhood and his youth were stained with sin. He tells you that in his early days he was a “fast lad;” that he did many things which he is sorry for now. “But then,” says he, “these are only like spots in the sun; these are only like a small headland of waste ground in acres of fruitful soil; I am still good; I am still righteous, because my virtues exceed my vices, and my good deeds quite cover up all the mistakes that I have committed.” Well, sir, do you not see that the only righteousness you claim is a *partial* righteousness? and in that very claim you do in fact make an admission that you are not perfect; that you have committed some sins. Now I am not responsible for what I am about to state, nor am I to be blamed for harshness in it, because I state neither more nor less than the very truth of God. It is of no saving avail to you that you have not have committed ten thousand sins, for if

you have committed one, you are a lost soul. The law is to be kept intact and entire, and the least crack, or flaw, or breakage, spoils it. The robe of righteousness in which you must stand at last must be without spot or blemish, and if there be but one microscopic stain upon it, which is supposing what is never true, yet, even then the gates of heaven never can admit you. A perfect righteousness you must have, or else you shall never be admitted to that wedding feast. You may say, "I have kept such a commandment and have never broken it," but if you have broken another you are guilty of the whole, because the whole law is like one rich and costly vase—it is one in design and fashion. Though you break not the foot, and stain not the margin, yet if there be any flaw or damage, the whole vessel is marred. And so if you have sinned in any point, at any time, and in any degree, you have broken the whole law; you stand guilty of it before God, nor can you be saved by the works of the law, do what you may.

"It is a hard sentence," says one, "and who can bear it!" Indeed, who *can* bear it? Who *can* bear to stand at the foot of Sinai and hear its thunders roar? "If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart." Who can stand when the lightnings flash and God descends upon Mount Paran and the hills melt like wax beneath his feet? "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them." Cursed is the man who sins but once, yea, hopelessly cursed so far as the law is concerned. Oh! sinner, I cannot help turning aside from the subject for a moment to remind you that there *is* a way of salvation, and a way by which the law's demands can be fully satisfied. *Christ* bore all the punishment of all believers, so that they cannot be punished. Christ kept the law of God for believers, and he is willing to cast about any and every penitent sinner that perfect robe of righteousness which he himself has wrought out. But *you* cannot keep the law, and if you bring up your self-righteousness the law condemns both it and you; Out of your own mouth it condemns you, inasmuch as you have not done all things and have not kept all the law. A great rock lies in your path to heaven; a mountain insurmountable; a gulf impassable; and by that road no man shall ever enter into eternal life.

The plea of self-righteousness, then, is in itself self-contradicting, and has only to be fairly stated to an honest man for him to see that it will not hold water for a single moment. What need of laboured argument to disprove a self-evident lie? Why should we tarry longer? Who but a very fool would maintain a notion which flies in its own face and witnesses against itself?

II. But now I pass to the second point, THE MAN WHO USES THIS PLEA CONDEMNS THE PLEA HIMSELF.

Not only does the plea cut its own throat, but the man himself is aware when he uses it that it is an evil, and false, and vain refuge. Now this is a matter of conscience, and therefore I must deal plainly with you; and if I speak not what you have felt, then you can say I am mistaken; but if I speak what you must confess to be true, let it be as the very voice of God to you. Men *know* that they are guilty. The conscience of the proudest man, when it is allowed to speak, tells him that he deserves the wrath of God. He may brag in public, but the very loudness of his bragging proves that he has an uneasy conscience, and therefore he makes a mighty din in order to drown its voice. Whenever I hear an infidel saying hard things of Christ, it reminds me of the men of Moloch, who beat the drums that they might not hear the screams of their own children. These loud blasphemies, these braggart boastings, are only a noisy way of drowning the shrieks of conscience. Do not believe that these men are honest. I think all controversy with them is time thrown away. I would never controvert with a thief about the principles of honesty, or with a known adulterer concerning the

duty of chastity. Devils are not to be reasoned with, but to be cast out. Parleying with hell serves no one's turn except the devil's. Did Paul argue with Elymas? or Peter with Simon Magus? I would not cross swords with a man who says there is no God; *he knows there is a God*. When a man laughs at Holy Scripture, you need not argue with him; he is either a fool or a knave—perhaps both. However villainous he may be, his conscience has some light; he knows that what he speaks is untrue. I cannot believe that conscience is so dead in any man as to let him believe that he is speaking the truth when he denies the Godhead; and much more I am certain that conscience never did give assent to the utterance of the braggart, who says he deserves eternal life, or has no sin of which to repent, or which by repentance may be washed away without the blood of Christ; he knows within himself that he speaks that which is false. When Professor Webster was shut up in prison for murder, he complained to the prison authorities that he had been insulted by his fellow-prisoners, for he said that through the walls of the prison he could hear them always crying out to him, “Thou bloody man! thou bloody man!” As it was not consistent with law that one prisoner should insult another, the strictest enquiry was made, and it was found that no prisoner had ever said such a word, or that if he had said it, Webster could not have heard it. It was his own conscience; it was not a word coming through the walls of the prison, but an echo reverberating from the wall of his bad heart, as conscience shouted, “Thou bloody man! thou bloody man!” There is in all your hearts a witness who will not cease his testimony; it cries, “Thou sinful man! thou sinful man!” You have only to listen to it, and you will soon find that every pretence of being saved by your good works must crumble to the ground. Oh! hear it now, and listen to it for a moment. I am sure *my* conscience says, “Thou sinful man! thou sinful man!” and I think yours must say the same, unless you are given up of God, and left to a seared conscience to perish in your sins.

When men get alone, if in their loneliness the thought of death forces itself upon them, they boast no more of goodness. It is not easy for a man to lie on his bed seeing the naked face of death, not at a distance, but feeling that his breath is breathing upon the skeleton, and that he must soon pass through the iron gates of death—it is not easy for a man to plead his self-righteousness then. The bony fingers thrust themselves like daggers into his proud flesh. “Ah!” saith Death, in tones which cannot be heard by mortal ear, but which are listened to by the mortal heart—“Where now are all thy glories?” He looks upon the man, and the wreath of laurel that was upon his brow fades and falls to the earth like blasted flowers. He touches his breast, and the star of honour which he wore moulders and is quenched into darkness. He looks at him yet again—that breast-plate of self-righteousness which glittered upon him like golden mail, suddenly dissolves unto dust, like the apples of Sodom before the touch of the gatherer, and the man finds himself to his own surprise naked, and poor, and miserable, when most he needed to be rich, when most he required to be happy and to be blessed. Ay, sinner, even while this sermon is being uttered, you may seek to refute it to yourself, and say, “Well, I believe I am as good as others, and that this fuss about a new birth, imputed righteousness, and being washed in blood, is all unnecessary,” but in the loneliness of your silent chamber, especially when death shall be your dread and grim companion, you shall not need me to state this, you shall see it clearly enough yourselves; see it with eyes of horror; and feel it with a heart of dismay, and despair, and perish because thou hast despised the righteousness of Christ.

How abundantly true, however, will this be at the day of judgment. I think I see that day of fire, that day of wrath. You are gathered as a great multitude before the eternal throne. Those who are robed in Christ's fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, are caught up to the right hand.

And now the trumpet sounds; if there be any that have kept the law of God, if there be faultless ones, if there be any that have never sinned, let them stand forth and claim the promised reward; but, if not, let the pit engulf the sinner, let the fiery thunder-bolt be launched upon the impenitent offenders. Now, stand forth, sir, and clear thyself! Come forth, my friend, and claim the reward, because of the church you endowed, or the row of alms-houses that you erected. What! what! does your tongue lie dumb in your mouth? Come forward, come forward—you who said you had been a good citizen, had fed the hungry, and clothed the naked—come forward now, and claim the reward. What! what! is your face turned to whiteness? Is there an ashy paleness on your cheek? Come forward, ye multitudes of those who rejected Christ, and despised his blood. Come now, and say, “All the commandments have I kept from my youth up.” What! are you seized with horror? Has the better light of judgment driven out the darkness of your self-righteousness? Oh! I see you, I see you, ye are not boasting now; but you, the best of you, are crying, “Ye rocks, hide me; ye mountains, open your stony bowels; and let me hide myself from the face of him that sits upon the throne.” Why, why such a coward? Come, face it out before your Maker. Come up, infidel, now, tell God there is no God. Come, while hell is flaming in your nostrils; come, and say there is no hell; or tell the Almighty that you never could bear to hear a hell-fire sermon preached. Come now, and accuse the minister of cruelty, or say that we love to talk on these terrible themes. Let me not mock you in your misery; but let me picture to you how devils shall mock you. “Aha!” say they “where is your courage now? Are your ribs of iron and your bones of brass? Will you dare the Almighty now, and dash yourselves upon the bosses of his buckler, or run upon his glittering spear?” See them, see them as they sink! The gulf has swallowed them up; the earth has closed again, and they are gone; a solemn silence falls upon the ear. But hark below, if you could descend with them, you would hear their doleful groans, and hollow moans, as they now feel that the God omnipotent was right and just, and wise, and tender, when he bade them forsake their righteousness, and flee to Christ, and lay hold on him that can save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

### III. THE PLEA IS ITSELF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PLEADER.

There is an unregenerated man here, who says, “Am I blind also?” I answer in the words of Jesus, “But now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth.” You have proved by your plea, in the first place, that you have never been enlightened of the Holy Spirit, but that you remain in a state of ignorance. A deaf man may declare that there is no such thing as music. A man who has never seen the stars, is very likely to say that there are no stars. But what does he prove? Does he prove that there are no stars? He only proves his own folly and his own ignorance. That man who can say half a word about his own righteousness has never been enlightened of God the Holy Spirit; for one of the first signs of a renewed heart is, that it abhors itself in dust and ashes. If thou dost to-day feel thyself to be guilty, and lost, and ruined, there is the richest hope for thee in the gospel; but if thou sayest, “*I am good, I have merits,*” the law condemns thee, and the gospel cannot comfort thee; thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, and thou art ignorant that all the while thou art talking thus, the wrath of God abideth on thee. A man *may* be a true Christian, and *may* fall into sin, but a man cannot be a true Christian and boast in his self-righteousness. A man may be saved, though infirmity may bespatter him with much mire; but *he* cannot be saved who does not know that he has been in the filth, and is not willing to confess that he is guilty before God. There are, in one sense, no conditions of salvation on our part, for whatever may be conditions God gives; but thus I know, there never was a man yet who was in a state of grace who did not

know himself, in himself, to be in a state of ruin, a state of depravity and condemnation. If you do not know this, then I say your plea of self-righteousness condemns you for ignorance.

But then again, inasmuch as you say that you are not guilty, this proves that you are impenitent. Now the impenitent can never come where God is. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" "but if we say that we have no sins, we make God a liar, and the truth is not in us." God will pardon all men who confess their iniquity. If we weep and lament, and take with us words, and say, "We have grievously sinned, forgive us—we have greatly erred, have mercy upon us, through Jesus Christ," God will not refuse the cry; but if we, out of our impenitent and hard hearts, put ourselves upon God's justice, God will give us justice, but not mercy, and that justice shall be the meting out to us of the full vials of his indignation, and of his wrath for ever and ever. He that is self-righteous is impenitent, and therefore he is not, and cannot be saved.

Further than this, the self-righteous man, the moment that he says he has done anything which can recommend him to God, proves that he is not a believer. Now, salvation is for believers, and for believers only. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Sir, you will be damned with all your self-righteousness, and your self-righteousness shall be like Dejanira's tunic, which she gave to Hercules, and which he put upon him, and, as the old fable hath it, it became a robe of fire to him; he tried to drag it away, but he pulled away pieces of his living, quivering flesh each moment, and perished miserably. Such shall your self-righteousness be to you. It seems a pleasant draught, and intoxicates for the moment; it is deadly and damnable as the venom of asps, and as the wine of Gomorrah. O soul! would that thou wouldst flee, above all things, from self-righteousness; for a self-righteous man does not and cannot trust Christ, and therefore he cannot see the face of God. None but the naked man will ever go to Christ for clothing; none but the hungry men will ever take Christ to be his food; none but thirsty souls will ever come to this well of Bethlehem to drink. The thirsty are welcome; but those who think they are good, are welcome neither to Sinai nor to Calvary. They have no hope of heaven, no peace in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Ah! soul, I know not who thou art; but if thou hast any righteousness of thine own, thou art a graceless soul. If you have given all your goods to feed the poor; if you have built many and many a sanctuary; if you have gone about with self-denial among the houses of poverty to visit the sons and daughters of affliction; if you have fasted thrice in the week; if your prayers have been so long that your throat has become hoarse through your crying; if your tears have been so many that your eyes have become blinded through your weeping; if your readings of Scripture have been so long that the midnight oil has been consumed in abundance;—if, I say, your heart has been so tender towards the poor and the sick and the needy that you would have been willing to suffer with them, to bear all their loathsome diseases, nay, if adding all this you could give your body to be burned, yet if you trusted in any one of these things your damnation would be as sure as though you were thief or drunkard. Understand me, I mean what I say. I want you not to think I speak unguardedly now. Christ said of the Pharisees of old the very thing that I have said of you. They were good and excellent in their way; but, said he, the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God before *you*, because they *would* go the wrong way, while the poor publicans and harlots were led to go the right way. The Pharisee who went about to make a righteousness of his own, did not submit to the righteousness of Christ; the publican and the harlot, knowing that they had nothing whereof to glory, came to Christ and took him as he was, and gave their souls up to be saved by his grace. Oh!

that we may do the same; for until we get rid of self-righteousness we are in a state of condemnation, and dying, the sentence must be executed upon us for ever and ever.

IV. I close now upon the last point, namely, that this plea, if we retain it, not only accuses the pleader now, but **IT WILL RUIN THE PLEADER FOR EVER.**

Let me show you two suicides. There is a man who has sharpened a dagger, and seeking out his opportunity he stabs himself to the heart. There he falls. Who shall blame any man for his death? He slew himself; his blood be on his own head.

Here is another: he is very sick and ill; he can scarcely crawl about the streets. A physician waits upon him; he tells him, "Sir, your disease is deadly; you must die; but I know a remedy which will certainly heal you. There it is; I freely give it to you. All I ask of you is, that you will freely take it." "Sir," says the man, "you insult me; I am as well as ever I was in my life; I am not sick." "But," says the other, "there are certain signs which I mark in your countenance which prove to me that you will have a deadly disease about you, and I warn you." The man thinks a moment; remembers that there have been certain signs in him of this very sickness; a monitor within tells him that it is so. He obstinately replies to the physician a second time—"Sir, if I want your physic I will send for it, and if I need it I will pay for it." He knows all the while there is not a farthing in his pocket, and that he cannot get credit anywhere; and there stands the life-giving cup before him which the physician at great expense has obtained, but which he freely gives to him and bids him freely take. "No," says the man, "I will not take it; I may be somewhat sick, but I am not worse than my neighbours; I am not more ill than other people, and I shall not take it." One day you go to his bed and you find he has slept his last sleep, and there he lies stone dead. Who slew this man? Who killed him? His blood be on his own head; he is as base a suicide as the other.

Now I will show you two more suicides. There is a man here who says—"Well, let what will happen in the next world, I will have my fill in this. Tell me where there are pleasures to be had and I will have them. Leave the things of God to old fools, and such like; I shall have the things of the present, and the joys and delights of time." He drains the cup of drunkenness, frequents the haunt of folly, and if he knows where there is any vice pursued he rushes after it. Like Byron; he is a very thunderbolt, launched from the hand of an arch-fiend; he flashes through the whole firmament of sin, and blazes himself out, until decayed in body and soul, he dies. He is a suicide. He defied God; he went against the laws of nature and of grace, despised warnings, declared he would be damned, and he has got what he richly deserved.

Here is another. He says, "I despise these vices; I am the most upright, honest, and commendable of men. I feel that I do not need salvation, and if I did need it I could get it myself. I can do anything you tell me to do, I feel I have mental force and manly dignity enough remaining in me to accomplish it. I tell you, sir, you insult me when you bid me trust in Christ." "Well," he says, "I consider there is such dignity in manhood, and so much virtue in me, that I need not a new heart, nor will I succumb and bend my spirit to the gospel of Christ on free-grace terms." Very well sir, when in hell you lift up your eyes, and *you will do so* as surely as the most profligate and profane, your blood will be upon your own head; and you will be as truly a suicide as he who wantonly and wickedly dashed himself against the laws of God and man, and brought himself to a sudden and hasty end by his iniquity and crimes.

"Well," says one, "this is a sermon well adapted to self-righteous persons, but I am not one." Then what are you, sir? Are you a believer in Christ? "I cannot say I am, sir." Why are you not, then? "Well, I would be, but I am afraid I may not believe in Christ." You are self-righteous, sir.

God commands you to believe in Christ, and you say you are not fit. Now what does this mean but that you are wanting to make yourself fit, and this after all is the spirit of self-righteousness; you are so proud that you will not take Christ unless you think you can bring something to him—that is it “Ah! no,” says one poor broken-hearted soul, “I do not think that is fair with me, for I do feel as if I would give anything, if I might hope to be saved; but oh, I am such a wretch! I am such a wretch! I cannot believe.” Now, that after all is self-righteousness. Christ bids you trust him. You say, “No, I will not trust thee, Christ, because I am such-an-one and such-an-one.” So, then, you are wanting to make yourself somebody, and then Jesus Christ is to do the rest. It is the same spirit of self-righteousness only in another garb. “Ah!” saith one, “but if I did but feel my need enough, as you just now said, sir, then I think I would trust Christ.” Self-righteousness again, you want your sense of need to save you. “Oh! but, sir, I cannot believe in Christ as I would.” Self-righteousness again. Let me just utter a solemn sentence which you may masticate at your leisure. If you trust to your faith and to your repentance, you will be as much lost as if you trusted to your good works or trusted to your sins. The ground of your salvation is not *faith*, but *Christ*; it is not repentance, but Christ. If I trust my trust of Christ, I am lost. My business is to trust Christ; to rest on him; to depend, not on what the Spirit has done in me, but what Christ did for me, when he did hang upon the tree. Now be it known unto you, that when Christ died, he took the sins of all his people upon his head, and there and then they all ceased to be. At the moment when Christ died, the sins of all his redeemed were blotted out. He did then suffer all they ought to have suffered; he paid all their debts; and their sins were actually and positively lifted that day from *their* shoulders to *his* shoulders, for “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And now, if you believe in Jesus, there is not a sin remaining upon you, for your sin was laid on Christ; Christ was punished for your sins before they were committed, and as Kent says:

“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their caste;  
And oh! my soul with wonder view,  
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”

Blessed privilege of the believer! But if you live and die unbelievers, know this, that all your sins lie on your own shoulders. Christ did never make any atonement for you; you were never bought with blood; you never had an interest in his sacrifice. You live and die in yourselves, lost; in yourselves, ruined; in yourselves, utterly destroyed. But believing—the moment you believe, you may know that you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. Believing, you may know that the righteousness of Christ is all yours; that all he did, he did for you; that all he suffered, he suffered for you. You do in fact, in the moment you believe, stand where Christ stood as God’s accepted Son; and Christ stands where you stood as the sinner, and suffers as if he had been the sinner, and dies as if he had been guilty—dies in your room, place, and stead.

Oh! Spirit of God, give faith this morning. Win us all from self; knit us all to Christ; may we be saved now by his free grace, and be saved in eternity.



## Plenteous Redemption

A Sermon

(No. 351)

Delivered at Exeter Hall, Strand, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON.

“With him is plenteous redemption.”—Psalm 103:7.

REDEMPTION is a word which has gladdened many ears, when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one, and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by corsairs, and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be *redemption*. His cruel master, who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him; but a rumour came, that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow-countrymen; that the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the moors might return to their home. Truly I can suppose the hours run happily along, and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged, when once that word “*redemption*” had sounded in their ears. So with our fellow-subjects and our fellow-men, who once were slaves in our West India settlements. We can well conceive that to their lips the word *redemption* must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money; that on a certain morning their fetters should be snapped asunder, so that they should no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip, but they should call themselves their own, and none should be their masters to possess their flesh, and have property in their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose, when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea, and the whole land was at liberty, how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared. O there are many sonnets in that one word “*redemption*.”

Now, ye who have sold for nought your glorious heritage; ye who have been carried bondslaves into Satan’s dominion; ye who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them; ye who have smarted beneath the lash of the law; what the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you to-night. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits, and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—“*plenteous redemption*.”

This evening I shall consider the subject of *redemption*, and then notice *the adjective appended to the word*: “*plenteous redemption*.”

I. First, then, we shall consider the subject of REDEMPTION.

I shall commence in this way, by asking, *What has Christ redeemed?* And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject, I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine, consistent with common sense, and declared to us by Scripture, namely, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ will most assuredly have. I start with that as an axiom, that whatever Christ has redeemed, Christ must have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason, and much

more to revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what he never shall obtain; and I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Saviour's death can ever be frustrated. Whatever was Christ's intention when he died—we lay it down as a very groundwork truth, which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain. I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures, that when he has once intended a thing, it must most assuredly be accomplished; and if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed his blood in vain; that he should die with an intention of doing something, and yet should not perform it; that he should die with a full intention in his heart, and with a promise on the part of God, that a certain thing should be given to him as a reward of his sufferings, and yet should fail to obtain it. I start with that; and I think that everyone who will weigh the matter, and truly consider it, must see it to be so, that Christ's intention in his death must be fulfilled, and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out. Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ's blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ's atonement is just as great as God meant it should be, and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what he meant to redeem, and exactly what the Father had decreed he should redeem. Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that all men are redeemed. Some may hold it, as I know they do, and hold it very strongly, and even urge it as being a fundamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it; this is a land of liberty. Let them hold their views, but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion, that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter; for if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God's intention is frustrated, and that Christ has not received what he died to procure. If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything; and I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake, or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason.

Starting, then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe, according to sound doctrine and Scripture, Christ has really redeemed. His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things; he has redeemed the souls of his people; he has redeemed the bodies of his people; he has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam; he has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which he will have the world at last.

Christ has redeemed *the souls of all his people who shall ultimately be saved*. To state it after the Calvinistic form, Christ has redeemed his elect; but since you do not know his elect until they are revealed, we will alter that, and say, Christ has redeemed all penitent souls; Christ has redeemed all believing souls; and Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy, seeing it is to be received, that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb's book of life, and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to heaven, instead to toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb's book of life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way, and ultimately attain to heaven; these, I believe, were redeemed, and I must firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption. I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed; I could not conceive my Saviour bearing the punishment for Judas, or if so how could Judas be punished again. I could

not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ's hands the penalty of his sin, and then at the sinner's hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed his blood in vain; and though I have read in the books of certain divines, that Christ's blood is fuel for the flames of hell, I have shuddered at the thought, and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of God. The souls of God's people, whoever they may be, and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I could fondly hope they are all of you—are redeemed effectually. Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin, and from the power of sin. The souls of Christ's people have guilt on account of sin, until they are redeemed; but when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are every one of them from that moment for ever blotted out.

“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified Lord,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through his blood.”

The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ, not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God's sight any longer a guilty person; you are reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you; and therefore, you can say—to recal a verse which we often repeat—

“Now freed from sin I walk at large,  
My Saviour's blood's my full discharge;  
At his dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”

Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression, is by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from all the Lord's believing family.

And mark, next: not only the guilt, but the punishment of sin is taken away. In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether. Take away the guilt, the punishment is gone; but to make it more effectual, it is as if it were written over again, that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned; they can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their stead, and therefore, they cannot, unless God be unjust, be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ their ransom died, they cannot die; if he, their surety, paid their debt, then unto God's justice they owe no longer anything, for Christ hath paid it all. If he hath shed his blood, if he hath yielded up the ghost, if he hath “died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” how, then, would God be just, and yet the punisher of those whom he has already punished once in the person of Jesus Christ their Saviour? No beloved, through the plenteous redemption of Christ we are delivered from all punishment on account of sin, and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.

Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom he died—are most effectually delivered from the *power* of sin. Oh! there are some who suck in the two truths I have been mentioning, as if they were honey; but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the power of sin. Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed

from the guilt of sin, or from the punishment of sin, unless he be at the same time delivered from the power of sin. Unless he is made by God to hate his own sin, unless he is enabled to cast it to the ground, unless he is made to abhor every evil way, and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed. If thou art still under the dominion of thy lusts, O wicked sinner, thou hast no right to think thyself a purchased heir of heaven. If thou canst be drunk, if thou canst swear, if thou canst curse God, if thou canst lie, if thou canst profane the Sabbath, if thou canst hate his people, if thou canst despise his Word, then thou hast no right whatever, any more than Satan in hell, to boast that thou art redeemed; for all the Lord's redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt, and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Art thou delivered from the power of sin, my hearer? Hast thou mortified it? Art thou dead unto it? Is it dead unto thee? Is it crucified unto thee, and thou unto it? Dost thou hate it as thou wouldst a viper? Dost thou tread on it as thou wouldst tread upon a serpent? If thou dost, albeit there be sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if thou hatest the sin of thy heart, if thou hast an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort. The Lord hath redeemed thee from the guilt and penalty, and also from the power of sin. That is the first point of redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should mistake me. I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want so to preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, he could not have meant what he said. Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I do believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, because I say again, it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture, to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed, and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Saviour's blood, or that his blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them.

2. Now let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the *bodies of all his children*. In that day when Christ redeemed our souls, he redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ who gave his human soul and his human body to death, purchased the body as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way redemption operates upon the body of the believer. I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by his death a glorious resurrection. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive." All men are by virtue of the death of Christ quickened to a resurrection, but even here there is a special property of the elect, seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, whilst others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection; a resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, thy body is redeemed.

"What though thine inbred sins require  
Thy flesh to see the dust,  
Yet, as the Lord thy Saviour rose,  
So all his followers must."

What! though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and because he lives I know that in my flesh I shall see God. These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death, shall not be always closed in darkness; death shall be made to give back his prey; he shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He hath the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons; they are wrapped up in their cerements, and he thinks

they are secure: he has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O death! foolish death! thy caskets shall be rifled; thy storehouses shall be broken open. Lo, the morning is come! Christ hath descended from on high. I hear the trump, "Awake! Awake!" and lo! from their tombs, the righteous start; while death sits in confusion howling in vain, to find his empire all bereft of its subjects, to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey. "Precious shall their blood be in his sight;" precious shall be their bones! their very dust is blessed, and Christ shall raise them with himself. Think of that, ye that have lost friends—ye weeping children of sorrow! your redeemed friends shall live again. The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch, shall grasp them in paradise; those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noon-day of felicity. That very frame which thou didst sorrowfully convey, with dread attire of funeral, to bury in its tomb—yes, that selfsame body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless the selfsame body, shall rise again; and thou, if thou art redeemed, shalt see it, for Christ has purchased it, and Christ shall not die in vain. Death will not have one bone of the righteous—nay, not a particle of their dust—nay, not a hair of their heads. It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body, and the whole body shall be completed, and united for ever in heaven with the glorified soul. The bodies of the righteous are redeemed, and redeemed for eternal happiness.

3. In the next place, all *the possessions of the righteous* which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! where art thou? I have a controversy with thee, man, for I have lost much by thee. Come thou hither. Adam! thou seest what thou art now, tell me what thou once wast; then I shall know what I have lost by thee, and then I shall be able to thank my Master that all thou didst lose he has freely bought back to all believers. What didst thou lose? "Alas!" cries Adam, "I had a crown once; I was king of all the world; the beasts crouched at my feet and did me reverence; God made me, that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills, and over all fowls of the air; but I lost my crown. I had a mitre once," said Adam, "for I was a priest to God, and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills, and sing sweet orisons of praise to him that made me. My censer of praise hath often smoked with incense, and my voice has been sweet with praise.

'These are thy glorious works, parent of good,  
Almighty, thine this universal frame,  
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then;'

Oft have I bidden misty exhalations, sun, and moon, and stars, sing to his praise; daily have I bidden the herds upon the hills low out his glories, and the lions roar his honours; nightly have I told the stars to shine it out, and the little flowers to blossom it forth: but ah! I lost my mitre, and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be his holy servant." Ah! Adam, thou hast lost me much; but yonder I see my Saviour; he takes his crown off his head, that he may put a crown on my head; and he puts a mitre on his head, to be a priest, that he may put a mitre on my head too, and on the head of all his people; for, as we have just been singing,

"Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,  
Hast set the prisoners free;  
Hast made us kings and priests to God,  
And we shall reign with thee."

Just what Adam lost: the kingship and the priesthood of Christ, is won for all his believing people. And what else didst thou lose, Adam? "Why, I lost paradise." Hush, man! say nothing upon that; for Christ hath bought me a paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as thine. So we can well

forgive thee that. And what else didst thou lose? “Why, I lost the image of my Maker.” Ah! hush, Adam! In Jesus Christ we have something more than that; for we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, and sure that is even better than the image of the Maker, for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore. So, Adam, all that thou hast lost I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nought. I, who have sold for nought a heritage divine, shall have it back unbought,—the gift of love, says Christ, e’en mine. Oh! hear it, then! The trump of Jubilee is blown; Christ hath redeemed the lost possessions of his people.

4. And now I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed this world. “Well, now,” says one, “that is strange, sir; you are going to contradict yourself flatly.” Stop a moment. Understand what I mean by *the world*, if you please. We do not mean every man, in it; we never pretended such a thing. But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell God cursed the world with barrenness. “Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto thee, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.” God cursed the earth. When Christ came into the world they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorn, and they put that on his head, and made him king of the curse; and in that day he purchased the redemption of the world from its curse; and it is my very belief, and I think it is warranted by Scripture, that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of Paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert, shall one day blossom like Sharon, and rejoice like the garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer for ever; I believe that she is yet to be clothed with verdure, such as she once wore. We have evidences in the beds of coal underneath the earth, that this world was once much more fertile than it is now. Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms, and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have builded half a forest for us now. Then mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth; and I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew shall be restored to us, and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known. No more cursed with blight and mildew, with no more blast and withering, we shall see a land like heaven itself—

“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.”

When Christ cometh he shall do even this.

In the day of the fall, too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament, and began to fall on each other; of this we are not sure; but if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid, and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox, and that the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming, and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind. God shall restore to us again, and even to the beasts of the field, the blessing which Adam lost.

And, my friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin: that, too, is to be removed. Seest thou yonder planet? It is whirling along through space—bright, bright and glorious. Hearest thou the morning stars sing together, because this new sister of theirs is made? That is the earth; she is bright now. Stay! Didst remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The palnet is dimmed, and on her face there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet; she glides along in ten-fold night; scarce doth a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again, the day is not come, when that planet

shall renew her glory, but it is hastening a main. As the serpent slips its slough, and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet hath slopped its clouds, and shone forth bright as it was before. Do you ask who hath done it? Who hath cleared away the mist? Who hath taken away the darkness? Who hath removed the clouds? "I have done it," says Christ, the sun of righteousness; "I have scattered darkness, and made that world bright again." Lo, I see a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this. This world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry, and crime; the day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword; it shall be no more intoxicated with blood; God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth. Then down shall go idols from their thrones; down superstitions from their pinnacles; then slavery shall cease; then crime shall end; then peace shall spread its halcyon wings over all the world; and then shall you know that Christ hath died for the world, and that Christ hath won it. "The whole creation," says Paul, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;" waiting for what? "waiting for the redemption;" and by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you, that this world shall be washed of all her sin; her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from his mind; as when, like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer she first flashed in her orbit. This Christ has redeemed; this, Christ shall, and most assuredly must have.

II. And now, a word or two concerning the last thought—"PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION."

It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Sure I should have made it no more plenteous, if I had lied against my conscience, and told you that he had bought every man; for of what avail is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of hell? How will that glorify Christ, that he hath redeemed me, and yet failed in his intentions? Surely it is more to his honour to believe, that according to his immutable, sovereign, and all-wise will, he laid the foundation as wide as he intended the structure to be, and then made it just according to his will. Nevertheless, it is "plenteous redemption." Very briefly, lend me your ears just a moment.

It is "plenteous," when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. Think if ye can, how great that host who have already "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to Paradise, all of them redeemed. They all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Is it not "plenteous redemption," when you reflect that it is a "multitude that no man can number" that will be gathered in? Let us close that by saying, "And why not you?" If so many are redeemed, why should not you be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?

It is "plenteous," again, if we consider the sins of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all to wash it all away—

"What though your numerous sins exceed  
The stars that spread the skies,  
And aiming at th' eternal throne,  
Like pointed mountains rise;"

Yet this plenteous redemption can take all your sins away. They are no greater than Christ foresaw, and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus, believing that however great

your guilt, his atonement is great enough for all who come to him, and therefore you may safely come.

Remember, again, that this “plenteous redemption” is plenteous, because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite; but this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable; but this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs you can scarce tell; but this redemption I know you cannot tell. Believe, then, that it is “plenteous redemption.” O believing sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is “plenteous redemption,” and that you have a lot in it. You will most certainly be brought safely home, by Jesu’s grace. Are you seeking Christ? Or rather, do you know yourselves to be sinners? If you do, I have authority from God to say to every one who will confess his sins, that Christ has redeemed him. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner; there are lots of them about, but I have no gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, “Yes, I am a sinner,”—who are sinners out of compliment, and do not mean it. I will preach another thing to *you*: I will preach against your self-righteousness another day; but I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for he “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” But are you a sinner, in the *bona fide* sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then in God’s name I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you; for as sure as ever he has revealed to you your guilty by the Holy Ghost, he will not leave you till he has revealed to you your pardon by his only Son. If you know your lost estate, you shall soon know your glorious estate. Believe in Jesus now; then thou art saved, and thou mayest go away happy,—blest beyond what kings could dream. Believe that since thou art a sinner, Christ hath redeemed thee—that just because thou knowest thyself to be undone, guilty, lost and ruined, thou hast this night a right, a privilege, and a title, to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Believe that, and then thou shalt know the meaning of this text—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.” God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus’ sake!



## None But Jesus

A Sermon

(No. 361)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, February 17th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At Exeter Hall, Strand

“He that believeth on him is not condemned” —John 3:18

THE way of salvation is stated in Scripture in the very plainest terms, and yet, perhaps, there is no truth about which more errors have been uttered, than concerning the faith which saves the soul. Well has it been proved by experience, that all doctrines of Christ are mysteries—mysteries, not so much in themselves, but because they are hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their eyes. So plain is Scripture, that one would have said, “He that runs may read”; but so dim is man’s eye, and so marred is his understanding, that the very simplest truth of Scripture he distorts and misrepresents. And indeed, my brethren, even those who know what faith is, personally and experimentally, do not always find it easy to give a good definition of it. They think they have hit the mark, and then afterwards they lament that they have failed. Straining themselves to describe some one part of faith, they find they have forgotten another, and in the excess of their earnestness to clear the poor sinner out of one mistake, they often lead him into a worse error. So that I think I may say that, while faith is the simplest thing in all the world, yet it is one of the most difficult upon which to preach, because from its very importance, our soul begins to tremble while speaking of it, and then we are not able to describe it so clearly as we would.

I intend this morning, by God’s help, to put together sundry thoughts upon faith, each of which I may have uttered in your hearing at different times, but which have not been collected into one sermon before, and which, I have no doubt, have been misunderstood from the want of their having been put together in their proper consecutive order. I shall speak a little on each of these points; first, *the object of faith*, to what it looks; next, *the reason of faith*, whence it comes; thirdly, *the ground of faith*, or what it wears when it comes; fourthly, *the warrant of faith*, or why it dares to come to Christ; and fifthly, *the result of faith*, or, how it speeds when it doth come to Christ.

I. First, then, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, or to what faith looks.

I am told in the Word of God to believe—What am I to believe? I am bidden to look—to what am I to look? What is to be the object of my hope, belief, and confidence? The reply is simple. The object of Faith to a sinner is Christ Jesus. How many make a mistake about this and think that they are to believe on *God the Father!* Now belief in God is an after-result of faith in Jesus. We come to believe in the eternal love of the Father as the result of trusting the precious blood of the Son. Many men say, “I would believe in Christ if I knew that I were elect.” This is coming to the Father, and no man can come to the Father except by Christ. It is the Father’s work to elect; you cannot come directly to him, therefore you cannot know your election until first you have believed on Christ the Redeemer, and then through redemption you can approach to the Father and know your election. Some, too, make the mistake of looking to the work of God *the Holy Spirit*. They look within to see if they have certain feelings, and if they find them their faith is strong, but if their feelings have departed from them, then their faith is weak, so that they look to the work of the Spirit

which is not the object of a sinner's faith. Both the Father and the Spirit must be trusted in order to complete redemption, but for the particular mercy of justification and pardon the blood of the Mediator is the only plea. *Christians* have to trust the Spirit after conversion, but the sinner's business, if he would be saved, is not with trusting the Spirit nor with looking to the Spirit, but looking to Christ Jesus, and to him alone. I know your salvation depends on the whole Trinity, but yet the first and immediate object of a sinner's justifying faith is neither God the Father nor God the Holy Ghost, but God the Son, incarnate in human flesh, and offering atonement for sinners. Hast thou the eye of faith? Then, soul, look thou to *Christ as God*. If thou wouldst be saved, believe him to be God over all, blessed for ever. Bow before him, and accept him as being "Very God of very God," for if thou do not, thou hast no part in him. When thou hast this believed, believe in him as *man*. Believe the wondrous story of his incarnation; rely upon the testimony of the evangelists, who declare that the Infinite was robed in the infant, that the Eternal was concealed within the mortal; that he who was King of heaven became a servant of servants and the Son of man. Believe and admire the mystery of his incarnation, for unless thou believe this, thou canst not be saved thereby. Then, specially, if thou wouldst be saved, let thy faith behold Christ in his *perfect righteousness*. See him keeping the law without blemish, obeying his Father without error; preserving his integrity without flaw. All this thou art to consider as being done on thy behalf. Thou couldst not keep the law; he kept it for thee. Thou couldst not obey God perfectly—lo! his obedience standeth in the stead of thy obedience—by it, thou art saved. But take care that thy faith mainly fixes itself upon Christ *as dying and as dead*. View the Lamb of God as dumb before his shearers; view him as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; go thou with him to Gethsemane, and behold him sweating drops of blood. Mark, thy faith has nothing to do with anything within thyself; the object of thy faith is nothing within thee, but a something without thee. Believe on him, then, who on yonder tree with nailed hands and feet pours out his life for sinners. There is the object of thy faith for justification; not in thyself, nor in anything which the Holy Spirit has done in thee, or anything he has promised to do for thee; but thou art to look to Christ and to Christ alone. Then let thy faith behold Christ *as rising from the dead*. See him—he has borne the curse, and now he receives the justification. He dies to pay the debt; he rises that he may nail the handwriting of that discharged debt to the cross. See him ascending up on high, and behold him this day pleading before the Father's throne. He is there pleading for his people, offering up to-day his authoritative petition for all that come to God by him. And he, as God, as man, as living, as dying, as rising, and as reigning above,—he, and he alone, is to be the object of thy faith for the pardon of sin.

On nothing else must thou trust; he is to be the only prop and pillar of thy confidence; and all thou addest thereunto will be a wicked antichrist, a rebellion against the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. But take care if your faith save you, that while you look to Christ in all these matters you view him as being *a substitute*. This doctrine of substitution is so essential to the whole plan of salvation that I must explain it here for the thousandth time. God is just, he must punish sin; God is merciful, he wills to pardon those who believe in Jesus. How is this to be done? How can he be just and exact the penalty,—merciful, and accept the sinner? He doeth it thus: he taketh the sins of his people and actually lifteth them up from off his people to Christ, so that they stand as innocent as though they had never sinned, and Christ is looked upon by God as though he had been all the sinners in the world rolled into one. The sin of his people was taken from their persons, and really and actually, not typically and metaphorically, but really and actually laid on Christ. Then God came forth with his fiery sword to meet the sinner and to punish him. He met Christ. Christ was

not a sinner himself; but the sins of his people were all imputed to him. Justice, therefore, met Christ as though he had been the sinner—punished Christ for his people’s sins—punished him as far as its rights could go,—exacted from him the last atom of the penalty, and left not a dreg in the cup. And now, he who can see Christ as being his substitute, and puts his trust in him, is thereby delivered from the curse of the law. Soul, when thou seest Christ obeying the law—thy faith is to say, “He obeys that for his people.” When thou seest him dying, thou art to count the purple drops, and say, “Thus he took my sins away.” When thou seest him rising from the dead, thou art to say—“He rises as the head and representative of all his elect”; and when thou seest him sitting at the right hand of God, thou art to view him there as the pledge that all for whom he died shall most surely sit at the Father’s right hand. Learn to look on Christ as being in God’s sight as though he were the sinner. “In him was no sin.” He was *“the just,”* but he suffered for the unjust. He was the righteous, but he stood in the place of the unrighteous; and all that the unrighteous ought to have endured, Christ has endured once for all, and put away their sins for ever by the sacrifice of himself. Now this is the great object of faith. I pray you, do not make any mistake about this, for a mistake here will be dangerous, if not fatal. View Christ, by your faith, as being in his life, and death, and sufferings, and resurrection, the substitute for all whom his Father gave him,—the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of all those who will trust him with their souls. Christ, then, thus set forth, is the object of justifying faith.

Now let me further remark that there are some of you, no doubt, saying—“Oh, I should believe and I would be saved if”—If what? If Christ had died? “Oh no, sir, my doubt is nothing about Christ.” I thought so. Then what is the doubt? “Why, I should believe *if I felt this, or if I had done that.*” Just so; but I tell you, you could not believe in Jesus if you felt that, or if you had done that, for then you would believe in yourself, and not in Christ. That is the English of it. If you were so-and-so, or so-and-so, then you could have confidence. Confidence in what? Why, confidence in your feelings, and confidence in your doings, and that is just the clear contrary of confidence in Christ. Faith is not to infer from something good within me that I shall be saved, but to say in the teeth, and despite of the fact that I am guilty in the sight of God and deserve his wrath, yet I do nevertheless believe that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth me from all sin; and though my present consciousness condemns me, yet my faith overpowers my consciousness, and I do believe that “he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” To come to Christ as a saint is very easy work; to trust to a doctor to cure you when you believe you are getting better, is very easy; but to trust your physician when you feel as if the sentence of death were in your body, to bear up when the disease is rising into the very skin, and when the ulcer is gathering its venom—to believe even then in the efficacy of the medicine—that is faith. And so, when sin gets the mastery of thee, when thou feelest that the law condemns thee, then, even then, as a sinner, to trust Christ, this is the most daring feat in all the world; and the faith which shook down the walls of Jericho, the faith which raised the dead, the faith which stopped the mouths of lions, was not greater than that of a poor sinner, when in the teeth of all his sins he dares to trust the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Do this, soul, then thou are saved, whosoever thou mayest be. The object of faith, then, is Christ as the substitute for sinners. God in Christ, but not God apart from Christ, nor any work of the Spirit, but the work of Jesus only must be viewed by you as the foundation of your hope.

II. And now, secondly, THE REASON OF FAITH, or why doth any man believe, and whence doth his faith come?

“Faith cometh by *hearing*.” Granted, but do not all men hear, and do not many still remain unbelieving? How, then, doth any man come by his faith? To his own experience his faith comes as the result of *a sense of need*. He feels himself needing a Saviour; he finds Christ to be just such a Saviour as he wants, and therefore because he cannot help himself, he believes in Jesus. Having nothing of his own, he feels he must take Christ or else perish, and therefore he doth it because he cannot help doing it. He is fairly driven up into a corner, and there is but this one way of escape, namely, by the righteousness of another; for he feels he cannot escape by any good deeds, or sufferings of his own, and he cometh to Christ and humbleth himself, because he cannot do without Christ, and must perish unless he lay hold of him. But to carry the question further back, where does that man get his sense of need? How is it that *he*, rather than others, feels his need of Christ? It is certain he has no more necessity for Christ than other men. How doth he come to know, then, that he is lost and ruined? How is it that he is driven by the sense of ruin to take hold on Christ the restorer? The reply is, this is *the gift of God*; this is the work of the Spirit. No man comes to Christ except the Spirit draw him, and the Spirit draws men to Christ by shutting them up under the law to a conviction that if they do not come to Christ they must perish. Then by sheer stress of weather, they tack about and run into this heavenly port. Salvation by Christ is so disagreeable to our carnal mind, so inconsistent with our love of human merit, that we never would take Christ to be our all in all, if the Spirit did not convince us that we were nothing at all, and did not so compel us to lay hold on Christ.

But, then, the question goes further back still; how is it that the Spirit of God teaches some men their need, and not other men? Why is it that some of you were driven by your sense of need to Christ, while others go on in their self-righteousness and perish? There is no answer to be given but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” It comes to divine sovereignty at the last. The Lord hath “hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.” According to the way in which Christ put it—“My sheep, hear my voice”; “ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” Some divines would like to read that—“Ye are not my sheep, because ye do not believe.” As if believing made us the sheep of Christ; but the text puts it—“Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.” “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” If they come not, it is a clear proof that they were never given; for those who were given of old eternity to Christ, chosen of God the Father, and then redeemed by God the Son—these are led by the Spirit, through a sense of need to come and lay hold on Christ. No man yet ever did, or ever will believe in Christ, unless he feels his need of him. No man ever did, or will feel his need of Christ, unless the Spirit makes him feel, and the Spirit will make no man feel his need of Jesus savingly, unless it be so written in that eternal book, in which God hath surely engraved the names of his chosen. So, then, I think I am not to be misunderstood on this point, that the reason of faith, or why men believe, is God’s electing love working through the Spirit by a sense of need, and so bringing them to Christ Jesus.

III. But now I shall want your careful attention, while I come to another point, upon which you, perhaps, will think I contradict myself, and that is, THE GROUND OF THE SINNER’S FAITH, or on what ground he dares to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friends, I have already said that no man will believe in Jesus, unless he feels his need of him. But you have often heard me say, and I repeat it again, that I do not come to Christ pleading that I feel my need of him; my reason for believing in Christ, is not that I *feel* my need of him, but that I *have* a need of him. The ground on which a man comes to Jesus, is not as a sensible sinner,

but as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner. He will not come unless he is awakened; but when he comes, he does not say, "Lord, I come to thee because I am an awakened sinner, save me." But he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, save me." Not his awakening, but his sinnership is the method and plan upon which he dares to come. You will, perhaps, perceive what I mean, for I cannot exactly explain myself just now. If I refer to the preaching of a great many Calvinistic divines, they say to a sinner, "Now, *if you feel* your need of Christ, *if you have repented* so much, *if you have been harrowed* by the law to such-and-such a degree, then you may come to Christ on the ground that you are an awakened sinner." I say that is false. No man may come to Christ on the ground of his being an awakened sinner; he must come to him *as a sinner*. When I come to Jesus, I know I am not come unless I am awakened, but still, I do not come as an awakened sinner. I do not stand at the foot of his cross to be washed because I have repented; I bring nothing when I come but sin. A sense of need is a good feeling, but when I stand at the foot of the cross, I do not believe in Christ because I have got good feelings, but I believe in him whether I have good feelings or not.

"Just as I am without one plea,  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidst me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God I come."

Mr. Roger, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Flavel, and several excellent divines, in the Puritanic age, and especially Richard Baxter, used to give descriptions of what a man must feel before he may dare to come to Christ. Now, I say in the language of good Mr. Fenner, another of those divines, who said he was but a babe in grace when compared with them—"I dare to say it, that all this is not Scriptural. Sinners do feel these things before they come, but they do not come on the ground of having felt it; they come on the ground of being sinners, and on no other ground whatever." The gate of Mercy is opened, and over the door it is written, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." Between that word "save" and the next word "sinners," there is no adjective. It does not say, "penitent sinners," "awakened sinners," "sensible sinners," "grieving sinners," or "alarmed sinners." No, it only says, "sinners," and I know this, that when I come, I come to Christ to-day, for I feel it is as much a necessity of my life to come to the cross of Christ to-day as it was to come ten years ago,—when I come to him I dare not come as a conscious sinner or an awakened sinner, but I have to come still as a sinner with nothing in my hands. I saw an aged man this week in the vestry of a chapel in Yorkshire. I had been saying something to this effect: the old man had been a Christian for years, and he said, "I never saw it put exactly so, but still I know that is just the way I come; I say, 'Lord,

'Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked, look to thee for dress;  
Helpless, come to thee for grace;  
Black'—  
("Black enough," said the old man)  
'I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'"

Faith is getting right out of yourself and getting into Christ. I know that many hundreds of poor souls have been troubled because the minister has said, "if you feel your need, you may come to Christ." "But," say they, "I do not feel my need enough; I am sure I do not." Many a score letters

have I received from poor troubled consciences who have said, "I would venture to believe in Christ to save me if I had a tender conscience; if I had a soft heart—but oh my heart is like a rock of ice which will not melt. I cannot feel as I would like to feel, and therefore I must not believe in Jesus." Oh! down with it, down with it! It is a wicked anti-Christ; it is flat Popery! It is not your soft heart that entitles you to believe. You are to believe in Christ to renew your hard heart, and come to him with nothing about you but sin. The ground on which a sinner comes to Christ is that he is black; that he is dead, and not that he knows he is dead; that he is lost, and not that he knows he is lost. I know he will not come unless he does know it, but that is not the ground on which he comes. It is the secret reason why, but it is not the public positive ground which he understands. Here was I, year after year, afraid to come to Christ because I thought I did not feel enough; and I used to read that hymn of Cowper's about being insensible as steel—

"If aught is felt 'tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel."

When I believed in Christ, I thought I did not feel at all. *Now* when I look back I find that I had been feeling all the while most acutely and intensely, and most of all because I thought I did not feel. Generally the people who repent the most, think they are impenitent, and people feel most their need when they think they do not feel at all, for we are no judges of our feelings, and hence the gospel invitation is not put upon the ground of anything of which we can be a judge; it is put on the ground of our being sinners and nothing but sinners. "Well," says one, "but it says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest'—then we must be weary and heavy-laden." Just so; so it is in the text, but then there is another. "Whosoever will let him come"; and that does not say anything about "weary and heavy-laden." Besides, while the invitation is given to the weary and heavy-laden, you will perceive that the promise is not made to them *as* weary and heavy-laden, but it is made to them *as* coming to Christ. They did not know that they were weary and heavy-laden when they came; they thought they were not. They really were, but part of their weariness was that they could not be as weary as they would like to be, and part of their load was that they did not feel their load enough. They came to Christ just as they were, and he saved them, not because there was any merit in their weariness, or any efficacy in their being heavy-laden, but he saved them as sinners and nothing but sinners, and so they were washed in his blood and made clean. My dear hearer, do let me put this truth home to thee. If thou wilt come to Christ this morning, as nothing but a sinner, he will not cast thee out.

Old Tobias Crisp says in one of his sermons upon this very point, "I dare to say it, but if thou dost come to Christ, whosoever thou mayest be, if he does not receive thee, then he is not true to his word, for he says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" If thou comest, never mind qualification or preparation. He needeth no qualification of duties or of feelings either. Thou art to come just as thou art, and if thou art the biggest sinner out of hell, thou art as fit to come to Christ as if thou wert the most moral and most excellent of men. There is a bath: who is fit to be washed? A man's blackness is no reason why he should not be washed, but the clearer reason why he should be. When our City magistrates were giving relief to the poor, nobody said, "I am so poor, therefore I am not fit to have relief." Your poverty is your preparation, the black is the white here. Strange contradiction! The only thing you can bring to Christ is your sin and your wickedness. All he asks is, that you will come empty. If you have anything of your own, you must leave all before you come. If there be anything good in you, you cannot trust Christ, you must come with nothing

in your hand. Take him as all in all, and that is the only ground upon which a poor soul can be saved—as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner.

IV. But not to stay longer, my fourth point has to do with THE WARRANT OF FAITH, or why a man dares to trust in Christ.

Is it not imprudent for any man to trust Christ to save him, and especially when he has no good thing whatever? Is it not an arrogant presumption for any man to trust Christ? No, sirs, it is not. It is a grand and noble work of God the Holy Spirit for a man to give the lie to all his sins, and still to believe and set to his seal that God is true, and believe in the virtue of the blood of Jesus. But why does any man dare to believe in Christ I will ask you now. “Well,” saith one man, “I summoned faith to believe in Christ because I did feel there was a work of the Spirit in me.” You do not believe in Christ at all. “Well,” says another, “I thought that I had a right to believe in Christ, because I felt somewhat.” You had not any right to believe in Christ at all on such a warranty as that. What is a man’s warrant then for believing in Christ. Here it is. Christ tells him to do it, that is his warrant. Christ’s word is the warrant of the sinner for believing in Christ—not what he feels nor what he is, nor what he is not, but that Christ has told him to do it. The Gospel runs thus: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.” Faith in Christ then is a commanded duty as well as a blessed privilege, and what a mercy it is that it is a duty; because there never can be any question but that a man has a right to do his duty. Now on the ground that God commands me to believe, I have a right to believe, be I who I may. The gospel is sent to every creature. Well, I belong to that tribe; I am one of the every creatures, and that gospel commands me to believe and I do it. I cannot have done wrong in doing it for I was commanded to do so. I cannot be wrong in obeying a command of God. Now it is a command of God given to every creature that he should believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. This is your warrant, sinner, and a blessed warrant it is, for it is one which hell cannot gainsay, and which heaven cannot withdraw. You need not be looking within to look for the misty warrants of your experience, you need not be looking to your works, and to your feelings, to get some dull and insufficient warrants for your confidence in Christ. You may believe Christ because he tells you to do so. That is a sure ground to stand on, and one which admits of no doubt. I will suppose that we are all starving; that the city has been besieged and shut up, and there has been a long, long famine, and we are ready to die of hunger. There comes out an invitation to us to repair at once to the palace of some great one there to eat and drink; but we have grown foolish, and will not accept the invitation. Suppose now that some hideous madness has got hold of us, and we prefer to die, and had rather starve than come. Suppose the king’s herald should say, “Come and feast, poor hungry souls, and because I know you are unwilling to come, I add this threat, if you come not my warriors shall be upon you; they shall make you feel the sharpness of their swords.” I think my dear friends, we should say, “We bless the great man for that threatening because now we need not say, ‘I may not come,’ while the fact is we may not stop away. Now I need not say I am not fit to come for I am commanded to come, and I am threatened if I do not come; and I will even go.” That awful sentence—“He that believeth not shall be damned,” was added not out of anger, but because the Lord knew our silly madness, and that we should refuse our own mercies unless he thundered at us to make us come to the feast, “Compel them to come in”; this was the Word of the Master of old, and that text is part of the carrying out of that exhortation, “Compel them to come in.” Sinner, you cannot be lost by trusting Christ, but you will be lost if you do not trust him, ay, and lost for not trusting him. I put it boldly now—sinner, not only may you come, but oh! I pray you, do not defy the wrath of

God by refusing to come. The gate of mercy stands wide open; why will you not come? Why will you not? Why so proud? Why will you still refuse his voice and perish in your sins? Mark, if you perish, any one of you, your blood lies not at God's door, nor Christ's door, but at your own. He can say of you, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Oh! poor trembler, if thou be willing to come, there is nothing in God's Word to keep thee from coming, but there are both threatenings to drive thee, and powers to draw thee. Still I hear you say, "I must not trust Christ." You *may*, I say, for every creature under heaven is commanded to do it, and what you are commanded to do, you may do. "Ah! well," saith one, "still I do not feel that I may." There you are again; you say you will not do what God tells you, because of some stupid feelings of your own. You are not told to trust Christ because you feel anything, but simply because you are a sinner. Now you know you are a sinner. "I am," says one, "and that is my sorrow." Why your sorrow? That is some sign that you do feel. "Ay," saith one, "but I do not feel enough, and that is why I sorrow. I do not feel as I should." Well, suppose you do feel, or suppose you do not, you are a sinner, and "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Oh, but I am such an old sinner; I have been sixty years in sin." Where is it written that after sixty you cannot be saved? Sir, Christ could save you at a hundred—ay, if you were a Methuselah in guilt. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Whosoever will let him come." "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." "Yes," says one, "but I have been a drunkard, a swearer, or lascivious, or profane." Then you are a sinner, you have not gone further than the uttermost, and he is able to save you still. "Ay," saith another, "but you do not know how my guilt has been aggravated." That only proves you to be a sinner, and that you are commanded to trust Christ and be saved. "Ay," cries yet another, "but you do not know how often I have rejected Christ." Yes, but that only makes you the more a sinner. "You do not know how hard my heart is." Just so, but that only proves you to be a sinner, and still proves you to be one whom Christ came to save. "Oh, but, sir, I have not any good thing. If I had, you know, I should have something to encourage me." The fact of your not having any good thing just proves to me that you are the man I am sent to preach to. Christ came to save that which was lost, and all you have said only proves that you are lost, and therefore he came to save you. Do trust him; do trust him. "But if I am saved," saith one, "I shall be the biggest sinner that ever was saved." Then the greater music in heaven when you get there; the more glory to Christ, for the bigger the sinner the more honour to Christ when at last he shall be brought home. "Ay, but my sin has abounded." His grace shall much more abound. "But my sin has reached even to heaven." Yes, but his mercy reaches above the heavens. "Oh! but my guilt is as broad as the world." Yes, but his righteousness is broader than a thousand worlds. "Ay, but my sin is scarlet." Yes, but his blood is more scarlet than your sins, and can wash the scarlet out by a richer scarlet. "Ay! but I deserve to be lost, and death and hell cry for my damnation." Yes, and so they may, but the blood of Jesus Christ can cry louder than either death or hell; and it cries to-day, "Father, let the sinner live." Oh! I wish I could get this thought out of my own mouth, and get it into your heads, that when God saves you, it is not because of anything in you, it is because of something in himself. God's love has no reason except in his own bowels; God's reason for pardoning a sinner is found in his own heart, and not in the sinner. And there is as much reason in you why you should be saved as why another should be saved, namely, no reason at all. There is no reason in you why he should have mercy on you, but there is no reason wanted, for the reason lies in God and in God alone.



V. And now I come to the conclusion, and I trust you will have patience with me, for my last point is a very glorious one, and full of joy to those souls who as sinners dare to believe in Christ—THE RESULT OF FAITH, or how it speeds when it comes to Christ.

The text says, "He that believeth is not condemned." There is a man there who has just this moment believed; he is not condemned. But he has been fifty years in sin, and has plunged into all manner of vice; his sins, which are many, are all forgiven him. He stands in the sight of God now as innocent as though he had never sinned. Such is the power of Jesus' blood, that "he that believeth is not condemned." Does this relate to what is to happen at the day of Judgment? I pray you look at the text, and you will find it does not say, "He that believeth *shall* not be condemned," but he *is* not; he is not now. And if he is not now, then it follows that he never shall be; for having believed in Christ that promise still stands, "He that believeth is not condemned." I believe to-day I am not condemned; in fifty years' time that promise will be just the same—"He that believeth is not condemned." So that the moment a man puts his trust in Christ, he is freed from all condemnation—past, present, and to come; and from that day he stands in God's sight as though he were without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. "But he sins," you say. He does indeed, but his sins are not laid to his charge. They were laid to the charge of Christ of old, and God can never charge the offence on two—first on Christ, and then on the sinner. "Ay, but he often falls into sin." That may be possible; though if the Spirit of God be in him he sinneth not as he was wont to do. He sins by reason of infirmity, not by reason of his love to sin, for now he hateth it. But mark, you shall put it in your own way if you will, and I will answer, "Yes, but though he sin, yet is he no more guilty in the sight of God, for all his guilt has been taken from him, and put on Christ,—positively, literally, and actually lifted off from him, and put upon Jesus Christ." Do you see the Jewish host? There is a scapegoat brought out; the high priest confesses the sin of the people over the scapegoat's head. The sin is all gone from the people, and laid upon the scapegoat. Away goes the scapegoat into the wilderness. Is there any sin left on the people? If there be, then the scapegoat has not carried it away. Because it cannot be *here* and *there* too. It cannot be carried away and left behind too. "No," say you, "Scripture says the scapegoat carried away the sin; there was none left on the people when the scapegoat had taken away the sin. And so, when by faith we put our hand upon the head of Christ, does Christ take away our sin, or does he not? If he does not, then it is of no use our believing in him; but if he doth really take away our sin, then our sin cannot be on him and on us too; if it be on Christ, we are free, clear, accepted, justified, and this is the true doctrine of justification by faith. As soon as a man believeth in Christ Jesus, his sins are gone from him, and gone away for ever. They are blotted out now. What if a man owe a hundred pounds, yet if he has got a receipt for it, he is free; it is blotted out; there is an erasure made in the book, and the debt is gone. Though the man commit sin, yet the debt having been paid before even the debt was acquired, he is no more a debtor to the law of God. Doth not Scripture say, that God has cast his people's sins into the depths of the sea? Now, if they are in the depths of the sea, they cannot be on his people too. Blessed be his name, in the day when he casts our sins into the depth of the sea, he views us as pure in his sight, and we stand accepted in the beloved. Then he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." They cannot be removed and be here still. Then if thou believest in Christ, thou art no more in the sight of God a sinner; thou art accepted as though thou wert perfect, as though thou hadst kept the law,—for Christ has kept it, and his righteousness is thine. You have broken it, but your sin is his, and he has been punished for it. Mistake not yourselves any longer; you are no more what you were; when you

believe, you stand in Christ's stead, even as Christ of old stood in your stead. The transformation is complete, the exchange is positive and eternal. They who believe in Jesus are as much accepted of God the Father as even his Eternal Son is accepted; and they that believe not, let them do what they will, they shall but go about to work out their own righteousness; but they abide under the law, and still shall they be under the curse. Now, ye that believe in Jesus, walk up and down the earth in the glory of this great truth. You are sinners in yourselves, but you are washed in the blood of Christ. David says, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." You have lately seen the snow come down—how clear! how white! What could be whiter? Why, the Christian is whiter than that. You say, "He is black." I know he is as black as anyone—as black as hell—but the blooddrop falls on him, and he is as white—"whiter than snow." The next time you see the snow-white crystals falling from heaven, look on them and say, "Ah! though I must confess within myself that I am unworthy and unclean, yet, believing in Christ, he hath given me his righteousness so completely, that I am even whiter than the snow as it descends from the treasury of God." Oh! for faith to lay hold on this. Oh! for an overpowering faith that shall get the victory over doubts and fears, and make us enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Go home, ye that believe in Christ, and go to your beds this night, and say, "If I die in my bed I cannot be condemned." Should you wake the next morning, go into the world and say, "I am not condemned." When the devil howls at you, tell him, "Ah! you may accuse, but I am not condemned." And if sometimes your sins rise—say, "Ah, I know you, but you are all gone for ever; I am not condemned." And when your turn shall come to die shut your eyes in peace.

"Bold shall you stand in that great day,  
For who aught to your charge can lay?"

Fully absolved by grace you shall be found at last and all sin's tremendous curse and blame shall be taken away, not because of anything you have done. I pray you do all you can for Christ out of gratitude, but even when you have done all, do not rest there. Rest still in the substitution and the sacrifice. Be you what Christ was in his Father's sight, and when conscience awakens, you can tell it that Christ was for you all that you ought to have been, that he has suffered all your penalty; and now neither mercy nor justice can smite you, since justice has clasped hands with mercy in a firm decree to save that man whose faith is in the cross of Christ. The Lord bless these words for his sake. Amen.

## None But Jesus—Second Part

A Sermon

(No. 362)

Delivered on Sunday Evening, February 17th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street, Southwark.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned” —John 3:18

IN the morning sermon, our time was mainly taken up with the description of Faith—what it is. We had only a few minutes left at its close to describe what it leads to—the privilege of justification, which is a gift to the soul as the result of Faith. Let this high privilege, then, occupy our attention to-night. The text says, “He that believeth on him—[that is on Christ Jesus]—is not condemned.”

To take up the subject in order, we shall notice first, *the satisfactory declaration here made*; then, secondly, we shall endeavour to *correct certain misapprehensions respecting it, by reason of which the Christian is often cast down*; and we shall close with *some reflections, positive and negative, as to what this text includes, and what it excludes*.

I. First of all, then, WHAT A SATISFACTORY DECLARATION!—“He that believeth on him is not condemned.”

You are aware that in our courts of law, a verdict of “*not guilty*,” amounts to an acquittal, and the prisoner is immediately discharged. So is it in the language of the gospel; a sentence of “*not condemned*,” implies the justification of the sinner. It means that the believer in Christ receives *now a present* justification. Faith does not produce its fruits by-and-by, but *now*. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified to-night?—so are we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing his praises above. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus, who was just then, hanging by his side: and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are *to-day* accepted in the Beloved, *to-day* absolved from sin, *to-day* innocent in the sight of God. Oh, ravishing, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of this vine which we shall not be able to gather till we go to heaven; but this is one of the first ripe clusters and may be plucked and eaten here. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, and part too of our daily raiment, with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are *now*—even *now* pardoned; even *now* are our sins put away; even *now* we stand in the sight of God as though we had never been guilty; innocent as father Adam when he stood in integrity, ere he had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree; pure as though we had never received the taint of depravity in our veins. “There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” There is not a sin in the Book of God, even *now*, against one of his people. There is nothing laid to their charge. There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth.

But to pass on, the text evidently means not simply present, but *continual* justification. In the moment when you and I believed, it was said of us, "He is not condemned." Many days have passed since then, many changes we have seen; but it is as true of us to-night, "He is not condemned." The Lord alone knows how long our appointed day shall be—how long ere we shall fulfill the hireling's time, and like a shadow flee away. But this we know, since every word of God is assured, and the gifts of God are without repentance, though we should live another fifty years, yet would it still be written here, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Nay, if by some mysterious dealing in providence our lives should be lengthened out to ten times the usual limit of man, and we should come to the eight or nine hundred years of Methuselah, still would it stand the same—"He that believeth on him is not condemned." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The just shall live by faith." "He that believeth on him shall never be confounded." All these promises go to show that the justification which Christ gives to our faith is a continual one, which will last as long as we shall live. And, remember, it will last in eternity as well as in time. We shall not in heaven wear any other dress but that which we wear here. To-day the righteous stand clothed in the righteousness of Christ. They shall wear this same wedding dress at the great wedding feast. But what if it should wear out? What if that righteousness should lose its virtue in the eternity to come? Oh beloved! we entertain no fear about that. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this righteousness shall never wax old. No moth shall fret it; no thief shall steal it; no weeping hand of lamentation shall rend it in twain. It is, it must be eternal, even as Christ himself, Jehovah our righteousness. Because he is our righteousness, the self-existent, the everlasting, the immutable Jehovah, of whose years there is no end, and whose strength faileth not, therefore of our righteousness there is no end; and of its perfection, and of its beauty there shall never be any termination. The text, I think, very clearly teaches us, that he who believeth on Christ has received for ever a continual justification.

Again, think for a moment; the justification which is spoken of here is *complete*. "He that believeth on him is not condemned,"—that is to say, not in any measure or in any degree. I know some think it is possible for us to be in such a state as to be half-condemned and half-accepted. So far as we are sinners so far condemned; and so far as we are righteous so far accepted. Oh beloved, there is nothing like that in Scripture. It is altogether apart from the doctrine of the gospel. If it be of works, it is no more of grace; and if it be of grace, it is no more of works. Works and grace cannot mix and mingle any more than fire and water; it is either one or the other, it cannot be both; the two can never be allied. There can be no admixture of the two, no dilution of one with the other. He that believeth is free from all iniquity, from all guilt, from all blame; and though the devil bring an accusation, yet it is a false one, for we are free even from accusation, since it is boldly challenged, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" It does not say, "Who shall prove it?" but "Who shall lay it to their charge?" They are so completely freed from condemnation, that not the shadow of a spot upon their soul is found; not even the slightest passing by of iniquity to cast its black shadow on them. They stand before God not only as half-innocent, but as perfectly so; not only as half-washed, but as whiter than snow. Their sins are not simply erased, they are blotted out; not simply put out of sight, but cast into the depths of the sea; not merely gone, and gone as far as the east is from the west, but gone for ever, once for all. You know, beloved, that the Jew in his ceremonial purification, never had his conscience free from sin. After one sacrifice he needed still another, for these offerings could never make the comers thereunto perfect. The next day's sins needed a new lamb, and the next year's iniquity needed a new victim for an atonement. "But this

man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God." No more burnt-offerings are needed, no more washing, no more blood, no more atonement, no more sacrifice. "It is finished!" hear the dying Saviour cry. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread; it is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition; it can never suffer any diminution. Oh, Christian, do lay hold of this precious thought; I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. It is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were loaded with irons, and to make him sing though his mouth were gagged, to think that we are perfectly accepted in Christ, that our justification is not partial, it does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered; from condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free.

Once more. The non-condemnation is *effectual*. The royal privilege of justification shall never miscarry. It shall be brought home to every believer. In the reign of King George the Third, the son of a member of this church lay under sentence of death for forgery. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, after incredible exertions, obtained a promise that his sentence should be remitted. By a singular occurrence the present senior deacon—then a young man—learned from the governor of the gaol that the reprieve had not been received; and the unhappy prisoner would have been executed the next morning, had not Dr. Rippon gone post-haste to Windsor, obtained an interview with the king in his bed-chamber, and received from the monarch's own hand a copy of that reprieve which had been negligently put aside by a thoughtless officer. "I charge you, Doctor," said his majesty, "to make good speed." "Trust me, Sire, for that," responded your old pastor, and he returned to London in time, just in time, and only just in time, for the prisoner was being marched with many others on to the scaffold. Ay, that pardon might have been given, and yet the man might have been executed if it had not been effectually carried out. But blessed be God our non-condemnation is an effectual thing. It is not a matter of letter, it is a matter of fact. Ah, poor souls, you know that condemnation is a matter of fact. When you and I suffered in our souls, and were brought under the heavy hand of the law, we felt that its curses were no mock thunders like the wrath of the Vatican, but they were real; we felt that the anger of God was indeed a thing to tremble at; a real substantial fact. Now, just as real as the condemnation which Justice brings, just so real is the justification which mercy bestows. You are not only nominally guiltless, but you are really so, if you believe in Christ; you are not only nominally put into the place of the innocent, but you are really put there the moment you believe in Jesus. Not only is it said that your sins are gone, but they are gone. Not only does God look on you as though you were accepted; you are accepted. It is a matter of fact to you, as much a matter of fact as that you sinned. You do not doubt that you have sinned, you cannot doubt that; do not doubt then that when you believe your sins are put away. For as certain as ever the black spot fell on you when you sinned, so certainly and so surely was it all washed out when you were bathed in that fountain filled with blood, which was drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

Come, my soul, think thou of this. Thou art actually and effectually cleared from guilt. Thou art led out of thy prison. Thou art no more in fetters as a bond-slave. Thou art delivered now from the bondage of the Law. Thou art freed from sin and thou canst walk at large as a freeman. Thy Saviour's blood has procured thy full discharge. Come, my soul,—thou hast a right now to come to thy Father's feet. No flames of vengeance are there to scare thee now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent. Come, my soul, thy disabilities are taken away. Thou wast unable once to see thy Father's face; thou canst see it now. Thou couldst not speak with him, nor he with thee; but now thou hast access with boldness to this grace wherein we stand. Once there was a fear of

hell upon thee; there is no hell for thee now. How can there be punishment for the guiltless? He that believeth is guiltless, is not condemned, and cannot be punished. No frowns of an avenging God now. If God be viewed as a judge, how should he frown upon the guiltless? How should the Judge frown upon the absolved one? More than all the privileges thou mightest have enjoyed if thou hadst never sinned, are thine now that thou art justified. All the blessings which thou couldst have had if thou hadst kept the law and more, are thine to-night because Christ has kept it for thee. All the love and the acceptance which a perfectly obedient being could have obtained of God, belong to thee, because Christ was perfectly obedient on thy behalf, and hath imputed all his merits to thy account that thou mightest be exceeding rich, through him who for thy sake became exceeding poor.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would but enlarge our hearts, that we might suck sweetness out of these thoughts! There is no condemnation. Moreover, there never shall be any condemnation. The forgiveness is not partial, but perfect; it is so effectual that it delivers us from all the penalties of the Law, gives to us all the privileges of obedience, and puts us actually high above where we should have been had we never sinned. It fixes our standing more secure than it was before we fell. We are not now where Adam was, for Adam might fall and perish. We are rather, where Adam would have been if we could suppose God had put him into the garden for seven years, and said, "If you are obedient for seven years, your time of probation shall be over, and I will reward you." The children of God in one sense may be said to be in a state of probation; in another sense there is no probation. There is no probation as to whether the child of God should be saved. He is saved already; his sins are washed away; his righteousness is complete: and if that righteousness could endure a million years' probation, it would never be defiled. In fact, it always stands the same in the sight of God, and must do so for ever and ever.

II. Let me now endeavour to CORRECT SOME MISAPPREHENSIONS, BY REASON OF WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE OFTEN CAST DOWN.

What simpletons we are! Whatever our natural age, how childish we are in spiritual things! What great simpletons we are when we first believe in Christ! We think that our being pardoned involves a great many things which we afterwards find have nothing whatever to do with our pardon. For instance, we think we shall never sin again; we fancy that the battle is all fought; that we have got into a fair field, with no more war to wage; that in fact we have got the victory, and have only just to stand up and wave the palm branch; that all is over, that God has only got to call us up to himself and we shall enter into heaven without having to fight any enemies upon earth. Now, all these are obvious mistakes. Though the text has a great meaning, it does not mean anything of this kind. Observe that although it does assert "He that believeth is not condemned"; yet it does not say that he that believeth shall not have his faith exercised. Your faith will be exercised. An untried faith will be no faith at all. God never gave men faith without intending to try it. Faith is received for the very purpose of endurance. Just as our Rifle Corps friends put up the target with the intention of shooting at it; so does God give faith with the intention of letting trials and troubles, and sin and Satan aim all their darts at it. When thou hast faith in Christ it is a great privilege; but recollect that it involves a great trial. You asked for great faith the other night; did you consider that you asked for great troubles too? You cannot have great faith to lay up and rust. Mr. Greatheart in John Bunyan's Pilgrim was a very strong man, but then what strong work he had to do. He had to go with all those women and children many scores of times up to the celestial city and back again; he had to fight all the giants, and drive back all the lions; to slay the giant Slaygood, and knock down

the Castle of Despair. If you have a great measure of faith, you will have need to use it all. You will never have a single scrap to spare, you will be like the virgins in our Lord's parable, even though you be a wise virgin, you will have to say to others who might borrow of you, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and for you." But when your faith is exercised with trials, do not think you are brought into judgment for your sins. Oh no, believer, there is plenty of exercise, but that is not condemnation; there are many trials, but still we are justified; we may often be buffeted, but we are never accursed; we may oftentimes be cast down, but the sword of the Lord never can and never will smite us to the heart. Yea, more; not only may our faith be exercised, but our faith may come to a very low ebb, and still we may not be condemned. When thy faith gets so small that thou canst not see it, even then still thou art not condemned. If thou hast ever believed in Jesus, thy faith may be like the sea when it goes out a very long way from the shore, and leaves a vast track of mud, and some might say the sea was gone or dried up. But you are not condemned when your faith is most dried up. Ay! and I dare to say it,—when your faith is at the flood-tide, you are not more accepted then, than when your faith is at the lowest ebb; for your acceptance does not depend upon the quantity of your faith, it only depends upon its reality. If you are really resting in Christ, though your faith may be but as a spark, and a thousand devils may try to quench that one spark, yet you are not condemned—you shall stand accepted in Christ. Though your comforts will necessarily decay as your faith declines, yet your acceptance does not decay. Though faith does rise and fall like the thermometer, though faith is like the mercury in the bulb, all weathers change it,—yet God's love is not affected by the weather of earth, or the changes of time. Until the perfect righteousness of Christ can be a mutable thing—a football to be kicked about by the feet of fiends—your acceptance with God can never change. You are, you must be, perfectly accepted in the Beloved.

There is another thing which often tries the child of God. He at times loses the light of his Father's countenance. Now, remember, the text does not say, "He that believeth shall not lose the light of God's countenance"; he may do so, but he shall not be condemned for all that. You may walk, not only for days but for months in such a state that you have little fellowship with Christ, very little communion with God of a joyous sort. The promises may seem broken to you, the Bible may afford you but little comfort; and when you turn your eye to heaven you may only have to feel the more the smarting that is caused by your Father's rod; you may have vexed and grieved his Spirit, and he may have turned away his face from you. But you are not condemned for all that. Mark the testimony, "He that believeth is not condemned." Even when your Father smites you and leaves a wale at every stroke, and brings the blood at every blow, there is not a particle of condemnation in any one stroke. Not in his anger, but in his dear covenant love he smites you. There is as unmixed and unalloyed affection in every love-stroke of chastisement from your Father's hand as there is in the kisses of Jesus Christ's lips. Oh! believe this; it will tend to lift up thy heart, it will cheer thee when neither sun nor moon appear. It will honour thy God, it will show thee where thy acceptance really lies. When his face is turned away, believe him still, and say, "He abideth faithful though he hide his face from me." I will go a little further still. The child of God may be so assaulted by Satan, that he may be well nigh given up to despair, and yet he is not condemned. The devils may beat the great hell-drum in his ear, till he thinks himself to be on the very brink of perdition. He may read the Bible, and think that every threatening is against him, and that every promise shuts its mouth and will not cheer him; and he may at last despond, and despond, and despond, till he is ready to break the harp that has so long been hanging on the willow. He may

say, "The Lord hath forsaken me quite, my God will be gracious no more"; but it is not true. Yea, he may be ready to swear a thousand times that God's mercy is clean gone for ever, and that his faithfulness will fail for evermore; but it is not true, it is not true. A thousand liars swearing to a falsehood could not make it true, and our doubts and fears are all of them liars. And if there were ten thousand of them, and they all professed the same, it is a falsehood that God ever did forsake his people, or that he ever cast from him an innocent man; and you are innocent, remember, when you believe in Jesus. "But," say you, "I am full of sin." "Ay," say I, "but that sin has been laid on Christ." "Oh," say you, "but I sin daily." "Ay," say I, "but that sin was laid on him before you committed it, years ago. It is not yours; Christ has taken it away once for all. You are a righteous man by faith, and God will not forsake the righteous, nor will he cast away the innocent." I say, then, the child of God may have his faith at a low ebb; he may lose the light of his Father's countenance, and he may even get into thorough despair; but yet all these cannot disprove my text—"He that believeth is not condemned."

"But what," say you, "if the child of God should sin?" It is a deep and tender subject, yet must we touch it and be bold here. I would not mince God's truth lest any should make a bad use of it. I know there are some, not the people of God, who will say, "Let us sin, that grace may abound." Their condemnation is just. I cannot help the perversion of truth. There be always men who will take the best of food as though it were poison, and make the best of truth into a lie, and so be damning their own souls. You ask, "What if a child of God should fall into sin?" I answer, the child of God does fall into sin; every day he mourns and groans because when he would do good, evil is present with him. But though he falls into sins, he is not condemned for all that—not by one of them, or by all of them put together, because his acceptance does not depend upon himself, but upon the perfect righteousness of Christ; and that perfect righteousness is not invalidated by any sins of his. He is perfect in Christ; and until Christ is imperfect, the imperfections of the creature do not mar the justification of the believer in the sight of God. But oh! if he fall into some glaring sin,—O God, keep us from it!—if he fall into some glaring sin, he shall go with broken bones, but he shall reach heaven for all that. Though, in order to try him and let him see his vileness, he be suffered to go far astray, yet he that bought him will not lose him; he that chose him will not cast him away; he will say unto him, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." David may go never so far away, but David is not lost. He comes back and he cries, "Have mercy upon me, O God!" And so shall it be with every believing soul—Christ shall bring him back. Though he slip, he shall be kept, and all the chosen seed shall meet around the throne. If it were not for this last truth—though some may stick at it—what would become of some of God's people? They would be given up to despair. If I have been speaking to a backslider, I pray he will not make a bad use of what I have said. Let me say to him, "Poor backslider! thy Father's bowels yearn over thee; he has not erased thy name out of the registry. Come back, come back now to him and say, 'Receive me graciously, and love me freely'; and he will say, 'I will put you among the children.' He will pass by your backsliding and will heal your iniquities; and you shall yet stand once more in his favour, and know yourself to be still accepted in the Redeemer's righteousness and saved by his blood." This text does not mean that the child of God shall not be tried, or that he shall not even sometimes fall under the trial; but it does mean this, once for all: He that believeth on Christ is not condemned. At no time, by no means, is he under the sentence of condemnation, but is evermore justified in the sight of God.



III. Now dear brethren, but little time remains for the closing points, therefore, in a hurried manner, let me notice **WHAT THIS TEXT EVIDENTLY INCLUDES**; and may God grant that these few words may nevertheless do good to our souls!

“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” If we are not condemned, then at no time does God ever look upon his children, when they believe in Christ, as being guilty. Are you surprised that I should put it so? I put it so again; from the moment when you believe in Christ, God ceases to look upon you as being guilty; for he never looks upon you apart from Christ. You often look upon yourself as guilty, and you fall upon your knees as you should do, and you weep and lament; but even then, while you are weeping over inbred and actual sin, he is still saying out of heaven, “So far as your justification is concerned, thou art all fair and lovely.” You are black as the tents of Kedar—that is yourself by nature; you are fair as the curtains of Solomon—that is yourself in Christ. You are black—that is yourself in Adam; but comely, that is yourself in the second Adam. Oh, think of that!—that you are always in God’s sight comely, always in God’s sight lovely, always in God’s sight as though you were perfect. For ye are complete in Christ Jesus, and perfect in Christ Jesus, as the apostle puts it in another place. Always do you stand completely washed and fully clothed in Christ. Remember this; for it is certainly included in my text.

Another great thought included in my text is this; you are never liable as a believer to punishment for your sins. You will be chastised on account of them, as a father chastises his child; that is a part of the Gospel dispensation; but you will not be smitten for your sins as the lawgiver smites the criminal. Your Father may often punish you as he punisheth the wicked. But, never for the same reason. The ungodly stand on the ground of their own demerits; their sufferings are awarded as their due deserts. But your sorrows do not come to you as a matter of desert; they come to you as a matter of love. God knows that in one sense your sorrows are such a privilege that you may account of them as a boon you do not deserve. I have often thought of that when I have had a sore trouble. I know some people say, “You deserved the trouble.” Yes, my dear brethren, but there is not enough merit in all the Christians put together, to deserve such a good thing as the loving rebuke of our heavenly Father. Perhaps you cannot see that; you cannot think that a trouble can come to you as a real blessing in the covenant. But I know that the rod of the covenant is as much the gift of grace as the blood of the covenant. It is not a matter of desert or merit; it is given to us because we need it. But I question whether we were ever so good as to deserve it. We were never able to get up to so high a standard as to deserve so rich, so gracious a providence as this covenant blessing—the rod of our chastening God. Never at any time in your life has a law-stroke fallen upon you. Since you believed in Christ you are out of the law’s jurisdiction. The law of England cannot touch a Frenchman while he lives under the protection of his own Emperor. You are not under the law, but you are under grace. The law of Sinai cannot touch you, for you are out of its jurisdiction. You are not in Sinai or in Arabia. You are not the son of Hagar or the son of a handmaid, you are the son of Sarah, and are come to Jerusalem and are free. You are out of Arabia, and are come to God’s own happy land. You are not under Hagar, but under Sarah; under God’s covenant of grace. You are a child of promise, and you shall have God’s own inheritance. Believe this, that never shall a law-stroke fall on you; never shall God’s anger in a judicial sense drop on you. He may give you a chastising stroke, not as the result of sin, but rather as the result of his own rich grace, that would get the sin out of you, that you may be perfected in sanctification, even as you are now perfect and complete before him in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

IV. I was about to go into a list of things which this text includes, but the time fails me; therefore I must spend the last minute or two in saying WHAT THIS TEXT EXCLUDES.

What does it exclude! Well, I am sure it excludes boasting. "He that believeth is not condemned." Ah! if it said, "He that *worketh* is not condemned," then you and I might boast in any quantity. But when it says, "He *that believeth*,"—why, there is no room for us to say half a word for old self. No, Lord, if I am not condemned, it is thy free grace, for I have deserved to be condemned a thousand times since I have been in this pulpit to-night. When I am on my knees, and I am not condemned, I am sure it must be sovereign grace, for even when I am praying I deserve to be condemned. Even when we are repenting we are sinning, and adding to our sins while we are repenting of them. Every act we do, as the result of the flesh, is to sin again, and our best performances are so stained with sin, that it is hard to know whether they are good works or bad works. So far as they are our own, they are bad, and so far as they are the works of the Spirit they are good. But then the goodness is not ours, it is the Spirit's, and only the evil remains to us. Ah, then, we cannot boast! Begone, pride! begone! The Christian must be a humble man. If he lift up his head to say something, then he is nothing indeed. He does not know where he is, or where he stands, when he once begins to boast, as though his own right hand had gotten him the victory. Leave off boasting, Christian. Live humbly before thy God, and never let a word of self-congratulation escape thy lips. Sacrifice self, and let thy song be before the throne—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory forever."

What next does the text exclude? Methinks it ought to exclude—now I am about to smite myself—it ought to exclude doubts and fears. "He that believeth is not condemned." How dare you and I draw such long faces, and go about as we do sometimes as though we had a world of cares upon our backs? What would I have given ten or eleven years ago if I could have known this text was sure to me, that I was not condemned. Why, I thought if I could feel I was once forgiven, and had to live on bread and water, and be locked up in a dungeon, and every day be flogged with a cat-o'-nine tails, I would gladly have accepted it, if I could have once felt my sins forgiven. Now you are a forgiven man, and yet you are cast down! Oh! shame on you. No condemnation! and yet miserable? Fie, Christian! Get thee up and wipe the tears from your eyes. Oh! if there be a person lying in gaol now, to be executed next week, if you could go to him and say, "You are pardoned," would he not spring up with delight from his seat; and although he might have lost his goods, and though it would be possible for him, after pardon, to have to suffer many things, yet, so long as life was spared, what would all this be to him? He would feel that it was less than nothing. Now, Christian, you are pardoned, your sins are all forgiven. Christ has said to you, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee"—and art thou yet miserable? Well, if we must be so sometimes, let us make it as short as we can. If we must be sometimes cast down, let us ask the Lord to lift us up again. I am afraid some of us get into bad habits, and come to make it a matter of practice to be downcast. Mind, Christian, mind, it will grow upon you—that peevish spirit—if you do not come to God to turn these doubts and fears out of you, they will soon swarm upon you like flies in Egypt. When you are able to kill the first great doubt, you will perhaps kill a hundred; for one great doubt will breed a thousand, and to kill the mother is to kill the whole brood. Therefore, look with all thy eyes against the first doubt, lest thou shouldst become confirmed in thy despondency, and grow into sad despair. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If this excludes boasting, it ought to exclude doubts too.

Once more. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." This excludes sinning any more. My Lord, have I sinned against thee so many times, and yet hast thou freely forgiven me all? What

stronger motive could I have for keeping me from sinning again? Ah, there are some who are saying this is licentious doctrine. A thousand devils rolled into one, must the man be who can find any licentiousness here. What! go and sin because I am forgiven? Go and live in iniquity because Jesus Christ took my guilt and suffered in my room and stead? Human nature is bad enough, but methinks this is the very worst state of human nature, when it tries to draw an argument for sin from the free grace of God. It is far harder to sin against the blood of Christ, and against a sense of pardon, than it is against the terrors of the law and the fear of hell itself. I know that when my soul is most alarmed by a dread of the wrath of God, I can sin with comfort compared with what I could when I have a sense of his love shed abroad in my heart. What more monstrous! to read your title clear, and sin? Oh, vile reprobate! you are on the borders of the deepest hell. But I am sure if you are a child of God, you will say when you have read your title clear, and feel yourself justified in Christ Jesus,

“Now, for the love I bear his name,  
 What was my gain, I count my loss;  
 My former pride I call my shame,  
 And nail my glory to his cross.”

Yes, and I must, and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus' sake. O may my soul be found in him, perfect in his righteousness! This will make you live near to him: this will make you like unto him. Do not think that this doctrine by dwelling on it will make you think lightly of sin. It will make you think of it as a hard and stern executioner to put Christ to death; as an awful load that could never be lifted from you except by the eternal arm of God; and then you will come to hate it with all your soul, because it is rebellion against a loving and gracious God, and you shall by this means, far better than by any Arminian doubts or any legal quibbles, be led to walk in the footsteps of your Lord Jesus, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I think this whole sermon, though I have been preaching to the children of God, is meant for sinners too. Sinner, I would that thou didst say so. If you know this, that *he that believeth is not condemned*, then, sinner if thou believest, thou wilt not be condemned; and may all I have said to-night help you to this belief in thy soul. Oh, but sayest thou, “May I trust Christ?” As I said this morning, it is not a question of whether you may or may not, you are commanded. The Scripture commands the gospel to be preached to every creature, and the gospel is—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” I know you will be too proud to do it, unless God by his grace should humble you. But if ye feel to-night that you are nothing and have nothing of your own, I think you will be right glad to take Christ to be your all-in-all. If you can say with poor Jack the Huckster,—

“I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,”  
 You may go on and say with him, this night,  
 “But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”  
 God grant that it may be so, for his name's sake. Amen.

## The First Sermon in the Tabernacle

A Sermon

(No. 369)

Delivered on Monday Afternoon, March 25th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”—Acts 5:42.

I DO not know whether there are any persons here present who can contrive to put themselves into my present position, and to feel my present feelings. If they can effect that, they will give me credit for meaning what I say, when I declare that I feel totally unable to preach. And, indeed, I think I shall scarcely attempt a sermon, but rather give a sort of declaration of the truths from which future sermons shall be made. I will give you bullion rather than coin; the block from the quarry, and not the statue from the chisel. It appears that the one subject upon which men preached in the apostolic age was *Jesus Christ*. The tendency of man, if left alone, is continually to go further and further from God, and the Church of God itself is no exception to the general rule. For the first few years, during and after the apostolic era, Christ Jesus was preached, but gradually the Church departed from the central point, and began rather to preach ceremonials and church offices than the person of their Lord. So has it been in these modern times: we also have fallen into the same error, at least to a degree, and have gone from preaching Christ to preaching doctrines about Christ, inferences which may be drawn from his life, or definitions which may be gathered from his discourses. We are not content to stand like angels *in* the sun; our fancies disturb our rest and must needs fly on the sunbeams, further and further from the glorious source of light. In the days of Paul it was not difficult at once, in one word, to give the sum and substance of the current theology. It was Christ Jesus. Had you asked anyone of those disciples what he believed, he would have replied, “I believe Christ.” If you had requested him to show you his Body of Divinity, he would have pointed upward, reminding you that divinity never had but one body, the suffering and crucified human frame of Jesus Christ, who ascended up on high. To them, Christ was not a notion refined, but unsubstantial; not an historical personage who had left only the savour of his character behind, but whose person was dead; to them he was not a set of ideas, not a creed, nor an incarnation of an abstract theory; but he was a person, one whom some of them had seen, whose hands they had handled, nay, one of whose flesh they had all been made to eat, and of whose blood they had spiritually been made to drink. Christ was substance to them, I fear he is too often but shadow to us. He was a reality to their minds; to us—though, perhaps, we would scarcely allow it in so many words—rather a myth than a man; rather a person who was, than he who was, and is, and is to come—the Almighty.

I would propose (and O may the Lord grant us grace to carry out that proposition, from which no Christian can dissent), I would propose that the subject of the ministry of this house, as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshippers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, although I claim to be rather a Calvinist according to Calvin, than after the modern debased fashion. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. You have there (pointing to the baptistery) substantial evidence that I am not

ashamed of that ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ; but if I am asked to say what is my creed, I think I must reply: "It is Jesus Christ." My venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, has left a body of divinity admirable and excellent in its way; but the body of divinity to which I would pin and bind myself for ever, God helping me, is not his system of divinity or any other human treatise, but Christ Jesus, who is the sum and substance of the gospel; who is in himself all theology, the incarnation of every precious truth, the all-glorious personal embodiment of the way, the truth, and the life.

This afternoon I will try to describe *the subject, Christ Jesus*; then, secondly, to speak for a little while upon its *comprehensiveness*; then to enlarge upon sundry of *its excellencies*; and conclude by testing *its power*.

I. First, then, the SUBJECT.

They continued both to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*. To preach Jesus Christ aright we must preach him in his *infinite and indisputable Godhead*. We may be attacked by philosophers, who will either make him no God at all, or one constituted temporarily and, I must add, absurdly a God for a season. We shall have at once upon us those who view Christ as a prophet, as a great man, as an admirable exemplar; we shall be assailed on all sides by those who choose rather to draw their divinity from their own addled brains than from the simplicity of Holy Writ; but what mattereth this? We must reiterate again and again the absolute and proper deity of Christ; for without this we are in the position of those described by the prophet:—"Their tacklings are loosed, they could not well strengthen their mast" and soon will our enemies prevail against us, and the prey of a great spoil shall be taken. Take away the divinity of Christ from the gospel, and you have nothing whatever left upon which the anxious soul can rest. Remove the Word who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, and the Jachin and Boaz of the temple are overturned. Without a divine Saviour, your gospel is a rope of sand; a bubble; a something less substantial than a dream. If Christ were not God, he was the basest of impostors. He was either one of two things, very God of very God, or else an arch-deceiver of the souls of men, for he made many of them believe he was God, and brought upon himself the consequences of what they called blasphemy; so that if he were not God, he was the greatest deceiver that ever lived. But God he is; and here, in this house, we must and will adore him. With the multitude of his redeemed we *will* sing:

"Jesus is worthy to receive,  
Honour and power *divine*,  
And blessings more, than we can give  
Be *Lord* for ever thine."

To preach Christ, however, we must also preach *his true humanity*. We must never make him to be less manlike because he was perfectly divine. I love that hymn of Hart which begins—

"A man there was—a real man,  
Who once on Calvary died."

"*Real man!*" I think we do not often realize that manhood of Christ; we do not see that he was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; feeling, thinking, acting, suffering, doing, just like ourselves—one of our fellows, and only above us because he is "exalted with the oil of gladness above his fellows." We must have a human Christ, and we must have one of real flesh and blood too; not of shadows or filmy fancies. We must have one to whom we can talk, one with whom we can walk, one

"Who in his measure feels afresh  
What every member bears;"

who is so intimately connected with us in ties of blood, that he is as with us one, the head of the family, first-born among many brethren. I am never more glad than when I am preaching a *personal* Christ. A doctrinal Christ, a practical Christ, or an experimental Christ, as some good men make him to be according to the temper of their minds, I do not feel to be sufficient for the people of God. We want a *personal* Christ. This has been a power to the Romish church—a power which they have used for ill, but always a power; they have had a personal Christ, but then it has either been a baby Christ in his mother's arms, or else a dead Christ upon the cross. They never reached the force of a real full-grown Christ, one who not only lived and suffered, but who died and rose again, and sits at the right hand of God, the Head of the Church, the one ruler of men. Oh! we must bring out more and more clearly each day the real personality of the Redeemer in his complex person. Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach *him*. If we are wrong in many points, if we be but right here, this will save our ministry from the flames; but if we be wrong here, however orthodox we may pretend to be, we cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of him.

But, further, to preach Christ Jesus, it is absolutely necessary we should preach him as *the only mediator between God and man*. Admitting the efficacy of the intercession of living saints for sinners, never for a moment denying that every man is bound to make supplication for all ranks and conditions of men, yet must we have it that the only mediator in the heavens, and the only direct intercessor with God, is the man Christ Jesus. Nay, we must not be content with making him the only mediator; we must set aside all approach to God in any way whatever, except by him. We must not only have him for the priest, but we must have him for the altar, the victim, and the offerer too. We must learn in full the meaning of that precious text—"Christ is all." We must not see a part of the types here and a part there, but all gathered up in him, the one door of heaven, the one crimson way by which our souls approach to God. We must not allow that approaches can be made in human strength, by human learning, or by human effort; but in him and through him, and by him, and in dependence upon him, must all be done between God and man. We have no wings, my brethren, with which to fly to heaven; our journey thither must be on the rounds [rungs] of Jacob's ladder. We cannot approach God by anything we have, or know, or do. Christ crucified, and he alone, must lift us up to God.

And more, we must preach Christ in the solitariness of his redemption work. We must not permit for a moment the fair white linen of his righteousness to be stained by the patch-work of our filthy rags. We must not submit that the precious blood of his veins should be diluted by any offering of ours co-acting therewith, for our salvation. He hath, by one sacrifice, for ever put away sin. We shall never preach Christ unless we have a real atonement. There be certain people nowadays who are making the atonement, first a sort of compromise, and the next step is to make the atonement a display of what ought to have been, instead of the thing which should have been. Then, next, there are some who make it to be a mere picture, an exhibition, a shadow—a shadow, the substance of which they have not seen. And the day will come, and there are sundry traces of it here and there, in which in some churches the atonement shall be utterly denied, and yet men shall call themselves Christians, while they have broken themselves against the corner-stone of the entire system. I have no kith nor kin, nor friendship, nor Christian amity, with any man whatever who claims to be a Christian and yet denies the atonement. There is a limit to the charity of Christians, and there can be none whatever entertained to the man who is dishonest enough to occupy a Christian pulpit and to deny Christ. It is only in the Christian church that such a thing can be tolerated. I appeal to you. Was there ever known a Buddhist acknowledged in the temple of Buddha who denied the basis

doctrine of the sect? Was there ever known a Mahomadan Imaum who was sanctioned in the mosque while he cried down the Prophet? It remains for Christian churches only to have in their midst men who can bear the name of Christian, who can even venture to be Christian teachers, while they slander the Deity of him who is the Christian's God, and speak lightly of the efficacy of his blood who is the Christian's atonement. May this deadly cancer be cut out root and branch; and whatever tearing of the flesh there may be, better cut it out with a jagged knife than suffer to exist because no lancet is to be found to do it daintily. We must have, then, Christ in the efficacy of his precious blood as the only Redeemer of the souls of men, and as the only mediator, who, without assistance of ours, has brought us to God and made reconciliation through his blood.

Our ministry will scarcely be complete unless we preach *Christ as the only lawgiver and Rabbi of the Church*. When you put it down as a canon of your faith that the church has right and power to decree rites and ceremonies, you have robbed Christ at once of his proper position as the only teacher of the church. Or when you claim the office of controlling other men's consciences by the decree of the church, or the vote of a synod, apart from the authority of Christ, you have taken away from Christ that chair which he occupies in the Christian church, as the teacher in the great Christian school, as the Rabbi, and the only Rabbi, of our faith. God forbid that we should hold a single truth except on his authority. Let not our faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. You refer me to the writings of Doctor this and Doctor the other: what are these? The words of Christ, these are truth, and these are wisdom. You bring me authority from the practice of a church three or four centuries removed from the crucifixion as the proof of the existence of a certain ceremony and the righteousness of certain ecclesiastical offices. What is your proof worth? If Christ hath not specially ordained it, and if he hath not commanded his people to obey it, of what value is any rite whatever? We acknowledge Christ as ordaining all things for his church, and presenting that church with a finished code of laws, from which any deviation is a sin, and to which any addition is a high crime. Any church officer who is not ordained of Christ occupies an office which he ought to resign. Any person who practices a ceremony for which he has not scriptural authority should renounce it; and any man who preaches a doctrine for which he has not Christ as his certifier, should not demand for it the faith of men.

But I fear there are times coming when the minister will not be true to his duty unless he goes further, and preaches Christ as *the sole King of the Church*. There has been a disposition on the part of the state, especially with regard to the Free Church of Scotland, to exercise power and judgement over church decrees. No king, no queen that ever lived, or can live, has any authority whatever over the church of Christ. The church has none to govern and rule over her but her Lord and her King. The church can suffer, but she cannot yield; you may break her confessors alive upon the wheel, but she, in her uprightness, will neither bend nor bow. From the sentence of our church there is no appeal whatever on earth. To the court of heaven a man may appeal if the sentence of the church be wrong, but to Caesar never. Neither the best nor the worst of kings or queens may ever dare to put their finger upon the prerogative of Christ as the head of the church. Up, church of God! If once there be any laws of man passed to govern thee, up, dash them in pieces! Let us each catch up the war cry, and uplift the lion standard of the tribe of Judah; let us challenge the kings of the earth and say, "*Who shall rouse him up?*" The church is queen above all queens, and Christ her only King. None have jurisdiction or power in the church of Christ save Jesus Christ himself. If any of our acts violate the civil laws, we are men and citizens, and we acknowledge the right of a state to govern us as individuals. None of us wish to be less subjects of the realm because

we are kings and priests unto God. But as members of Christian churches we maintain that the excommunication of a Christian church can never be reversed by the civil power, or by any state act, nor are its censures to be examined, much less to be removed, mitigated, or even judged. We must have, as Christ's church, a full recognition of his imperial rights, and the day will come when the state will not only tolerate us as a mere society, but admit that as we profess to be the church of Christ, we have a right by that very fact to be self-governing, and never to be interfered with in any sense whatever, so far as our ecclesiastical affairs are concerned.

Christ must be preached, then, and exalted in all these respects, or else we have not preached a full Christ; but I go one step further. We have not yet mounted to the full height of our ministry unless we learn to preach *Christ as the King of kings*. He has an absolute right to the entire dominion of this world. The Christian minister, as ordained of God to preach, has a perfect right in God's name to preach upon any subject touching the Lord's kingdom, and to rebuke and exhort even the greatest of men. Sometimes I have heard it said, when we have canvassed the acts of an emperor or senator, "These are politics;" but Christ is King of politics as well as theology. "Oh! but"—say they—"what have you to do with what the state does?" Why, just this: that Christ is the head of all states, and while the state has no authority over the church, yet Christ himself is King of kings, and Lord of lords. Oh, that the church would put her diadem upon her head, and take her right position! We are not slaves. The church of God is not a grovelling corporation bound for ever to sit upon a dunghill; never queen was so fair as she, and never robe so rich as the purple which she wears. Arise, O Church! arise, the earth is thine; claim it. Send out thy missionary, not as a petitioner to creep at the feet of princes, but as an ambassador for God to make peace between God and man. Send him out to claim the possession which belongs to thee, and which God has given to thee to be thine for ever and ever, by a right which kings may dispute, but which one day every one of them shall acknowledge.

The fact is, we must bring *Christ himself* back into camp once more. It is of little use having our true Jerusalem swords, and the shields, and the banners, and the trumpets, and the drums; we want the King himself in the midst of us. More and more of a personal Christ is the great lack of the time. I would not wish for less doctrine, less experience, or less practice, but more of all this put into Christ, and Christ preached as the sum and substance of it all.

II. But, secondly, I am now to speak, for a short time, upon the COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE SUBJECT which the text announces.

It is an old and trite saying that the ministers of the gospel may be divided into three kinds—the doctrinal, the experimental, and the practical. The saying is so often repeated that very few would contradict it. But it betrays at once, if it be true, the absence and lack of a something essentially necessary for the church's success. Where is the preacher of *Christ* out of these? I propound this, that if a man be found a preacher of Christ, he is doctrinal, experimental, and practical. The *doctrinal* preacher generally has a limited range. He is useful, exceedingly useful; God constitutes him a barrier against the innovations of the times: he preaches upon his subjects so frequently that he is well versed in them, and becomes one of the armed men about the bed of Solomon. But suppose the doctrinal preacher should have it all his own way, and there should be none others at all, what would be the effect? See it in our Baptist churches about one hundred and fifty years ago. They were all *sound* and sound asleep. Those doctrines had preached them into a lethargy, and had it not been for some few who started up and proposed the missions for the heathen, and who found but little sympathy at first, the church would have been utterly inactive. Now, I would not be hard



with any, but there are some brethren still whose preaching might justly be summed up as being doctrinal, nothing more than doctrinal, and what is the effect of their ministry? Bitterness. They learn to contend not only earnestly for the faith, but savagely for it. Certainly we admire their earnestness, and we thank God for their soundness, but we wish there were mingled with their doctrine a somewhat else which might tone down their severity and make them seek rather the unity and fellowship of the saints than the division and discord which they labour to create.

Again, I will refer you to the next class of preachers, the *experimental*. How delightful it is to sit under an experimental preacher! Perhaps of all ministries this one is the most useful, he who preaches the doubts, the fears, the joys, the ecstasies of the people of God. How often do the saints see the footsteps of the flock, and then they find the shepherd under an experimental minister! But do you know the effect of an experimental minister, purely so, I mean, when all else is put aside to make room for experience? There is one school of divines always preaching the corruption of the human heart. This is their style; "*Except thou be flayed alive by the law; except thou art daily feeling the utter rottenness of thine heart; except thou art a stranger to full assurance, and dost always doubt and fear; except thou abidest on the dunghill and dost scrape thyself with a potsherd, thou art no child of God.*" Who told you that? This has been the preaching of some experimental preachers, and the effect has been just this. Men have come to think the deformities of God's people to be their beauty. They are like certain courtiers of the reign of Richard III, who is said by history to have had a hump upon his back and his admirers stuffed their backs that they might have a graceful hump too. And there be many who, because a minister preaches of doubts and fears, feel they must doubt and fear too; and then that which is both uncomfortable to themselves and dishonouring to God comes to be the very mark of God's people. This is the tendency of experimental preaching, however judiciously managed, when ministers harp on that string and on that alone; the tendency is either to preach the people into a soft and savoury state, in which there is not a bit of manliness or might, or else into that dead and rotten state in which corruption outswells communion, and the savour is not the perfume of the king's ointments, but the stench of a corrupt and filthy heart.

Take also the *practical* preacher; who would say a word against this good man? He stirs the people up, excites the children of God to holy duties, promotes every excellent object, and is in his way an admirable supplement to the two other kinds of ministers. But sit under she practical preacher; sit under him all the year round and listen to his people as they come out. There is one who says, "*the same thing over again—Do, do, do, nothing but do.*" There is a poor sinner yonder just gone down the front steps. Follow him, "Oh," says he, "I came here to find out what *Christ* could do for me, and I have only been told what *I* must do for myself" Now this it a great evil, and persons who sit under such a ministry become lean, starvelling things. I would that practical preachers would listen to our farmers, who always say it is better to put the whip in the manger than upon the horse's back. Let them feed the people with food convenient for them, and they will be practical enough; but all practice and no promise, all exhortation and no sound doctrine, will never make the man of God perfect and zealous for good works.

But what am I driving at in bringing up these three sorts of ministers? Why just this: to show you that there is one minister who can preach all this, without the dangers of any one of the others, but with the excellencies of the whole. And who is he? Why, any man in the world who preaches Christ. If he preaches Christ's person he must preach *doctrine*. If I preach Christ I must preach him as the covenant head of his people, and how far am I then from the doctrine of election? If I preach

Christ I must preach the efficacy of his blood, and how far am I removed then from the great doctrine of an effectual atonement? If I preach Christ I *must* preach the love of his heart, and how can I deny the final perseverance of the saints? If I preach the Lord Jesus as the great Head and King, how far am I removed from divine Sovereignty? Must I not, if I preach Christ personally, preach his doctrines? I believe they are nothing but the natural outgrowth of that great root thought, or root substance rather, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who will preach Christ fully will never be lax in doctrine. And what better *experience* can you preach than in preaching Christ? Would you preach the sufferings of the saints, preach *his* agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion; for the true sufferings of the saints are in fellowship with him. If you would preach their joys, preach *his* resurrection, his ascension, and his advent; you are never far from the joys of the saints when you are near to the joys of Christ; for did not he say, “*My joy shall be in them that their joy may be full*”? And what better *practice* can be preached than preaching Christ? Of every virtue he is the pattern; of the perfection of human character he is the very mirror; of everything that is holy and of good report, he is the abiding incarnation. He cannot fail, then, to be a good doctrinal, experimental, practical preacher, who preaches Christ. Did you ever know a congregation grow less spiritual by a minister preaching Christ? Did you ever know them get full of doubts and fears by preaching Christ? Did you ever hear of their getting lax in sentiment by his preaching Christ? Did you ever hear a whisper that men became unholy in their lives because they heard too much about Christ? I think that all the excellencies of all ministers may be gathered up into the teaching of the man who can preach Christ every day in the week, while there will not be any of the evils connected with the other forms of preaching.

III. I shall now pass onto notice some of the surpassing excellencies of the subject

First, he will always have a *blessed variety* in his preaching. In Australia I have heard that the only change for the backwoodsmen is to have one day damper [unleavened cake baked in wood ashes), tea, and bread; the next day, bread, damper, and tea; and the next day, tea, bread, and damper. The only variety some ministers give, is one Sunday to have depravity, election, and perseverance, and the next Sunday, election, perseverance, and depravity. There are many strings to the harp of the gospel. There are some brethren who are so rightly charmed with five of the strings, which certainly have very rich music in them, that they never meddle with any of the other strings; the cobwebs hang on the rest, while these five are pretty well worn out. It is always pretty much the same thing from the first of January to the last of December. Their organ has very few keys, and upon these they may make a very blessed variety, but I think not a very extensive one. Any man who preaches Christ will ensure variety in his preaching. *He* is all manner of precious perfume, myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. He is all sorts of music, he is everything that is sweet to the ear; he is all manner of fruits; there is not one dainty in him but many. This tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits. He is all manner of raiment; he is golden raiment for beauty, he is the warm raiment for comfort, he is the stout raiment for harness in the day of battle. There are all things in Christ, and he that hath Christ will have as great a variety as there is to be found in the scenery of the world where are no two rocks alike, and no two rivers wind in precisely the same manner, and no two trees grow in precisely the same form. Any other subject you may preach upon till your hearers feel satiety; but with Christ for a subject, you may go on, and on, and on, till the sermon swells into the eternal song, and you begin to sing, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

There is yet another excellence about this subject, namely, *that it suits all sorts of people*. Are there rebels present? Preach Christ; it will suit them. Are there pardoned sinners present? What is better, to melt their hearts than the blood of the Lord Jesus. Are there doubting Christians? What can cheer them better than the name of Christ. Are there strong believers? What is stronger meat than Jesus crucified? Are there learned, polite, intellectual hearers? If they are not satisfied with Christ, they ought to be. Are there poor, ignorant, unlettered men? Jesus Christ is just the thing to preach to them—a naked Christ to their simple ears. Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates. Land in New Zealand in the midst of uncivilised men, move off to another post and stand in the midst of poetical Persia or fickle France, the cross is adapted to all. We need not inquire into the doctrinal opinion of our hearers. If they are high, I am sure Christ will suit them. If they are low, if they be true believers, I am sure Christ Jesus will suit *them*. No Christians will reject such meat as this; only prepare it, and with a hot heart serve it up on the table, and they will be satisfied and feed to the full. So that there is adaptation as well as variety in this subject.

IV. But more than this, I must add, and this will bring me to my last point, for my time flies—there is a power about this subject when it is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, which is not found in any other. My brethren, what power there is in this subject to promote *the union* of the people of God! There is a man there, he is almost a Puseyite. “I do not like him,” says one. Stop till I tell you something more about him, and you will. There is another man there, a Presbyterian—true blue; he cannot bear Independency, or anything but Presbytery—a covenant man. “Well,” says one, “I like him a little better; but I do not suppose we shall get on very well.” Stop! I will tell you some more about him. There is another man down there; he is a very strong Calvinist. “Humph,” says one, “I shall not admire *him*.” Stop, stop! Now, here are these three men; let us hear what they say of each other. If they know nothing of each other except what I have stated, the first time they meet there will be a magnificent quarrel. There is yonder clergyman—he will have little fraternity whatever with the ultra-Evangelical; while the Presbyterian will reject them both, for he abhors black prelacy. But, my dear brethren, all three of you, we of this congregation will approve of you all, and you will approve of one another when I have stated your true character. That man yonder, whom I called almost a Puseyite, was George Herbert. How he loved the doornails of the church! I think he would scarce have had a spider killed that had once crept across the church aisles. He was a thorough churchman, to the very centre of the marrow of his bones; but what a Christian! What a lover of his sweet Lord Jesus! You know that hymn of his which I have so often quoted, and mean to quote a hundred times more: “How sweetly doth my Master’s sound,” and so forth. I hear a knock at the door. “Who is that?” “Why, it is a very strong churchman.” “Do not show him in; I am at prayer; I cannot pray with him.” “Oh, but it is George Herbert!” “Oh, let him in, let him in! No man could I pray better with than Mr. Herbert. Walk in, Mr. Herbert; we are right glad to see you; you are our dear companion; your hymns have made us glad.”

But who was that second man, the Presbyterian, who would not have liked George Herbert at all? Why, that was Samuel Rutherford. What a seraphic spirit! What splendid metaphors he uses about his sweet Lord Jesus! He has written all Solomon’s Song over without knowing it. He felt and proved it to be divine. The Spirit in him re-dictated the song. Well now, I think, we will introduce Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Herbert together, and I am persuaded when they begin to speak about their Master they will find each other next of kin; and I feel sure that, by this time, Samuel Rutherford and George Herbert have found each other out in heaven, and are sitting side by side. Well, but

then we mentioned another; who was that high Calvinist? He was the man who was called the Leviathan of Antinomians. That he was a leviathan I will grant, but that he was an Antinomian is false. It was Dr. Hawker. Now, I am sure, George Herbert would not have liked Dr. Hawker, and I am certain that Dr. Hawker would not have liked George Herbert, and I do not suppose that Samuel Rutherford would have had anything to do with either of them. "No, no," he would say, "your black prelacy I hate." But look at Hawker, there is a sweet spirit; he cannot take up his pen but he dips it in Christ, and begins to write about his Lord at once "Precious Immanuel—precious Jesus." Those words in his morning and evening portions are repeated again and again, and again. I recollect hearing of Mr. Rowland Hill, that he said to a young man who was at tea with him one night when he was about to go:—"Where are you going to?" "Oh!" said he, "I am going to hear Dr. Hawker, at St. George's in the Borough." "Oh, go and hear him," he said; "he is a right good man, worth hearing. But there is this difference between him and me; my preaching is something like a pudding, with here and there a plum; but Dr. Hawker's is all plum." And that was very near the mark, because Dr. Hawker was all Christ. He was constantly preaching of his Master; and even if he gave an invitation to a sinner, it was generally put in this way: "What sayest thou? Wilt thou go with *this man*, and be married and espoused unto *him*? It was the preaching of a personal Christ that made his ministry so full of marrow and fatness.

My dear friends, let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed. I see before me this afternoon members of all Christian denominations; but if Christ Jesus is not the topic that suits you, why then I think we may question your Christianity. The more Christ is preached, the more will the Church prove, and exhibit, and assert, and maintain her unity; but the less Christ is preached, and the more of Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, the more of strife and division, and the less of true Christian fellowship.

We will only mention the power of the preaching of Christ *upon the heart of sinners*. There is a person, now a member of my church, whose conversion was owing to the reading of that hymn:

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

"Ah," said he "does Jesus love my soul? Then how vile I have been to neglect him." There are scores whose conversion is distinctly and directly traceable, not to doctrine—though that is often useful—nor experience, nor practice, though these are fruitful, but to the preaching of Christ. I think you will find the most fertile sermons have always been the most Christly sermons. This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod. One may fall upon the stony ground, but it oftener happens that the seed breaks the stone when it falls, and as Christ is a root out of a dry ground, so this finds root for itself even in dry, hard, stony hearts. We ought to preach the law, we ought to thunder out the threatenings of God, but they must never be the main topic. Christ, Christ, Christ, if we would have men converted. Do you want to convince yonder careless one? Tell him the story of the cross. Under God it will arrest his attention and awaken his thoughts. Would you subdue the carnal affections of yonder profligate? Preach the love of Christ, and that new love shall uproot the old. Would you bind up yonder broken heart? Bring forth Christ, for in him there is a cordial for every fear. Christ is preached and we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice "for he is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." Judge not, my dear brethren, any man's ministry. The world has too often condemned the man whom God intended to honour. Say not of such an one "He can do no good, for his language is rough and rude." Say not of another that his style is too often marred with flippancy. Say not of a third that he is too erudite or soars too high. Every man in his own order. If that man preach Christ, whether he be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, we wish

him God speed; for God will bless the Christ he preaches, and forgive the error which mingled with his ministry. I must even frankly admit the truth of many a criticism that has been uttered on my ministry, but I know it has been successful, and under God it has been, because I *have* sought to preach Christ. I say that without boasting or egotism, because if I had not done so I had no right so be a minister of Christ at all, and as I claim to be God's minister, I will and must declare it, whatever I have not preached, *I have preached Christ*, and into whatever mistakes I have fallen, I have sought to point to his cross, and say, "Behold the way to God." And if ye see others preaching Christ, be not you their foe. Pray for them; bear them in your arms before God; their errors may yet be outgrown, if they preach Christ; but if not, I care not what their excellency may be, the excellency shall die and expire like sparks that go out in darkness. They have not the fuel of the flame, for they have not Christ Jesus as the substance of their ministry.

May I entreat, in closing, your earnest prayer, each one of you, that in this house as well as in all the places of worship round about, Christ may evermore be preached, and I may add my own sincere desire that this place may become a hissing and the abode of dragons, and this pulpit be burned with fire, or ever any other gospel be preached here than that which we have received of the holy apostles of God; and of which Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone. Let me have your incessant prayers. May God speed every minister of Christ. But where there is so large a field of labour may I claim your earnest and constant intercessions, that where Christ is lifted up, men may be drawn to hear, and afterwards drawn to believe, that they may find Christ the Saviour of our souls. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "Repent and be converted, every one of you," said Peter. Yet again said Paul to the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God give us grace to believe, and unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace

Nos. 385-88.

Thursday, April 11th, 1861.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** These messages are part of the inaugural ceremonies held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, when it first opened. Spurgeon had already preached the first sermons there, beginning March 25, while the building was not yet quite finished. This, however, was the official opening ceremony, and Spurgeon presided, choosing several fellow pastors to expound the doctrines of Calvinism. This guide is offered the reader wishing to follow the familiar TULIP acronym:

? Total depravity—"Human Depravity," by Evan Probert (message 2).

? Unconditional Election—"Election", by John Bloomfield (message 1).

? Limited Atonement—"Particular Redemption," by J. A. Spurgeon (message 3).

? Irresistible Grace—"Effectual Calling," by James Smith (message 4).

? Perseverance of the Saints—"The Final Perseverance of Believers in Christ Jesus," by William O'Neill (message 5).

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON took the chair at 3 o'clock.

The proceedings were commenced by singing the 21st Hymn—

Saved from the damning power of sin,

The law's tremendous curse,

We'll now the sacred song begin

Where God began with us.

We'll sing the vast unmeasured grace

Which, from the days of old,

Did all his chosen sons embrace,

As sheep within the fold.

The basis of eternal love

Shall mercy's frame sustain;

Earth, hell, or sin, the same to move

Shall all conspire in vain.

Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood,

Hail the Great Three in One;

Tell how secure the cov'nant stood

Ere time its race begun.

Ne'er had ye felt the guilt of sin,

Nor sweets of pard'ning love,

Unless your worthless names had been

Enroll'd to life above.

O what a sweet exalted son

Shall rend the vaulted skies,

When, shouting, grace, the blood-wash'd throng

Shall see the Top Stone rise.

The Rev. George Wyard, of Deptford, offered prayer.

The REV. C. H. Spurgeon in opening the proceedings said, we have met together beneath this roof already to set forth most of those truths in which consists the peculiarity of this Church. Last evening we endeavoured to show to the world, that we heartily recognised the essential union of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, this afternoon and evening, it is our intention, through the lips of our brethren, to set forth those things which are verily received among us, and especially those great points which have been so often attacked, but which are still upheld and maintained,—truths which we have proved in our experience to be full of grace and truth. My only business upon this occasion is to introduce the brethren who shall address you, and I shall do so as briefly as possible, making what I shall say a preface to their remarks.

The controversy which has been carried on between the Calvinist and the Arminian is exceedingly important, but it does not so involve the vital point of personal godliness as to make eternal life depend upon our holding either system of theology. Between the Protestant and the Papist there is a controversy of such a character, that he who is saved on the one side by faith in Jesus, dare not allow that his opponent on the opposite side can be saved while depending on his own works. There the controversy is for life or death, because it hinges mainly upon the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther so properly called the test doctrine, by which a Church either stands or falls. The controversy again between the believer in Christ and the Socinian, is one which affects a vital point. If the Socinian be right, we are most frightfully in error; we are, in fact, idolaters, and how dwelleth eternal life in us? and if we be right, our largest charity will not permit us to imagine that a man can enter heaven who does not believe the real divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other controversies which thus cut at the very core, and touch the very essence of the whole subject. But, I think we are free to admit, that while John Wesley, for instance, in modern times zealously defended Arminianism, and on the other hand, George Whitfield with equal fervour fought for Calvinism, we should not be prepared either of us, on either side of the question, to deny the vital godliness of either the one or the other. We cannot shut our eyes to what we believe to be the gross mistakes of our opponents, and should think ourselves unworthy of the name of honest men, if we could admit that they are right in all things and ourselves right too. An honest man has an intellect which does not permit him to believe that “yes” and “no” can both subsist at the same hour and both be true. I cannot say, “It is,” and my brother point blank say, “It is not,” and yet both of us be right on that point. We are willing to admit, in fact, we dare not do otherwise, that opinion upon this controversy does not determine the future of even the present state of any man; but still, we think it to be so important, that in maintaining our views, we advance with all courage and fervency if spirit, believing that we are doing God’s work and upholding most important truth. It may not be misunderstood, we only use the term for shortness. That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth. Perhaps Calvin himself derived it mainly from the writings of Augustine. Augustine obtained his views, without doubt, through the Spirit of God, from the diligent study of the writings of Paul, and Paul received them of the Holy Ghost, from Jesus Christ the great founder of the Christian dispensation. We use the term then, not because we impute any extraordinary importance to Calvin’s having taught these doctrines. We would be just as willing to call them by any other name, if we could find one which would be better understood, and which on the whole would be as consistent with fact. And then again, this afternoon, we shall have very likely to speak of Arminians, and by that, we would not for a moment insinuate that all who are in membership with the Arminian body,

hold those particular views. There are Calvinists in connection with Calvinistic Churches, who are not Calvinistic, bearing the name but discarding the system. There are, on the other hand, not a few in the Methodist Churches, who, in most points perfectly agree with us, and I believe that if the matter came to be thoroughly sifted, it would be found that we are more agreed in our private opinions than in our public confessions, and our devotional religion is more uniform than our theology. For instance, Mr. Wesley's hymn-book, which may be looked upon as being the standard of his divinity, has in it upon some topics higher Calvinism than many books used by ourselves. I have been exceedingly struck with the very forcible expressions there used, some of which I might have hesitated to employ myself. I shall ask your attention while I quote verses from the hymns of Mr. Wesley, which we can all endorse as fully and plainly in harmony with the doctrines of grace, far more so than the preaching of some modern Calvinists. I do this because our low-doctrine Baptists and Morisonians ought to be aware of the vast difference between themselves and the Evangelical Arminians.

HYMN 131, verses 1, 2, 3.

“Lord, I despair myself to heal:  
I see my sin, but cannot feel;  
I cannot, till thy Spirit blow,  
And bid the obedient waters flow.  
'Tis thine a heart of flesh to give;  
Thy gifts I only can receive:  
Here, then, to thee I all resign;  
To draw, redeem, and seal,—is thine.  
With simple faith on thee I call,  
My Light, my Life, my Lord, my all:  
I wait the moving of the pool;  
I wait the word that speaks me whole.”

HYMN 133, verse 4.

“Thy golden sceptre from above  
Reach forth; lo! my whole heart I bow;  
Say to my soul, Thou art my love;  
My chosen midst ten thousand, thou.”  
This is very like election.

HYMN 136, verses 8, 9, 10.

“I cannot rest, till in thy blood  
I full redemption have:  
But thou, through whom I come to God,  
Canst to the utmost save.  
From sin, the guilt, the power, the pain,  
Thou wilt redeem my soul:  
Lord, I believe, and not in vain;  
My faith shall make me whole.  
I too, with thee, shall walk in white;  
With all thy saints shall prove,  
What is the length, and breadth, and height,



And depth of perfect love.”

Brethren, is not this somewhat like final perseverance? and what is meant by the next quotation, if people of God can perish at all?

HYMN 138, verses 6, 7.

“Who, who shall in thy presence stand,  
And match Omnipotence?  
Ungrasp the hold of thy right hand,  
Or pluck the sinner thence?  
Sworn to destroy, let earth assail;  
Nearer to save thou art:  
Stronger than all the powers of hell,  
And greater than my heart.”

The following is remarkably strong, especially in the expression “force.” I give it in full:—  
HYMN 158

“O my God, what must I do?  
Thou alone the way canst show;  
Thou canst save me in this hour;  
I have neither will nor power:  
God, if over all thou art,  
Greater than my sinful heart,  
All thy power on me be shown,  
Take away the heart of stone.  
Take away my darling sin,  
Make me willing to be clean;  
Make me willing to receive  
All thy goodness waits to give.  
Force me, Lord, with all to part;  
Tear these idols from my heart;  
Now thy love almighty show,  
Make even me a creature new.  
Jesus, mighty to renew,  
Work in me to will and do;  
Turn my nature’s rapid tide,  
Stem the torrent of my pride;  
Stop the whirlwind of my will;  
Speak, and bid the sun stand still;  
Now thy love almighty show,  
Make even me a creature new.  
Arm of God, thy strength put on;  
Bow the heavens, and come down;  
All my unbelief o’erthrow;  
Lay th’ aspiring mountain low:  
Conquer thy worst foe in me,  
Get thyself the victory;

Save the vilest of the race;  
 Force me to be saved by grace.”  
 HYMN 206, verses 1, 2.  
 “What am I, O thou glorious God!  
 And what my father’s house to thee,  
 That thou such mercies hast bestow’d  
 On me, the vilest reptile, me!  
 I take the blessing from above,  
 And wonder at the boundless love.  
 Me in my blood the love pass’d by,  
 And stopp’d, my ruin to retrieve;  
 Wept o’er my soul thy pitying eye;  
 Thy bowels yearn’d, and sounded, “Live!”  
 Dying, I heard the welcome sound,  
 And pardon in thy mercy found.”

Nor are these all, for such good things as these abound, and they constrain me to say, that in attacking Arminianism we have no hostility towards the men who bear the name rather than the nature of that error, and we are opposed not to any body of men, but to the notions which they have espoused.

And now, having made these remarks upon terms used, we must observe that there is nothing upon which men need to be more instructed than upon the question of what Calvinism really is. The most infamous allegations have been brought against us, and sometime, I must fear, by men who knew them to be utterly untrue; and, to this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw, call that John Calvin, and then shoot all their arrows at it. We are not come here to defend your man of straw—shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence. We come here to state what our views really are, and we trust that any who do not agree with us will do us the justice of not misrepresenting us. If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down? Among the gross falsehoods which have been uttered against the Calvinists proper, is the wicked calumny that we hold *the damnation of little infants*. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere, in some corner of the earth, a miscreant who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say, with regard to infants, Scripture saith but little, and, therefore, where Scripture is confessedly scant, it is for no man to determine dogmatically. But I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions, and those unknown to me, when I say, we hold that all infants are elect of God and are therefore saved, and we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree, and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the *lost*. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus, who said, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” doth daily and constantly receive into his loving arms those tender ones who are only shown, and then snatched away to heaven. Our hymns are no ill witness to our faith on this point, and one of them runs thus:

“Millions of infant souls compose  
The family above.”

“Toplady, one of the keenest of Calvinists, was of this number. “In my remarks,” says he, “on Dr. Nowell, I testified my firm belief that the souls of *all departed infants* are with God in glory; that in the decree of predestination to life, God hath included all whom he decreed to take away in infancy, and that the decree of reprobation hath nothing to do with them.” Nay, he proceeds farther, and asks, with reason, how the anti-Calvinistic system of conditional salvation and election, or good works foreseen, will suit with the salvation of infants? It is plain that Arminians and Pelagians must introduce a *new principle* of election; and in so far as the salvation of infants is concerned, become Calvinists. Is it not an argument in behalf of Calvinism, that its principle is uniform throughout, and that no change is needed on the ground on which man is saved, whether young or old? John Newton, of London, the friend of Cowper, noted for his Calvinism, holds that the children in heaven exceed its adult inhabitants in all their multitudinous array. Gill, a very champion of Calvinism, held the doctrine, that all dying in infancy are saved. An intelligent modern writer, (Dr. Russell, of Dundee,) also a Calvinist, maintains the same views; and when it is considered that nearly *one-half* of the human race die in early years, it is easy to see what a vast accession must be daily and hourly making to the blessed population of heaven.”

A more common charge, brought by more decent people,—for I must say that the last charge is never brought, except by disreputable persons,—a more common charge is, that we hold clear *fatalism*. Now, there may be Calvinists who are fatalists, but Calvinism and fatalism are two distinct things. Do not most Christians hold the doctrine of the providence of God? Do not all Christians, do not all believers in a God hold the doctrine of his foreknowledge? All the difficulties which are laid against the doctrine of predestination might, with equal force, be laid against that of Divine foreknowledge. We believe that God hath predestinated all things from the beginning, but there is a difference between the predestination of an intelligent, all-wise, all-bounteous God, and that blind fatalism which simply says, “It is because it is to be.” Between the *predestination* of Scripture and the *fate* of the Koran, every sensible man must perceive a difference of the most essential character. We do not deny that the thing is so ordained that it must be, but why is it to be, but that the Father, God, whose name is love, ordained it; not because of any necessity in circumstances that such and such a thing should take place. Though the wheels of providence revolve with rigid exactness, yet not without purpose and wisdom. The wheels are full of eyes, and everything ordained is so ordained that it shall conduce to the grandest of all ends, the glory of God, and the next to that the good of his creatures. But we are next met by some who tell us that we preach the wicked and horrible doctrine of *sovereign and unmerited reprobation*. “Oh,” say they, “you teach that men are damned because God made them to be damned, and that they go to hell, not because of sin, not because of unbelief, but because of some dark decree with which God has stamped their destiny.” Brethren, this is an unfair charge again. Election does not involve reprobation. There may be some who hold unconditional reprobation. I stand not here as their defender, let them defend themselves as best they can; I hold God’s election, but I testify just as clearly that if any man be lost he is lost for sin; and this has been the uniform statement of Calvinistic ministers. I might refer you to our standards, such as “The Westminster Assembly’s Catechism,” and to all our Confession, for they all distinctly state that man is lost for sin, and that there is no punishment put on any man except that which he richly and righteously deserves. If any of you have ever uttered that libel against us, do it not again, for we are as guiltless of that as you are yourselves. I am speaking personally—and I think in this

I would command the suffrages of my brethren—I do know that the appointment of God extendeth to all things; but I stand not in this pulpit, nor in any other, to lay the damnation of any man anywhere but upon himself. If he be lost, damnation is all of man; but, if he be saved, still salvation is all of God. To state this important point yet more clearly and explicitly, I shall quote at large from an able Presbyterian divine:

“The pious Methodist is taught that the Calvinist represents God as creating men in order to destroy them. He is taught that Calvinists hold that men are lost, not because they sin, but because they are nonelected. Believing this to be a true statement, it is not wonderful that the Methodist stops short, and declares himself, if not an Arminian, at least an AntiPredestinarian. But no statement can be more scandalously untrue. It is the uniform doctrine of Calvinism, that God creates all for his own glory; that he is infinitely righteous and benignant, and that where men perish it is only for their sins.

In speaking of suffering, whether in this world or in the world to come; whether it respects angels or men, the Westminster standards (which may be considered as the most authoritative modern statement of the system) invariably connect the punishment with previous sin, and sin only. “As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as *a righteous* judge FOR FORMER SINS doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as *their corruption* makes occasion of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.” The Larger Catechism, speaking of the unsaved among angels and men, says, “God according to his Sovereign power and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, *to be for their sin inflicted*, to the praise of the glory of his justice.” Again, “the end of God appointing this day (of the last judgment) is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate *who are wicked and disobedient*.” This is no more than what the Methodist and all other Evangelical bodies acknowledge—that where men perish it is in consequence of their sin. If it be asked, why sin which destroys, is permitted to enter the world, that is a question which bears not only on the Calvinist, but equally on all other parties. They are as much concerned and bound to answer it as he; nay, the question is not confined to Christians. All who believe in the existence of God—in his righteous character and perfect providence, are equally under obligation to answer it. Whatever may be the reply of others, that of the Calvinist may be regarded as given in the statement of the Confession of Faith, which declares that God’s providence extendeth itself even to the first fall, and other sins of angels and men, &c.; “*yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin*.” It is difficult to see what more could be said upon the subject; and if such be the undoubted sentiments of Calvinists, then what misrepresentation can be more gross than that which describes them as holding that sinners perish irrespective of their sin, or that God is the author of their sin? What is the declaration of Calvin? “*Every soul* departs (at death) to that place *which it has prepared for itself* while in this world.”

It is hard to be charged with holding as sacred truth what one abhors as horrid blasphemy, and yet this is the treatment which has been perseveringly meted out to Calvinists in spite of the most

solemn and indignant disclaimers. Against nothing have they more stoutly protested than the thought that the infinitely holy, and righteous, and amiable Jehovah is the author of sin; and yet how often do the supporters of rival systems charge them with this as an article of faith?

A yet further charge against us is, that we *dare not preach the gospel to the unregenerate*, that, in fact, our theology is so narrow and cramped that we cannot preach to sinners. Gentlemen, if you dare to say this, I would take you to any library in the world where the old Puritan fathers are stored up, and I would let you take down any one volume and tell me if you ever read more telling exhortations and addresses to sinners in any of your own books. Did not Bunyan plead with sinners, and whoever classed him with any but the Calvinist? Did not Charnock, Goodwin, and Howe agonise for souls, and what were they but Calvinist? Did not Jonathan Edwards preach to sinners, and who more clear and explicit on these doctrinal matters. The works of our innumerable divines teem with passionate appeals to the unconverted. Oh, sirs, if I should begin the list, time should fail me. It is an indisputable fact that we have laboured more than they all for the winning of souls. Was George Whitfield any the less seraphic? Did his eyes weep the fewer tears or his bowels move with the less compassion because he believed in God's electing love and preached the sovereignty of the Most High? It is an unfounded calumny. Our souls are not stony; our bowels are not withdrawn the compassion which we ought to feel for our fellowmen; we can hold all our views firmly, and yet can weep as Christ did over a Jerusalem which was certainly to be destroyed. Again, I must say, I am not defending certain brethren who have exaggerated Calvinism. I speak of Calvinism proper, not that which has run to seed, and outgrown its beauty and verdure. I speak of it as I find it in Calvin's Institutes, and especially in his Expositions. I have read them carefully. I take not my views of Calvinism from common repute but from his books. Nor do I, in this speaking, even vindicate Calvinism as if I cared for the name, but I mean that glorious system which teaches that salvation is of grace from first to last. And again, then, I say it is an utterly unfounded charge that we dare not preach to sinners.

And then further, that I may clear up these points and leave the less rubbish for my brethren to wheel away, we have sometimes heard it said, but those who say it ought to go to school to read the first book of history, that we who hold Calvinistic views are the enemies of revivals. Why, sirs, in the history of the Church, with but few exceptions, you could not find a revival at all that was not produced by the orthodox faith. What was the great work which was done by Augustine, when the Church suddenly woke up from the pestiferous and deadly sleep into which Pelagian doctrine had cast it? What was the Reformation itself but the waking up of men's minds to those old truths? However far modern Lutherans may have turned aside from their ancient doctrines, and I must confess some of them would not agree with what I now say, yet, at any rate, Luther and Calvin had no dispute about Predestination. Their views were identical, and Luther, "On the bondage of the will," is as strong a book upon the free grace of God as Calvin himself could have written. Hear that great thunderer while he cries in that book, "Let the Christian reader know then, that God foresees nothing in a contingent manner; but that he foresees, proposes, and acts, from his eternal and unchangeable will. This is the thunder stroke which breaks and overturns Free Will." Need I mention to you better names than Huss, Jerome of Prague, Farrel, John Knox, Wickliffe, Wishart, and Bradford? Need I do more than say that these held the same views, and that in their day anything like an Arminian revival was utterly unheard of and undreamed of. And then, to come to more modern times, there is the great exception, that wondrous revival under Mr. Wesley, in which the Wesleyan Methodists had so large a share; but permit me to say, that the strength of the doctrine

of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its Calvinism. The great body of the Methodists disclaimed Palagianism, in whole and in part. They contended for man's entire depravity, the necessity of the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and that the first step in the change proceeds not from the sinner, but from God. They denied at the time that they were Pelagians. Does not the Methodist hold as firmly as ever we do, that man is saved by the operation of the holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost alone? And are not many of Mr. Wesley's sermons full of that great truth, that the Holy Ghost is necessary to regeneration? Whatever mistakes he may have made, he continually preached the absolute necessity of the new birth by the Holy Ghost, and there are some other points of exceedingly close agreement; for instance, even that of human inability. It matters not how some may abuse us, when we say man could not of himself repent or believe; yet, the old Arminian standards said the same. True, they affirm that God has given grace to every man, but they do not dispute the fact, that apart from that grace there was no ability in man to do that which was good in his own salvation. And then, let me say, if you turn to the continent of America, how gross the falsehood, that Calvinistic doctrine is unfavourable to revivals. Look at that wondrous shaking under Jonathan Edwards, and others which we might quote. Or turn to Scotland—what shall we say of M'Cheyne? What shall we say of those renowned Calvinists, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and before them Livingstone, Haldane, Erskine, and the like? What shall we say of the men of their school, but that, while they held and preached unflinchingly the great truths which we would propound to-day, yet God owned their word, and multitudes were saved. And if it were not perhaps too much like boasting of one's own work under God, I might say, personally I have never found the preaching of these doctrines lull this Church to sleep, but ever while they have loved to maintain these truths, they have agonised for the souls of men, and the 1600 or more of whom I have myself baptized, upon profession of their faith, are living testimonies that these old truths in modern times have not lost their power to promote a revival of religion.

I have thus cleared away these allegations at the outset; I shall now need a few minutes more to say, with regard to the Calvinistic system, that there are some things to be said in its favour, to which of course I attach but little comparative importance, but they ought not to be ignored. It is a fact that the system of doctrines called the Calvinistic, is so *exceedingly simple* and so readily learned, that as a system of Divinity it is more easily taught and more easily grasped by unlettered minds than any other. The poor have the Gospel preached to them in a style which assists their memories and commends itself to their judgments. It is a system which was practically acknowledged on high philosophic grounds by such men as Bacon, Leibnitz, and Newton, and yet it can charm the soul of a child and expand the intellect of a peasant. And then it has another virtue. I take it that the last is no mean one, but it has another—that when it is preached there is a something in it which *excites thought*. A man may hear sermons upon the other theory which shall glance over him as the swallow's wing gently sweeps the brook, but these old doctrines either make a man so angry that he goes home and cannot sleep for very hatred, or else they bring him down into lowliness of thought, feeling the immensity of the things which he has heard. Either way it excites and stirs him up not temporarily, but in a most lasting manner. These doctrines haunt him, he kicks against the pricks, and full often the word forces a way into his soul. And I think this is no small thing for any doctrine to do, in an age given to slumber, and with human hearts so indifferent to the truth of God. I know that many men have gained more good by being made angry under a sermon than by being pleased by it, for being angry they have turned the truth over and over again, and at last the truth

has burned its way right into their hearts. They have played with edge-tools, but they have cut themselves at last.

It has this singular virtue also—it is so *coherent in all its parts*. You cannot vanquish a Calvinist. You may think you can, but you cannot. The stones of the great doctrines so fit into each other, that the more pressure there is applied to remove them the more strenuously do they adhere. And you may mark, that you cannot receive one of these doctrines without believing all. Hold for instance that man is utterly depraved, and you draw the inference then that certainly if God has such a creature to deal with salvation must come from God alone, and if from him, the offended one, to an offending creature, then he has a right to give or withhold his mercy as he wills; you are thus forced upon election, and when you have gotten that you have all: the others must follow. Some by putting the strain upon their judgments may manage to hold two or three points and not the rest, but sound logic I take it requires a man to hold the whole or reject the whole; the doctrines stand like soldiers in a square, presenting on every side a line of defence which it is hazardous to attack, but easy to maintain. And mark you, in these times when error is so rife and neology strives to be so rampant, it is no little thing to put into the hands of a young man a weapon which can slay his foe, which he can easily learn to handle, which he may grasp tenaciously, wield readily, and carry without fatigue; a weapon, I may add, which no rust can corrode and no blows can break, trenchant, and well annealed, a true Jerusalem blade of a temper fit for deeds of renown. The coherency of the parts, though it be of course but a trifle in comparison with other things, is not unimportant. And then, I add,—but this is the point my brethren will take up—it has this excellency, that it is scriptural, and that it is consistent with the experience of believers. Men generally grow more Calvinistic as they advance in years. Is not that a sign that the doctrine is right. As they are growing riper for heaven, as they are getting nearer to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the soul longs to feed on the finest of the wheat, and abhors chaff and husks. And then, I add—and, in so doing, I would refute a calumny that has sometimes been urged,—this glorious truth has this excellency, that it produces the holiest of men. We can look back through all our annals, and say, to those who oppose us, you can mention no names of men more holy, more devoted, more loving, more generous than those which we can mention. The saints of our calendar, though uncanonized by Rome, rank first in the book of life. The names of Puritan needs only to be heard to constrain our reverence. Holiness had reached a height among them which is rare indeed, and well it might for they loved and lived the truth. And if you say that our doctrine is inimical to human liberty, we point you to Oliver Cromwell and to his brave Ironsides, Calvinists to a man. If you say, it leads to inaction, we point you to the Pilgrim Fathers and the wildernesses they subdued. We can put our finger upon every spot of land, the wide world o'er, and say, “Here was something done by a man who believed in God’s decrees; and, inasmuch as he did this, it is proof it did not make him inactive, it did not lull him to sloth.”

The better way, however of proving this point is for each of us who hold these truths, to be more prayerful, more watchful, more holy, more active than we have ever been before, and by so doing, we shall put to silence the gainsaying of foolish men. A living argument, is an argument which tells upon every man; we cannot deny what we see and feel. Be it ours, if aspersed and calumniated, to disprove it by a blameless life, and it shall yet come to pass, that our Church and its sentiments too shall come forth “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

## ELECTION

BY THE

**Rev. JOHN BLOOMFIELD,**

OF MEARD'S COURT, SOHO.

My dear Christian friends, those who best know my cast of mind and ministry will readily believe me when I say I would rather have spoken on the majesty and mystery of the person of Christ, or I would rather have spoken on the perfection and intrinsic worth of the mediation of Christ, or on the great attraction of Christ as a gracious and omnipotent Saviour, than on the subject that has been assigned to me. The subject that has been given me is that of the doctrine of eternal and personal election; I have to prove that the doctrine of election is a scriptural truth; and, at the commencement of my few remarks on this profound subject, allow me to say that I hold and firmly believe the Bible to be revelation from God, that the revelations of God's mind are essentially and infallibly true, that its ancient historical records are of the greatest value, that its prophecies are to be studied and to be venerated, that the doctrines of the Bible are in harmony with the majesty, wisdom, holiness and goodness of their Author. Now it should not be a point with us whether a doctrine is like or disliked, whether it is believed or disbelieved, but whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, whether it is the doctrine of the Word of God. Truth has never been popular in this world: Jesus Christ when on earth was by no means popular. Truth never will be popular in this world while men are influenced by sin, and enmity against God. Perhaps no doctrine has met with such bitter opposition as the doctrine on which I have to speak. It has been fearfully misunderstood for a want of prayerful and independent study of the Holy Scriptures, or perhaps from the miserable misrepresentations that have been given of it by some public men. It is a truth which has been bitterly opposed; we may oppose a doctrine which we cannot with all our puny efforts depose. We may dispute in our blindness and enmity a doctrine which we cannot refute. We believe firmly that the doctrine of election to salvation in Jesus Christ is a doctrine of the Scriptures. We believe in sovereign love, but not in sovereign hatred. We believe in salvation by the grace of God without works, but not in damnation without sin. We believe firmly in election to salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we discard from our creed the miserable, wretched doctrine of reprobation without sin. Is the doctrine of election a Scriptural doctrine? Can we prove it from the word of God? It is one thing to believe it to be a doctrine of Divine revelation, and it is another thing to have the sanctifying grace and power of it in our hearts. The election we read of in the Scriptures is inseparably connected with holiness, and we believe in no election to salvation without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who has appointed salvation as an end has appointed the methods by which that end shall be accomplished. Perhaps no man possessed of his reasoning powers questions the truth that God has predestinated harvest as long as this world shall continue. But without sowing of seed, without the agricultural labour that is given to the land, we should have no harvest, because he who predestinated harvest predestinated the sowing of the seed as much. And God has appointed us not unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ. I shall endeavour now to prove, from the quotation of a few Scriptures, that the doctrine of eternal and personal election is a Scriptural



and Divine truth. Jesus Christ himself was said to be “chosen of God and precious.” He is God’s elect, for Jehovah himself says, “Behold my servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” Angels that continue in their unfallen dignity and felicity are termed elect angels. Elect angels are employed as ministering spirits to those that shall be heirs of salvation. Elect angels will be employed in the gathering of God’s elect into the heavenly world. The Jewish nation was a chosen nation, and as such they were privileged with the oracles of God, and stood as a representative people. They were chosen not because of their personal worth, they were chosen not because of their goodness, but they were chosen to be a separated people, a people that should be God’s peculiar treasure, and should be holiness unto the Lord; of them it was said, “For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God—the Lord hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Jesus Christ himself, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, speaks of certain days being shortened because of God’s elect. The Psalmist craved to be remembered with the favour that God was pleased to bear towards his people, that he might see the good of his chosen. And Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples, “Ye have not chose me, but I have chosen you.” And the Apostle Paul very often in his writings has brought out this great and profound doctrine. He says, “There is a remnant according to the election of grace.” He speaks to the Ephesian Church, and says, “Ye are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that ye may be holy, and that ye may stand before God without blame in love.” God hath in the exercise of his sovereignty *chosen a people* in Christ to *salvation* before time began—it was before the foundation of the *world*, here is its antiquity—it is in Christ according to the riches of God’s grace, and it is to *holiness* and salvation. He, in his addresses to the Church at Thessalonica, said he could but thank God “that they were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.” Peter speaks of the people of God as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. He wrote to the *elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. More Scriptures might be given upon this subject, but I think they would be unnecessary. If we would only give our attention to the simple teachings of the Spirit of God by the prophets, by the Psalmist, by Christ, and by the Apostles, we could not have one moment’s doubt as to the doctrine of Divine election being a Scriptural truth.

My second point is to show that God has chosen his people to the highest possible relation to himself, and to the enjoyment of the most precious blessings in Christ. All spiritual relations stand in Christ; all spiritual relations originated in God’s grace; and all spiritual relations are standing manifestations of the sovereignty of God’s favour and of the immutability of God’s love. If we are the sons of God, what has constituted us the sons of God? We are sons of God by God’s sovereign love; it is by an act of adoption, it is by an act of Jehovah’s will, that we are constituted his sons and his daughters. Adoption is relation established to which we have no natural right; adoption is one thing, and the spirit of adoption is another. Now Christ is God’s first-born, and all the family are chose in him; Christ is the glorious Head of the Church, and all the family of God are chosen members in him; Christ is the everlasting Priest of his Church, and he represents all the family, just as the Jewish priest represented by his breast-plate and in the fulfilment of his office the whole of the Jewish nation. All relation to God then stands in Christ, originated in the sovereignty of Jehovah’s will, and is expressive of the infinite love of Jehovah’s heart. We are chose to salvation—that is the end; the means by which that end is accomplished is by the “sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.” We are chose to usefulness; every Christian should seek to be useful; every Christian in his right mind is a witness for God; every Christian, as he is influenced by Christian principles, bears testimony to the dignity of the relation that God has established, and bears testimony

to the holiness of the principles by which his heart is influenced; every Christian should be a living gospel, his life should bear testimony to the holiness of that Christianity that he studies and is influenced by. We are chosen to eternal life, but it is eternal life through Christ. Without faith there is no evidence of interest in Christ, without faith there is no enjoyment of salvation by Christ. Without faith, a man has no evidence of interest in the Lamb's Book of Life; but he who believes in Christ, however weak and trembling his faith has evidence in his own heart that his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; and his conduct corresponding with the holiness of the gospel, he carries in his life a witness to his interest in all the purposes of heaven, and in all the redemptive excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ. The great evidence of interest in election is holiness. A man to talk of believing in election, and going to heaven, because he is one of God's elect, and yet living in sin, and in enmity to God, this can never, never be. We are chosen unto salvation, it is said, "through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth;" and, without this sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth, there is no holiness; and, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord." Without holiness, no man would be capable of serving God in heaven; without holiness, no man would be capable of beholding the glories of Jesus Christ there; without holiness, no man can serve God with power and success here; without holiness, no man can have fellowship with God, and so have fellowship with us, for truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ. It is only by practical life of consistency with faith in Christ Jesus, that we have evidence of our interest in election. We are chosen, not because we are holy, but that we might be holy; we are chosen, not because we are good, but that by the principles of the everlasting Gospel, we might become so; we are chosen, not because we are saved, but that we may be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hold, dear friends, that the great doctrine of election should be preached. It should be preached, because it is part of a grand system of truth. Truth is not one doctrine, but it is a grand system, and you cannot leave out one part without impairing its beauty, nor leave out one part of this system without weakening its strength. The beauty of truth lies in its perfection, and in that harmony of its connection; the strength of truth lies in the unity of its parts, and it is like gold dust—it is all precious. If Election be not a truth inspired by the Spirit of the living God—if it be not a truth proclaimed by the prophets that were inspired—if it be not a truth published by the Apostles—if it be not a truth found in the teachings of the word of God, let us never say one word about it; but if it was truth in the days of the Apostles, then it is no less a truth now. What the Apostles preached, I hold, we ought to preach in the spirit of love, in the spirit of faith, in the spirit of meekness, entirely depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us success in the conversion of immortal souls. One moment longer, and I have done. There is nothing in the doctrine of election that is discouraging to a penitent, seeking sinner. There is everything in the Gospel to welcome the returning prodigal to his Father's house; there is everything to meet the necessities of an awakened conscience; there is everything in the Gospel to satisfy the longing of a penitent soul. I know some may say, "I fear, Sir, I shall not be saved because I am not one of God's elect." Art thou a sinner? art thou a penitent sinner? art thou a seeking sinner? If thou art a seeking, penitent sinner, you cannot imagine how welcome you are to the provisions of infinite love. Every truth in the Gospel is open to you; every promise in the Gospel is open to you; every invitation in Scripture speaks to you. If thou art a sinner seeking mercy, let this cheer thy heart—that God delighteth in mercy. If thou art seeking salvation, Jesus is a willing and an able Saviour, and he has said, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." There is nothing, dear friends, in the doctrine of election as it stands in the Scriptures

that should discourage any penitent in seeking after mercy through Jesus Christ. I know, in the miserable misrepresentation of this great and glorious truth, men might well be discouraged from seeking mercy through the Saviour. But see it in its Scriptural connection; see it in the simplicity of it as it is put before us by the great Apostles; see it in the teachings of the Saviour himself, and there is nothing in it but that which welcomes a penitent sinner. It is a great encouragement to a seeking soul. Does the farmer who sows his seed sow that seed with less or more encouragement because he knows that God has ordained that harvest shall be? He sows his seed with a heart brimfull with hope, because God has promised that a harvest shall be as long as the world continues. Only let the means be used according to the Holy Scriptures; only let the poor awakened, penitent sinner renounce everything but Christ and him crucified, mercy will roll into his troubled heart and fill his spirit with peace, and he shall come off more than conqueror, shouting, Victory through the blood of the Lamb—Victory, victory through Jesus Christ.

## **HUMAN DEPRAVITY**

BY THE

**Rev. EVAN PROBERT,**

OF BRISTOL.

My Christian friends, you are quite aware that the subject which is to engage our further attention this afternoon, is HUMAN DEPRAVITY—a subject about which there are different opinions, which I shall not attempt to examine at the present time, but I shall confine myself to the teachings of God's word, which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and from which we learn what man was when he came from the hands of his Maker, and what he is now as a fallen creature. It is explicitly declared by the sacred writers, that God made man upright, and therefore his condition was one of perfect innocence and high moral excellence. There was no tendency to evil in any part of his nature, nothing that deviated in the least from the rule of moral rectitude. Whatever his duty was, it was to him his invariable and delightful employment. But, alas! man in honour did not long continue. Through the insinuating wiles of the devil, our first parents were induced to violate the positive command of their Maker, the observance of which was the condition of their happiness, and, as punishment for their transgression, they were driven out of Paradise, and became liable to be cut off by the sentence of death, and consigned to everlasting misery; and, in consequence of our connection with Adam, as our federal head and representative, we became subject to the dreadful consequences of his fall. This is evident from the testimony of the Apostle Paul, in the fifth Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. There we read, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And, again, "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners." It is evident from these passages that God viewed Adam in the covenant of works as the head and representative of his natural posterity, and consequently, when he fell we fell in him, and became subject to the tremendous consequences of his fall. Here it may be asked, what are the consequences of his fall? what were they to him, and what are they to us? To answer this question, we must ascertain what the Apostle means when he uses the words death, judgment, and

condemnation. I think that he uses these words in opposition to the grace of God, to justification of life, and to the reign of the redeemed in life by Jesus Christ. These are the benefits which result from the grace of God through Christ, and which stand opposed to the evils which sin has introduced into our world; and, as it cannot be supposed that these benefits relate to temporal life, or solely to the resurrection of the body, it cannot be that the evils involved in the words, death, judgment, and condemnation, relate simply to temporal death, but they must be considered as including temporal, legal, and spiritual death.

From the very hour that Adam transgressed, he became mortal,—the sentence of death was pronounced upon him, and the seeds of depravity were sown in his system; thus the fair and beautiful and glorious creature began to fade, wither, and die, and all his posterity became mortal in him, and have from that day to this come into the world dying. Whatever the case of man might have been if he had not sinned we cannot say. This however we know, that he would not have died; for death is the result of the federal failure of the father of our race. “Dust thou art,” God said to him, “and unto dust shalt thou return.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “In Adam all died.” So that it may be said to every one of Adam’s sons and daughters, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

But Adam by his transgression not only brought temporal death upon himself and his posterity, he also brought legal death. Having violated the law that was given him to observe, he became under the curse of that law, which involved not only temporal death and expulsion from Paradise, but an exposure to suffer the just demerits of his transgression; and, in consequence of our connection with him as our federal head, we are under the curse of the same law—“By one man’s disobedience judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” and further, “By the offence of one many were made sinners.” The very moment our progenitor transgressed, all his descendants became subject to the curse. The holy nature of God abhorred the apostate race; the curse of his holy and righteous law has ever rested upon that race; judgment has been given and recorded against us as a fallen world, in the court of Heaven, and unless it is reversed it must fall upon us with all its tremendous consequences.

We are also, in consequence of Adam’s transgression, become the subjects of spiritual death, which consists not merely in the deprivation of the principle of life; but in having become depraved creatures, all the faculties of our souls and members of our bodies are depraved, so that it may be said of us, as the prophet says of the Jewish nation, “The head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot unto the head there is no soundness.” What! no soundness in any part? nothing good in any part? nothing spiritually good? nothing if cherished and fostered that will not lead to God, to Heaven, and to happiness? Nothing whatever. Let no one mistake me. I do not mean to say for a single moment, that sin has destroyed any of the faculties of man’s soul, for they are all there. They all exist as they did when they were produced; but I mean to say, that sin has deprived man of the principle of spiritual life, and made him a depraved and debased creature; and we believe that we can prove this from the word of God, as well as from observation.

First,—From the conduct of little children. Children begin to sin very early in life. If there were any good in us, it would show itself in infancy, before good habits became corrupted, and evil principles were produced by our connection with the world. But do little children prefer good? Are they inclined to the good and the excellent? Do you see from the earliest period of their existence that they are desirous of good? On the contrary, I say, as soon as they begin to act, they prove by their action, that in them there is a depraved nature, from which they act. “Madness,” says a wise

man, "is bound up in the heart of a child," they go astray from the womb telling lies. But it may be said, in the way of objection, that this may arise from the unfavourable circumstance in which some children are placed. No doubt, unfavourable circumstances have a bad influence upon the minds of children; but it is not so with the whole race. Point out to me, one child who is disposed from infancy to seek that which is good, that which is holy. And surely, if the tendency of infants from their earliest history is to evil, it is a proof that it must arise from the evil propensities within them, which grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength.

Secondly,—We have further proof of human depravity from the aversion of sinners to come to Christ. They are invited to come, persuaded to come, and are assured that they shall find pardon, acceptance, and salvation. But they cannot be induced to come to him; and why will they not come? Is it because he is not willing to receive them, or because there is anything in him to prevent them? No, but it is because of the deep-rooted depravity in their hearts. The heart is averse to all that is good, and therefore rejects the Saviour and turns away from him. Hence he complained when in our world, "How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." What more needed to be added? Man turns away in proud disdain from all the blessings of the gospel, and the glories of heaven brought before him, and rushes on with steady purpose to damnation. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Oh, to how many in this land may it be said, "They hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof."

Thirdly,—We have further evidence of native depravity from the testimony of Scripture. In the first place, let me refer you to the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis, and the third verse. There we read, that Adam, after he had lived one hundred and thirty years, begat a son in his own likeness after his image. Mind, the image in which Adam was created was the image of God, but that image he had lost before he begat Seth; therefore, the image in which Seth was born must have been the image of his progenitor, as a fallen and depraved creature. Let me refer you, in the second place, to the third chapter of the Gospel of John. "He that is born of the flesh," said the Saviour to Nicodemus, "is flesh, and he that is born of the Spirit is spirit." To be born of the flesh, according to the wisest interpretation of that passage, is to be born of a depraved nature; to be born of the Spirit is to be born of the Holy Spirit of God—which birth, the Saviour told Nicodemus he must experience before he could see the kingdom of God. And again, we have several passages in proof of this point. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse of that chapter, the Apostle says, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin by the law which worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death." "When we were in the flesh," means this—when we were in an unrenewed depraved state. In the same chapter he says, at the 14th verse, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin;" as if he had said, "I am as a sinner, a depraved creature." In accordance with this the Apostle says, at the 18th verse of the same chapter, "In me—that is, in my flesh—there dwelleth no good thing." No love to God, no holy aspirations! No, none whatever. At the beginning of the eighth chapter the same Epistle, we find the terms "flesh" and "Spirit" placed in opposition to each other, "Who walk not after the flesh," says the Apostle, describing Christians, "but after the Spirit." To be in the flesh is to be in a depraved state, to be in the Spirit is to be a partaker of his grace; to walk after the flesh is to walk after the dictates of corrupt principles and propensities, to walk after the Spirit is to be governed by spiritual principles and by the Holy Spirit of God; and the Apostle, in writing to the Galatians, says to them, "Walk in the Spirit, and

ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” These passages, I think, prove beyond all contradiction, that man as a fallen creature, is a depraved creature, destitute of any good. There are many other passages of Scripture that confirm this doctrine, such as the following, “Who can bring a clean thing out of a unclean.” Not one. What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he should be just. “Behold,” says a Psalmist, “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Read the account of man before the deluge, and there we find that every imagination and the thought of his heart were only evil, and that continually. The same account is given of him after the flood. The deluge could not wipe away the stains of moral pollution, could not destroy in man the deep-rooted depravity of his heart. “The heart,” says Jeremiah, “is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.” I think that what our blessed Lord said to the Jews of old, is applicable to every unconverted man under heaven—“But I know you that ye have not the love of God in you.” Some of you may be more humane than others, more benevolent than other, more compassionate than other, as men, and as women, but one has as much of the love of God in him as others. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” against the being of God, against the government of God, against the gospel of God, against the purposes of God. The enmity of the human heart is unconquerable by any human agency whatever. It is mortal enmity, it strikes at the being of God, and, therefore, as President Edwards, of America, justly observes, “that when it found God in our nature, in our world, it put him to death on the accursed tree.” Such, my brethren, is the enmity of the heart of man, such is its deeprooted depravity, that in him there is no good thing. We can never speak too bad of what sin has done for us, and we can never speak too much, or too well, of what God has done for us, in the person of his Son, and in us, by the agency of his Holy Spirit.

Fourthly—The doctrine of human depravity may be proved from those passages which assert the universal necessity of redemption by Jesus Christ. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus,” said the angel, “because he shall save his people from their sins,” “In him we have redemption through his blood,” says St. Paul, “even the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of his grace.” Now, the work of redemption pre-supposes the sinful state of man, and implies a deliverance from that state and from the punishment to which man is exposed. Hence it is said of Christ, that he came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost, and that he died—the just for the unjust—that he might bring us to God. Now, if redemption by Christ is necessary, it is evident that man is a sinner; and, if man is a sinner, it is evident that man has a depraved nature. You cannot make anything else of it. Say what you like about man and about his excellencies, you must come to this conclusion, that he is a condemned and a depraved creature, or else he would not need redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifthly,—The passages that assert the universal necessity of the new birth prove this very truth—“Except a man be born of water,” said the Saviour, “and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.” But if a man has some good in him, and if that good could be cherished, and be increased, and worked up so as to make men fit for heaven, what need of the new birth? what need of the Spirit of all grace to renew him in the spirit of his mind? Whenever, my brethren, you pray to God for the Spirit to change the human heart, whether you believe the doctrine or not, you imply it in your petition before the mercy-seat. They are represented by the sacred writers as having been called from darkness into light, as having an unction from the Holy One whereby they know all things, and those of them who have been called readily acknowledge that they were once foolish, once deceived and deceiving, once depraved — very depraved; and not only so, but the very best of Christians in the world

confess with humility the depravity of their hearts, and I believe that the man who knows himself best is the man who is most ready to confess this and to humble himself before God—"Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And while Christians feel this, their language is, "Create within me a clean heart, oh God! and renew a right spirit within me; purge me with hysop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Apply the blood of sprinkling to my guilty conscience, and let the Spirit of all grace work in my polluted and depraved heart, and form me to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and meeten my immortal spirit for the inheritance of the saints in light, and of angels in glory. My dear friends, I need not say more. I should not think there is an individual here this afternoon who is not disposed to agree with me, when I say that man is fallen creature, is a depraved creature, is a condemned creature: he is under the curse of God's righteous law, and at the same time the subject of the reigning power of depravity, the subject of the effects of sin throughout his whole nature; and that, as a sinner, let it be recorded in high heaven there is no good in man's nature until God puts it there, and you will never be brought, by beloved hearers, into a right state of mind before God, until you are brought to feel that you have nothing, and that you must have all in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Oh! Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" But here are blessed tidings, "But in me is their help found." Does not this subject, my hearers, teach us, in the first place, the amazing long suffering of God towards our race. God might, as soon as man sinned, without the least imputation of injustice to his character, have cut him down, because the fall was the result of his criminal choice, and attended by the most aggravating circumstances; but God has borne with us, and is bearing still, which shows that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, oh! house of Israel?" And does not the subject teach us also the helplessness of man as a sinner? He is unable to atone for his sins or to renew his heart. Many attempts have been made to atone for human transgression, and to cleans and purify the human heart, but they have all failed, not one has succeeded. No sacrifice, short of an infinite one, could satisfy Divine justice and magnify the broken law. No power, short of the omnipotent energy of the Eternal Spirit, can renew the human heart. But, while man is a helpless creature he is not a hopeless creature. We do not say to him there is no hope. Oh, no! I rejoice in that thought at this very moment. God has remembered us in our lowest state, he has laid help upon one that is mighty, one who, by his passive and active obedience, has magnified the law and made it honourable, satisfied the claims of Divine justice, so that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ; and while he made atonement for our transgressions, he has procured for us the Spirit of all grace to renew our nature, to transform us into the likeness of himself, and to prepare us in the use of means for the inheritance of the saints in light. Those of us who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and, I trust, most of us are—would to God that I could believe that we all are—let us pray for a larger measure of the Spirit, upon ourselves, individually, and upon the world around us. Surely, my hearers, my dear brother who has to occupy this platform, and who has to unfurl to you the banner of the cross, will need a large measure of the Holy Spirit. May He come upon his head, and upon his heart; and may he never ascend this platform but in His strength, and under His guidance, and in His light; may he never preach a sermon without its being blessed to the conversion of souls, and the building up of the Church; and may you, as a Christian Church, continue earnest in prayer for the Spirit to come, and it is the Spirit will reconcile us to each other, the Spirit will remove differences between Arminians and Calvinists, the Spirit will

bring us to see, by-and-by, eye to eye, and this world will be filled with the glory of God. May the Lord command his blessing upon these remarks, for his name's sake. Amen.

The Meeting then adjourned till half-past six. After the friends had assembled—

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON said, I wish to make one or two observations before I introduce to you the speakers of this evening. Controversy is never a very happy element for the child of God: he would far rather be in communion than engaged in defence of the faith or in attack upon error. But the soldier of Christ knows no choice in his Master's commands. He may feel it to be better for him to lie upon the bed of rest than to stand covered with the sweat and dust of battle; but as a soldier he has learned to obey, and the rule of his obedience is not his personal comfort but his Lord's absolute command. The servant of God must endeavour to maintain all the truth which his Master has revealed to him, because, as a Christian soldier, this is part of his duty. But while he does so, he accords to others the liberty which he enjoys himself. In his own house of prayer he must and will maintain that which he believes to be true. He does not feel himself at all out of temper or angry when he hears that in other places there are some holding different views of what the truth is, who as honestly, and perhaps as forcibly, endeavour to maintain their views. To our own Master we stand or fall; we have no absolute judge of right or wrong incarnate in the flesh on earth to-day. Nor is even the human judgment itself an infallible evidence of our being, for since the fall, no powers of mortals are free from imperfection. Our judgment is not necessarily a fully enlightened one, and we ourselves therefore let another man's judgment also be his guide unto God; but we must not forget that every man is responsible to the Most High for the use of that judgment, for the use of that mental power which God has given him, by which he is to weigh and balance the arguments of either side. I have found commonly that, with regard to the doctrine of grace which we preach, there are a great many objections raised. One of the simplest trades in the world is the raising of objections. You never need, if you wish to set up in that line of business, to look abroad for capital or resources; however poor and penniless a man may be, even in wits, he can easily manufacture difficulties. It is said "that a fool may raise objections which a thousand wise men could not answer." I would not hesitate to say that I could bring objections to your existence to-night, which you could not disprove. I could sophisticate and mystify until I brought out the conclusion that you were blind, and deaf, and dumb, and I am not sure that by any process of logic you would be able to prove that you were not so. It might be clear enough to you that you could both speak, and see, and hear. The only evidence, however, I suppose that you could give, would be by speaking, and seeing, and hearing, which might be conclusive enough; but if it were left to be a mere matter of word-fighting for schoolmen, I question whether the caviller might not cavil against you to the judgment-day in order to dispute you out of the evidence of your very senses. The raising of difficulties is the easiest trade in all the world, and, permit me to add, it is not one of the most honourable. The raising of objections has been espoused, you know, by that great and mighty master of falsehood in the olden times, and it has been carried on full often by those whose doubts about the truth sprung rather from their hearts than from their heads. Some difficulties, however, ought to be met, and let me now remove one or two of them. There are some who say, "Provided the doctrines of grace be true, what is the use of our preaching?" Of course I can hardly resist a smile while I put this splendid difficulty—it is so huge a one. If there are so many who are to be saved, then why preach? You cannot diminish, you cannot increase the number, why preach the Gospel? Now, I thought my friend Mr. Bloomfield anticipated this difficulty well enough. There must be a harvest,—why sow, why plough? Simply because the harvest is ordained



in the use of the means. The reason why we preach at all is because God has ordained to save some. If he had not, we could not see the good of preaching at all. Why! we should come indeed on a fool's errand if we came here without the Master's orders at our back. His elect shall be saved—every one of them,—and if not by my instrumentality or that of any brother here present, if not by any instrumentality, then would God sooner call them by his Holy Spirit, without the voice of the minister, than that they should perish. But this is the very reason why we preach, because we wish to have the honour of being the means, in the hand of God, of calling these elect ones to himself. The certainty of the result quickens us in our work, and surely it would stay none but a fool in his labour. Because God ordains that his word shall not return unto him void, therefore, we preach that word, because, “as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud, even so doth the word of the Lord accomplish his purpose;” therefore, we would have our doctrine to drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb. But, there are some again who say, “To what purpose after all, is your inviting any to come, when the Spirit of God alone constrains them to come; and why, especially, preach to those whom believe to be so depraved that they cannot and will not come?” Ay, just so, this is a serious difficulty to everything except faith. Do you see Ezekiel yonder; he is about to preach a sermon. By his leave, we will stop him. “Ezekiel, where are you about to preach?” “I am about,” saith he, “to preach to a strange congregation—dead, dry bones, lying in a mass in a valley.” “But, Ezekiel, they have no power to live.” “I know that,” saith he. “To what purpose, then, is your preaching to them? If they have no power, and if the breath must come from the four winds, and they have no life in themselves, to what purpose do you preach?” “I am ordered to preach,” saith he, “commanded;” and he does so. He prophesies, and afterward mounting to a yet higher stage of faith, he cries, “Come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” And the wind comes, and the effect of his ministry is seen in their life. So preach we to dead sinners; so pray we for the living Spirit. So, by faith, do we expect his Divine influence, and it comes,—cometh not from man, nor of man, nor by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, but from the sovereign will of God. But notwithstanding it comes instrumentally through the faith of the preacher while he pleads with man, “as though God did beseech them by us, we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.” But if ten thousand other objections were raised, my simple reply would be just this, “We can raise more objections against your theory, than you can against ours.” We do not believe that our scheme is free from difficulties; it were uncandid if we were to say so. But we believe that we have not the tithe of the difficulties to contend with that they have on the opposite side of the question. It is not hard to find in those texts which appear to be most against us, a key, by which they are to be harmonized; and we believe it to be utterly impossible, without wresting Scripture, to turn those texts which teach our doctrine, to teach any other thing whatsoever. They are plain, pointed, pertinent. If the Calvinistic scheme were the whole sum and substance of all truth, why then surely, if it held everything within some five or six doctrines, you might begin to think that man were God, and that God's theology were less than infinite in its sweep. What are we, that we should grasp the infinite? We shall never measure the marches of eternity. Who shall compass with a span the Eternal God, and who shall think out anew his infinite thoughts? We pretend not that Calvinism is a plumb-line to fathom the deeps; but we do say, that it is a ship which can sail safely over its surface, and that every wave shall speed it onwards towards its destined haven. To fathom and to comprehend is neither your business nor mine, but to learn, and then, having learned, to teach to others, is the business of each Christian man; and thus would

be do, God being our helper. One friend kindly suggests a difficulty to me, which, having just spoken of, I shall sit down. That amazing difficulty has to do with the next speaker's topic, and, therefore, I touch it. It says in the Scriptures, that Paul would not have us destroy him with our meat for whom Christ died. Therefore, the inference is—only mark, we don't endorse the logic—the inference is, that you may destroy some with your meat for whom Christ died. That inference I utterly deny. But then, let me put it thus. Do you know, that a man may be guilty of a sin which he cannot commit. Does that startle you? Every man is guilty of putting God out of existence, if he says in his heart, "No God." But he *cannot* put God out of existence; and yet, the guilt is there, because he would if he could. There be some who crucify the Son of God afresh. They cannot,—he is in heaven, he is beyond their reach. And yet, because their deeds would do that, unless some power restrained, they are guilty of doing what they can never do, because the end and aim of their doings would be to destroy Christ, if he were here. Now, then, it is quite consistent with the doctrine that no man can destroy any for whom Christ died, still to insist upon it that a man may be guilty of the blood of souls. He may do that which, unless God prevented it,—and that is no credit to him,—unless God prevented it, would destroy souls for whom Jesus Christ died. But, again I say, I have not come here to-night to anticipate and to answer all objections; I have only done that, that some troubled conscience might find peace. This was not a meeting of discussion, but for the explaining of our views, and the teaching them simply to the people. I now shall call upon my beloved brother to take up the point of particular redemption.

## PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

BY THE

**Rev. J. A. SPURGEON,**

OF SOUTHAMPTON.

I think it is well that the death of Christ and its consequent blessings should occupy one place in our discussion here to-night; for not only is it the central truth in the Calvinistic theory, but the death of Christ is the centre point of all history and of all time. The devout of all ages have stood and gazed with anxious glance into these deep mysteries, searching what, or what manner of things the Holy Spirit did by them testify and reveal; and we know that hereafter, in yon world of glory, the redeemed shall sing of these things for ever, and shall find in the Redeemer and in his work, fresh matter for love and for praise as eternity shall roll on. We take our stand between the two, and I think the language of our hearts to-night is akin to all ages of the Church of Christ,—“God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now the grand result of the death of our Lord—though not the only result—the grand result of that death, so far as man is concerned, is the redemption which it ultimately achieves; and, with regard to the extent of that redemption, we believe the Scriptures are plain and speak most clearly, when they tell of a final day of manifestation, when the redeemed *from amongst* men shall take their stand before the Redeemer, to sing of him who, as the good shepherd, hath laid down his life for his sheep, and has purchased unto himself a peculiar people—his body, the Church. Now, we believe that, in reaching that grand and final result there are many steps that must be taken, and we

think that, from these preliminary steps, there are multitudes that gain rich handfuls of blessings who shall not however reap the full harvest of glory. We believe that the whole world is flooded with blessings, and that the stream rolls broad and clear from the hill-foot of Calvary, and laves the feet alike of the godly and of the ungodly, the thankful and the thankless. But from the riven side of Christ there comes forth one stream—the river of life, whose banks are trodden only by the feet of the multitude of believers, who wash and are clean, who drink and live for evermore. We speak to-night of Christ's death in its various relations, so as to touch upon and include sundry things which cannot be properly classed under the title of particular redemption; but we feel we are driven to this course, so as to be able to do justice to ourselves and to our leading theme.

Now, we have three sets of truths before us, and these three sets of truths we must deal with. (1.) We have, first of all, a God holy and righteous, loving and gracious, a God who has been most grievously wronged and injured, and a God who must be honoured alike by the giving him all the glory of which he has been robbed, and by the bearing of his just expression of holy indignation at the wrong that has been done unto him. We have a God jealous in the extreme, and yet, strange enough, declaring that he passes by iniquity and forgiveth transgression and sin. We have a God truthful, who has sworn "that the soul that sinneth it shall die," and who yet speaks to those souls, and says, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die." A God whom we know must be just, and must execute upon the ungodly that which they have justly merited, and who yet strangely says, "Come and let us plead together, and though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as wool, and though they be like crimson I will make them white as snow." That is one set of truths—strange, and apparently contradictory. Then we have another. (2.) We have a world lost, and yet swathed in an atmosphere of mercy. We have a world dark with the darkness of death, and yet everywhere we find it more or less under the influence of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, which came a light unto darkness, that did not and could not comprehend it. And we have, moreover, a world rebellious, and serving another master than the right one, and yet nevertheless beneath the feet of him who has been made Head over all things for his body's sake, which is the Church. (3.) And then, once more, we have a Church peculiar in its unmerited privileges, chose from before all time to inherit the kingdom given to it before the world began—a kingdom that can never be trodden upon save by the spotless and the deathless; and yet the inheritors are by nature dead in trespasses and in sins—lost, ruined—without a God and without a hope in the world. How are all those strange and apparently contradictory things to be solved? One clue, we find, is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The work involves its ultimate end, which is redemption, and of that work we are about to speak here to-night.

We speak first of those blessings which come from the death of Christ, and are for all men; the whole world is under a mediatorial government, the whole spirit of which is a government of long-suffering, graciousness, tenderness, and mercy, such as could not have been exercised had Christ never died. A government there might have been, but it must be, we think, a government akin to that which is found in the place where those are found who make their bed in hell. We find, moreover, that the direct and indirect influences of the Cross of Christ have pervaded the whole world, and none can tell how full oft its gentle spirit has come like oil upon the troubled waters; or what man, with his wild passions, would have been without the ameliorating influence of the Cross. We possibly may be able to tell, when we look across the impassable gulf into a Gehenna beneath, and see sin unchecked working out its dire results; and, we believe that whatever comes short of that darkness, whose very light is darkness, is due to that light which radiates from the Cross of

Christ, and whatever is short of hell streams from Calvary. And then, further still, we have a Bible, a revelation filled with the love and mercy of God to man—a Bible in which our Lord himself could show, beginning at Moses, and in all the prophets, that which did testify concerning himself; and, apart from Jesus Christ and his death, there could have been no such revelation of God's character unto the human race. A revelation there might have been, but it would have been a revelation of Sinai's horrors and terrors, without even the spark of hope which comes forth from that dispensation there set forth. There might have been a revelation, I say, but it would have been a revelation that would not have wound up as this does with a blessing. It would have ended like the Old Testament with a curse; it would have begun with the same. It would have been worse than Ezekiel's roll of woes which is filled all over with terrible lamentation, and with awful sorrow and woe. And again, there is a positive overture of mercy, a true and faithful declaration of good tidings unto every creature, and we *do* believe that it is our duty to preach the Gospel unto every creature; and the Gospel runs thus—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, for he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That overture we hold to be no mockery, but made in good faith; and that overture is not the overture of a shadow, but the presentation of solid, substantial blessings; and for the rejection of that, not God, but man is answerable, and for the rejection of that he will be lost. "For this the condemnation, that they have not believed on him whom God hath sent." And, then, lastly, we find that as the purchase of the death of Christ there is a Church, and that Church is sent forth into the world with orders to bless it and to do good unto all men. It is bidden to go forth as a light in the midst of darkness; it is bidden so to live as to be the salt of the whole earth. Now, we say that each one of these blessings is no small gift from God to man—no mean result of the death of our Master; and, combined, we think they would form a boon worthy of a God; and, as we put our hand upon it, we think we can give a full and true expression, and with an emphasis surpassed by none, to that glorious text—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And we think, upon our system, and upon ours alone, we can give full truthfulness and emphasis to the remainder—"That whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting life." Now, upon redemption proper, the latter part of our theme, we will pass on to speak. And, first, what do we mean by redemption? Most certainly we do not mean the **POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION**, for we have learned to distinguish between the possibility of a thing and a thing itself. We feel this, that we do not preach and cannot preach, gathering our teaching from the Bible, a possibility of redemption. We proclaim a redemption. Nor do we mean by redemption a contingency of redemption, which, again, is contingent upon a third thing. We have learned to distinguish between a contingency and a certainty. We proclaim a certain redemption, and we speak of that which is not possible but positive, not contingent but certain. Neither do we mean by redemption such an outgrowth of the man's own power or goodness as shall enable him to burst his way through every bondage and to get forth free; such an elevation of human nature, whether by the education of others, or by his own works, as to enable him at last to stand free. If we meant that, we should use the word *escape*, but not the word *redemption*. And again, if we meant, as some, alas! have seemed to mean, God's foregoing his claim upon man; God's waiving man's liabilities, and God's giving up that which we believe, as a holy God, he cannot surrender; if we meant that, we should speak of *emancipation*—of pure pardon and forgiveness. But we do not. We mean *redemption*. And then, again, we do not mean by redemption the meeting of the debts, either in prospective or in the present. We do not mean that the man shall, either in the present or in the future, bear any part of the penalty; and, by some goodness, either in the present or foreseen, satisfy God's claim upon

him. If we meant that, I think we should use altogether another word than the word redemption. What do we mean by redemption? We mean, by redemption, the work of one being which is done for another, but generally a helpless one, in order to give him a perfect freedom. And when we speak of redemption, mark you, we speak of a thing that is the result of that work. We distinguish between redemption and redemption work. What we mean, by redemption, is just this—the grand result and end of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we could as well speak of redemption apart from the redeemed, as we could speak of life apart from a living creature. Life and living creatures are co-extensive, and so is redemption and the redeemed. If you take down any book that will give you an explanation of the word “redemption,” I think you will find three things put therein. It is a ransom, a rescue, and a release. Now, I take the whole three words to be the fulness of the meaning of one word. It is such a ransom, and such a rescue, as result in a complete and full release. Whatever stops short of that thing, is, of course, not the thing itself; the thing itself that we mean, is the positively being redeemed and made free. Now, just by way of simplifying the subject, let me speak of the Redeemer, and of the redemption work, and of those who are redeemed.

First, the Redeemer, who is he? We believe him to be the Word that was with God, equal unto God, and was God,— who became flesh and dwelt among us. At the same time, the flesh did not become, in any sense, Deity, neither did the Deity, in any sense, become carnal. They formed another person, and that person the God-man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Now, what is he? And here I just ask that question, in order to meet some objections, and, if I can, to put on one side two or three theories that seem to fight against ours. I hear a voice, saying, in reply to that question, what is he? Why, he is God’s idea of humanity; he is God, who has taken up humanity from its fallen state, raised it up not only to the place where he first put it, but, beyond, even to the height to which he hoped it would ascend, or possibly something beyond it. And, now, from henceforth, such is the union betwixt common humanity, that the lost, in their degradation, have but to look to their common humanity exalted, realize their identity with it, and to feel themselves, by that deed, raised to the same standard, and redeemed, and free for evermore. To which, we reply, there is enough of truth in that lie to keep it alive, and that is all. We do believe that our Master did lay hold of humanity; we do believe that he has honoured and dignified the human race, by taking that upon him, and by becoming flesh like unto ourselves. But we cannot see how that the gazing upon that can open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, give life to the dead, and procure the discharge of our sins, any more than we can see how that the gazing upon an Olympic game would give to the physically lame, physical strength, or could give to those who were physically dead, life from their physical death.

And, again, I hear other voices replying to that question. They say, “he is the great example of self-denial, and of the submission of the human will to the Divine. And what redemption is, is this—that man now can look to that great display of selfdenial, can catch of its spirit, and can imitate it, and by that deed of subjection, making the will to succumb to the will of the Divine, they may, at least, emancipate themselves, and go forth free.” To which we reply, once more, there is enough of truth in that just to cement the error together, and to give it a plausible appearance to the sons of men, but there is nothing more. It is true that our Saviour was the Sent One of the Father. It is true, he came, saying, “Lo! I come to do thy will.” He declares he was not doing his own will, but the will of him that sent him. And he winds up by saying, “Not my will, but thine be done.” But, after all, we cannot, and dare not accept that submission of Christ’s will to the Father, as being a

satisfaction for sin; neither can we see, how, by the imitation of that, we can, in any sense, wipe away the sins of the past, or free ourselves from the penalty that is yet to come.

But now to answer for ourselves. What is our Lord Jesus Christ? And we say, that in life he is the great example and copy; in death, he is the substitute; and in both, the federal head—the elder brother and kinsman of his Church.

But now time warns me that I must pass on to the second thought—the work of redemption. First of all, we gaze at that part of the work which is Godward, and that we call atonement; and, when you ask me—What is the character of the atonement? I reply—It has a twofold nature, to correspond with the twofold character of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and a consequent insult to him who is the lawmaker. But it is something more than that: the power by which he has transgressed has been perverted; it was given to him to obey the law that he might glorify God. And to make, therefore, a satisfaction for sin, there must be a bringing to the law obedience; there must be the bearing of the sanction because of the disobedience; there must be the rendering to God the glory due to him; and there must be the bearing of his just displeasure and the expression of his holy wrath and indignation. That Christ has done: he came, and his whole life was obedience to the law, for he was obedient even unto death; and in that death he bore the sanction of the law—for he was made a curse, it being written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” His whole life was spent to glorify God, and at its close he could say, “I have glorified thee, and I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do:” and his death was the bearing of the just displeasure of God towards the sinner, and in the agony of his heart he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In these things we behold, therefore, the presentation of the obedience due, the giving to God the glory due, the bearing of God’s displeasure, and the enduring of the curse of the law. And now the question would be put to me as to the value of atonement. We believe that its value depends not so much upon the Being appeased, nor upon the beings to be atoned for, as upon the Being who makes the atonement. The value of Christ’s atonement is the value of himself. He gave himself for us. If he had stood as the surety for the whole world, he could not be more. He gave himself; what more could he bestow? The value of the atonement is the value of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his flesh he can take man’s place, and by his Divinity he can give, and must give anyhow, an infinite value to the work that he, in mortal flesh, performs. For one soul, therefore, it must be infinite—for more or less it cannot be. Infinite it is, and infinite it must be, and we have no part or parcel with those who would say, that if Judas was to have been saved, Judas’ amount of penalty would have had to have been paid, in addition to what has been borne and paid by Christ. He took the place, the room, and stead of the church, and then all that he was worth went in that church’s place and stead. More he could not do, if he had taken the place of the whole world. But, you ask me, is there any limit to the atonement at all? I say I think there is; and the limit seems to be, not in the value, but in the purpose. The limit seems to be this theory—for *whom* did he die? in whose place and stead did he stand? If he stood in the place and stead of the whole world, then he made atonement for the sins of the whole world, and the whole world will be saved. If he stood in the place and stead of his Church, then he made atonement for his Church, and the whole Church will be saved. We believe that Christ took the place and stead of every believer, that the believer’s sin was put on him, and thus the ex-sinner can go forth free. But I hear a voice saying, “I challenge substitution, and I object to that.” So be it. I ask you, did Christ die for sin at all? It must be answered,—Yes. Then for whose sin did he die? If his own, then he suffered righteously. Did he die for the sins of the whole world? then justice cannot demand this again. Did he die for part of the sins of the whole

world? then the rest of the sins will still condemn the world; then must have Christ died in vain. We believe that he took all the sins of some men. It was not a fictitious condemnation; it was not a fancy sin made for the occasion; it was a positive sin that had been committed by God's people, and is transferred from them to him who laid down his life for his sheep; loving us, and giving himself for and in the stead or in the place of his people.

But, then, we say this work of redemption comprised something more than thus paying down the ransom, and the bearing of the penalty. It is, moreover, a rescue; for sin has not only made men this to have insulted God and broken God's law, it has transferred them unto bondage under the allegiance of one—"the strong man armed." They must be freed from that. Christ came, has destroyed death, and through death him also who has the power of death, even the devil; making an open show of them upon his cross, ascending up on high a victor, leading captivity captive. And then, I think, there is yet something further. Sin has affected the man himself, made him to need in his own person a releasing from the dominion, power, and corruption of sin. This Christ has secured by his covenant with the Father. But that which I take to comprise effectual calling and final perseverance, I shall leave to my brethren who shall speak afterwards. And now as to the persons redeemed—who are they? The Church, we say, whether you look at the Church as elect from all eternity, or the Church believing in time, or the Church as glorified hereafter. We look at them all as one, and we say these are the redeemed, these are they for whom redemption has been procured. We cannot add to their number, we cannot diminish them; for we believe that those whom God foreknew, he did predestinate; that those whom he did predestinate, he also called: for whom he calls he justifies, for whom he justifies he also glorifies; the whole are one,—and for these redemption has been made.

Now, if I may be permitted the time, I will just touch upon one or two, objections, and then I will conclude. I hear some one saying, "But by that, sir, you surely must limit God's love." I reply, is God loving when he punishes any and doth not save all? Then is he loving also when he purposes to do that, for whatever justifies the deed justifies the purpose which gives the morality to the deed. And then I hear another objection—"How can you, sir, upon that theory, go to preach the Gospel unto every creature?" You have heard that answered—we have got the order; but, I reply yet further: I could not go and preach the Gospel upon any other theory, for I dare not go on that fool's errand of preaching a redemption that might not redeem, and declaring a salvation that might not save. I could not go and say to a man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And he would answer me, "Do you think you are going to heaven?" "Yes." "Why?" "Because Christ died for me." "But he died for us all, and my chances therefore are as good as yours." And he might reply to me after he had accepted my declaration, and after he had believed, and begun to rejoice, after all he might say, "Is there any real reason why I should rejoice, some for whom Christ died are in hell, and I may also go there. I cannot begin to rejoice in your news till I feel myself in glory. It is rather a faulty piece of good news, because it is nothing positive; it is a grand uncertainty you have proclaimed to me." Now, what we preach, is the Gospel to every creature, and that we take to be this—If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you shall be saved; if you do not, you will be lost, and lost for ever. You are not redeemed—you are not saved,—there is not, in another word, salvation and redemption for those who are lost for ever. But we add, "We are what we are by Divine grace; we have believed; if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be as we are—will be able to boast as we do, humbly in the Lord our God;" or in other words—If you believe, and are baptized, you will be saved; if you do not believe, you will be lost, and lost for ever.

## EFFECTUAL CALLING

BY THE

**Rev. JAMES SMITH**

OF CHELTENHAM.

My Christian friends, our minds have been occupied to-day with some of the loftiest subjects that can engage the thoughts of man. Our attention has been directed to the infinitely wise and true God, and we have been endeavouring to conceive of him as the great, the infinite, the eternal; the great, the infinite, the eternal intellect, who, of himself, conceiveth the grandest schemes, and infallibly provides for their accomplishment, so that there can be no mistake, no failure. We know that every wise intellect forms its plan before it provides its mean, or attempts to carry out the idea conceived in the mind.

And the great doctrine of election, to which our attention was directed this afternoon, answers to the formation of the plan in the infinite mind of God. He foresaw, clearly, that the whole human race, represented by the first man, would fall into sin, and left to themselves, would certainly perish. To prevent a catastrophe so fearful, he determined in his infinite mind, to have a people for himself, a people that would comprise the vast majority of the fallen inhabitants of this world. They were all present before his mind; their names were registered in his book, which book was delivered into the hands of the Lamb, the Son of God, who accepted the book at the hands of his Father, and, as it were, signed it with his own name, so that it has been designated, "The Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And Jesus looked upon this act as the committing of the people to himself, on purpose that he might take the charge of them, on purpose that he might carry out the Father's will respecting them, and gain eternal laurels and honours to himself, by placing them in splendor, majesty, and glory before his Father's face for ever. We therefore find him frequently when speaking with his Father, and referring to this act in the eternal counsels, saying, "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. Keep those whom thou hast given me by thine own name, that they may be one as we are." But election interferes not with man as standing in Adam, but with man as under sin the result of Adam's fall. It ensured their restoration, but it did not interfere with their fall, and consequently the elect, with the rest, all fell in the first man. The entire mass of human nature became depraved, polluted, rotten to the heart's core; so depraved, so polluted, so rotten, that nothing could effect a change but the omnipotent energy of the omnipotent God. There is that in depravity in every form, that defies the touch of any one but the Infinite; that refuses to succumb to anything but to Omnipotence itself. The heart of man is foul as the heart of Satan; the nature of man is foul as the nature of Satan; and the sin of man is worse than the sin of Satan. Satan, the great archangel, that fell from heaven, did a tremendous deed when he set mind in opposition to Deity; but man set not merely mind, but matter with mind, in opposition to the eternal God. God could once look upon the world and say, "Though mind is in rebellion, matter is not in opposition;" but after the fall of man, mind and matter alike were corrupt, were depraved, were in opposition to the Eternal. Every man's heart steams with enmity against God; every man's spirit rises in rebellion against God; and, as you have heard tonight, the verdict of every man's conscience in its fallen



state is, “No God, no God;” and if the Eternal could be voted out of existence by the suffrages of his fallen creatures, every hand would be up, every heart would give its verdict, and every voice would vote for the annihilation of the Most High. The will of man strong, the will of man stern, the will of man determined, and opposed to the will of God, will yield to nothing but that which is superior to itself; it laughs at authority, it turns with disgust from holiness, it refuses to listen to invitation, and, in this state, man—universal man, is found. In this state, man, the entire mass of man, with the exception of those who had been saved on credit, and had been changed by the sacred influences of the Spirit—in this state man was found when Christ came into our world. He came and, as ye have heard, assumed humanity, and united it with Deity. The two natures constituted the one person of the glorious Mediator; that glorious Mediator stood the representative of his people; that Mediator stood the Surety of his family; that Mediator stood the Substitute of the multitude of his fallen ones. That Mediator came to be the sacrifice to which sin was to be transferred, by which sin was to be expiated and removed out of the way, that God’s mercy might freely flow, and from the sinner’s conscience, that he might have peace and joy.

But as the election of the Father did not interfere with the falling of man’s nature, so the redemption of the Son did not change the nature that had fallen. It was therefore necessary, that as the Father sent the Son, the Son should send the Comforter; and as it required an infinite victim to atone for man’s guilt, it required an infinite agent to change man’s fallen nature. As to the Father, the atonement must be made as the moral governor, as the maintainer of the rights of the eternal throne; so from the Father, through the Son, must the Holy Spirit descend to renew, to transform, to remodel, to fit human nature to gaze upon the unveiled glories of Deity, and to render to God the homage due unto his name. And this just brings me to my point—EFFECTUAL CALLING. This implies, that there is a calling that may not be effectual. Yes, there is a call that extends to the whole human family. As it is written, “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is unto the sons of men.” There is a call that refers to humanity as sinful, and to sinners as such, however fallen and depraved they may be. Repentance or a change of mind, repentance and remission of sins, are to be preached amongst all nations, and the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem; and, beginning at Jerusalem the slaughter-house of the Son of God, and the slaughter-house of the prophets, and of the saints,—beginning there, they said, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” But the people were like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer—charm he never so wisely. The Baptist had come and cried, “Repent,” and sternly, and impressively he preached, but they paid little regard,—at least, little regard that tended to life. And the Son of God, with all that was soft, and winning, and captivating, came and preached; but they turned away, and he said, “To whom shall I like the men of this generation—they are like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows—We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced, and we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented.” Now, this call must be given, because God commands it; this call must be given, because God works by it. In giving the general, the universal call to all that hear the gospel, we obey the high mandate of the Eternal God; we do honour and homage to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we employ an instrument—a weapon, if you please—by which the Spirit of God operates upon the human mind; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing, and the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. The general call leads to the special, to the particular, or what we designate,

the “effectual call.” We speak to me as men, and we reason with them; we speak to sinners as sinners, and we expostulate with them; but while we reason, and while we expostulate, we have the promise of the presence of the Master—“I am with you;” we have the promised presence of the Eternal Paraclete, who was sent to empower, sent to accompany, and sent to work by the Lord’s servants; and, while we speak and give the call as we are commanded and commissioned, the Holy Spirit works—the infinite power of the Eternal Spirit comes into contact,—direct, immediate contact, with the mind of man. There is a power that goes with the word—distinct from the word—when it is accompanied by the energy of the Eternal Spirit; and that power produces in the heart, life—a spiritual, a Divine, an immortal life—a life that man dead in sin had not; a life which a man once having loseth not, for it is eternal; a life that was given us in Christ before the world was; a life preserved for us by Christ all through the past ages that have rolled away; a life that is communicated from the loving heart of Him who is the great depository of grace, and conducted by the Holy Ghost into the heart that is called by grace. Has the Spirit accompanying the word produced life? From that life springs conviction: not the cold conviction awakened occasionally in the mind of man, by the reasoning of man, by reflecting upon his past misconduct, or by the flashing of the forked lightnings of the law; but a conviction that is produced by the Holy Spirit bringing the law into contact with the conscience—the Gospel into contact with the heart. In the sinner’s conscience God erects a tribunal, in the sinner’s conscience God sits as judge, and to the tribunal, before the just judge, man is summoned to appear; and in the heart, in the soul, in the nature of man, there is a miniature of the judgment that is to take place at the completion and winding up of the present dispensation. The man is arraigned as a sinner, the man is convicted as a culprit, the man is condemned as a criminal; he stands before God, and he has nothing to say; every excuse has withered like the leaves of autumn, every excuse is carried away like the chaff from the summer’s threshing-floor, every rag that the man boasted of is torn from him, and he stands, a naked sinner, before a heart-searching God. The penetrating eye of the Omniscient darts into the innermost recesses of his soul, and the gentle fingers of the Spirit turns over one fold of the heart after the other; the process may be long, or the operation may be quick, but sooner or later the man is brought to this.—“In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” He had once started at the Scriptural representation of man’s fallen and depraved nature; he had once wondered that from the lip of truth had proceeded the startling words, “From within, out of the heart, proceed murders, adulteries, blasphemies, false witnesses, and abominable idolatries.” He never could have thought that evil so dreadful, he never could have thought that sins so fearful, he never could have thought that principles so diabolical, could have been found in a nature like his; but there they are, and he has nothing to object—but, under the power of the deep conviction that is produced, he is filled with terrible alarm. If he casts his eye back, there are the crimes of his life; if he casts his eye forward, there is the tremendous judgment; if he lifts up his eyes to Heaven, there is the pure and holy God that he has insulted; and if he turns his eyes within, all is dark and vain and wild. He is filled with alarm—alarm that perhaps keeps him awake by night, and haunts and harasses him by day, until he is prepared to do anything, prepared to go anywhere, if he may but escape the just judgment of his God. He is by this discipline prepared to submit to God’s method of salvation; he is prepared to give up proposing conditions according to which he would be saved; he no longer goes about to work out a righteousness of his own, but he is ready to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Being, therefore, conscious of his criminality, burdened with his guilt, trembling at the prospect of his destiny, he falls prostrate before the high throne of the Eternal, smites upon his breast, and cries

“God be merciful to me a sinner,” as if no such a sinner had ever appealed to God’s mercy, as if no such culprit had ever stood before God’s throne; before God he says, “If there can be mercy in thy heart sufficient to reach a case so dismal and so desperate, God be merciful to me;” and after having pleaded with earnestness, after having supplicated with intense emotion, and after having, perhaps, become a little bold, he is startled at his own temerity, and receding, as it were, from the position that he had taken, he cries—

“Depth of mercy, can there be  
 Mercy in thy heart for me,  
 O God of spotless purity?”

And, perhaps, like David, he groans in his heart, and mourns in his soul, until his bones wax old, through his roaring all the day long. But, no relief, no help is found, until, at length, he begins to make confession of his sin, and, as he confesses, the Spirit of God unveils and unfolds the gospel mystery, and, as in the days of the law, when the victim was brought to the Priest, and the man placed his hand upon its head, between its horns, and pressed with his might and confessed over it all his transgressions, all his iniquities, and all his sins, so the man lays his hand of faith upon the victim’s head, and there confesses his sin. As he confesses, a change takes place in his feelings, the burden begins to disperse, a little bright light in the cloud attracts his attention, and, as he looks upward, he seems to catch the loving Father’s eye, and feels an encouragement within him to approach unto God; and, as he approaches, still confessing, still pleading, still deploring, still resting his hand upon the victim’s head, and trusting in the atonement you have heard of, and on that alone, he seems to hear strange music, delightful melody, and that music is the commencement of the sound of the trump of the Jubilee, when the oppressed one is to go free, and as he listens to the sound the chains drop from his hands, and the burden from his shoulders, the trouble is removed from his heart, and he lifts up his eyes, streaming perhaps with tears, to heaven, and says, “Oh Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me:” and looking around, on those about him, in the language of wonder, astonishment, and gratitude, he says, “Behold, behold a mystery, behold a miracle, behold one of the greatest wonders of the universe; behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid, for Jah Jehovah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation.” He has now peace flowing into his heart like a river, he has now a consciousness that God has accepted him in the beloved, and he now experimentally knows the truth, tastes the sweetness, and feels the power of the apostolic testimony, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” He has now experienced the effectual call. It has been a call from darkness into marvellous light, from bondage into glorious liberty; out of prison the man comes to reign; from the dunghill he is lifted up to sit among the princes, even among the princes of God’s people. And, now, as I must conclude, just observe, the origin of this call is the free, the sovereign, the distinguishing grace of God. It originates, not in man’s will, nor in man’s disposition, nor in man’s station in society, but of His will, and of His will alone, who is the great sovereign ruler of the universe, is this change effected; of man it *cannot be*, for it includes a new creation; a resurrection; and the inhabitants of God. Generally speaking, the instrumentality by which God works is the gospel, but in every instance the agent that produces the change is the holy and eternal Spirit of God. He quickens the soul dead in trespasses and sins, he enlightens the understanding that was in the midnight darkness of nature, he disposes the will which before ran counter to the will of God; he teaches the

understanding that was once averse to everything pure and holy, and then gently, and lovingly, and sweetly he leads the soul to the Cross to gaze upon the wondrous Sufferer, he then leads the soul to the Church to confess Christ and him crucified, and then leads it in the paths of righteousness for his own name's sake. The calling is high, for it is from the High and Holy One; it is heavenly, in contrast with the earthly calling of the descendants of Abraham of old; it is an evidence of distinguishing love; and thanks, eternal thanks to God, it is irreversible; for the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance. From death to life we pass; from darkness into light we come; out of bondage into liberty we spring; from sin to the knowledge and enjoyment of holiness we are introduced; then at last from earth to heaven. Into the grace of Christ we are called, and we stand in his favour. Into the fellowship of Christ we are called, and when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. The Father draws; the Spirit quickens; the Son receives; and when locked in the arms of the Son of God, our effectual calling is realized and enjoyed. Its author, is God; its subjects, are the elect; its nature, is holy; and its end, is glorious. Thus, you perceive, my friends, all originated in God's thought, which thought sprung into a perfect plan, to carry out which plan provision was made, and this plan will be perfectly carried out to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thus, whether you think of election, whether you think of redemption, or whether you think of effectual calling,

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“Give all the glory to his holy name,  
 For to him all the glory belongs;  
 Be your's the high joy still to sound forth his praise  
 And crown him in each of your songs.”

The REV. C. H. SPURGEON.—I think it was John Newton, who, speaking about good Calvinistic doctrine compared it to lumps of sugar; but he said, he did not so much give to his people the lumps of sugar, as diffuse the whole of it throughout his sermons; just as people do not eat sugar, but put it in their tea. Now, some of you have not yet grown patient enough to listen, I think, to a doctrine, however fully it may be brought out. Our people want anecdotes, illustrations, parables, and metaphors; even the best and sublimest things keep our minds on such a stretch when we listen to them, that there is good need that illustrations should yield us some relief. To-day was set apart that these doctrines might be fully brought out; this has been done, and there remains but one, and that my friend Mr O'Neil is to take, namely the final perseverance of the saints. Before he speaks, just one or two words. Has it never struck you that the scheme of doctrine which is called Calvinistic has much to say concerning God? It commences and ends with the Divine One. The angel of that system stands like Uriel in the sun; it dwells with God; he begins, he carries on, he perfects; it is for his glory and for his honour. Father, Son, and Spirit co-working, the whole Gospel scheme is carried out. Perhaps there may be this defect in our theology; we may perhaps too much forget man. I think that is a very small fault, compared with the fault of the opposite system, which begins with man, and all but ends with him. Man is a creature; how ought God to deal with him? That is the question some theologians seem to answer. The way we put it is—God is the Creator, he has a right to do as he wills; he is Sovereign, there is no law above him, he has a right to make and to unmake, and when man hath sinned, he has a right to save or to destroy. If he can save, and yet not impair his justice, heaven shall ring with songs; if he destroy, and yet his goodness be not marred, then hell itself with its deep bass of misery, shall swell the mighty rollings of his glorious praise. We hold that God should be most prominent in all our teachings; and we hold this to be a

gauge by which to test the soundness of ministers. If they exalt God and sink the sinner to the very dust, it is all well; but if they lower the prerogatives of Deity, if he be less sovereign, less just, or less loving than the Scripture reveals him to be, and if man be puffed up with that fond notion that he is anything better than an unclean thing, then such theology is utterly unsound. Salvation is of the Lord, and let the Lord alone be glorified.

## **THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST JESUS;**

BY THE

**Rev. WILLIAM O'NEILL,**

MINISTER OF NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON.

My dear Brethren and Friends.

Most unexpectedly did the kind invitation of my esteemed brother, Mr Spurgeon, come to me, to take part in the present service of this beautiful house. And after I had engaged to come I sincerely wished that I had not. I felt, however, that it would not be proper to retire from the engagement, but seek to meet in a becoming spirit, both towards God's truth and God's people. I will now try to do this. I utter here, of course, my own sentiments. As I am not responsible for anything that has been or may be said by another speaker, so I alone am responsible for what I shall say. But though I am not the delegate or representative of any church, denomination, or community, I doubt not that my declaration of faith on the matter at hand will be, in all substantial points, that of a very large number who love Jesus and are living in His service. That I desire to believe what the Bible teaches, and that I am sincere in my convictions, I *know* to be true: but that there are thousands of excellent Christians on the other side admits of no doubt, and should not be questioned by any one. Of their deep sincerity, love to God and his Gospel, zeal and devotedness in holy things, self-denying labours in the Divine service, and the cultivation and manifestation of Christian graces, I would and do speak with the most earnest approval. I give them as much credit for sincerity as I claim for myself; and I do this not as a favour, but as a piece of simple justice. Yet we differ—differ as to what the Sacred Oracles teach on the doctrine now before us; and it is competent and right for all men to examine, each one for himself, which of our opinions is that which is taught in the Bible, for certainly both are not taught there.

The question—Is it possible for sincere Christians, truly regenerated persons, to be finally separated from Jesus, to lose the favour of God their Father, and be eternally shut out from His smile and Home?—is one of no small moment. It involves issues of the most momentous nature, and cannot but be unspeakably interesting to every believer in Christ. We say, with unfaltering tongue, that of all the dead, every one who was ever renewed in heart is now in heaven; and that reconciliation with God on earth, through Christ Jesus, will, in every case, end in the everlasting salvation of the soul. Did God, then, tell us that all who are here now are His regenerated people, (would that they were!) we should believe that when the roll of the finally saved shall be called, every one of them would answer to that call by saying, "Here am I, Lord: Thy right arm, and the effectual operation of Thy Spirit and grace has done it all, and now I am to be for ever happy, for

ever sinless, for ever safe." It is hardly necessary to say, that we believe this view of the case to be in entire harmony with the teaching of God's Book. To the law and to the testimony, if we, or others, speak not on this and on all other matters according to that Word, it is because there is no light in us or in them. (Isaiah viii. 20.)

Having called public attention to this doctrine lately in a small book,<sup>1</sup> in which I have sought to obey the Master's command,—“Search the scriptures,”—I will now, with your kind permission, direct attention to a few portions of the Divine Word that, we believe, fully establish the doctrine of the saints' final preservation and perseverance. On each of those texts my words must be few, as the time allotted to me is short.

Hear then the Holy Spirit's teaching when speaking by the prophet Samuel:—“For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” (1 Sam. xii. 22) This, we think, is conclusive. What Christian does not know, and knowing, does not mourn over, the untrustworthiness of his own heart? And feeling fully assured that it is impossible for him to vanquish “the world, the flesh, and the devil,” how welcome to his heart is the declaration, “The LORD will not forsake His people.” No; He thought proper to renew their hearts, to quicken them into spiritual life, and He will mercifully continue to carry on His good work in their souls till it be perfected in glory. The reason why “He will not forsake His people” is stated here most explicitly; just as much so as is the declaration of His unchangeable love. It is not that they were less sinful by nature or practice than others; or because of any moral qualities that were found in them; but “because it pleased the Lord to make them His people.” Hear another portion: God, speaking by his prophet Isaiah, says,—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” (Isaiah xlix. 15, 16.) This we regard as a most interesting, as well as a most consolatory portion of Scripture. “Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” This was not only an error in creed,—it was also a dishonourable estimate of the Divine character, and to it the Gracious One replies in these words:—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.” The affection of a right-minded mother for her tender and helpless offspring is one of the strongest that is experienced by human beings. But, though strong, very strong, it may, alas! give way. It is, at best, only a creature's love, and therefore changeable; while that love which is exercised by God towards His believing children is, like Himself, unchangeable. These words prove, and were designed to prove, most conclusively, that the love of the Divine Father towards His adopted sons and daughters is not a fluctuating or changing thing. What other, or what lower interpretation can we put upon the words, “YET WILL NOT I FORGET THEE?” And not forgetting them is, in this case, equivalent to His continuing to care for, to keep, and tenderly regard them.

Hear God again speaking by the same prophet:—“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains

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<sup>1</sup> *Unchanging Love*. Tresidder, Ave Maria Lane, London. All the texts that are usually quoted in opposition to the doctrine now noticed are passed under calm review.

shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." These words deserve to hold a prominent place among those which God has spoken for the comfort and joy of His people. Their obvious design is—to sustain believers under the chastening hand of God, and to do this by considerations drawn from His own character, and not from anything in themselves. Vain, brethren, is it to trust, or put confidence in our own false hearts. They are weak as helpless infancy. To lean on them will only be evidence of our folly and of our sin. We are not to find consolation in our gifts, in our graces, in our labours, in our resolutions, or in our experience, nor by the grace of God will we do so. But when chastised by the everloving and good Father,—when smarting under his parental and deserved stripes,—we may feast our souls on His blessed words—words that fire those souls with confidence, hope, and love.—“In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” Such, brethren, are GOD’S utterances! These are the words of One who is unchangeable in affection; of One who says,—Oh! blessed be his adorable name for that saying,—“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Mal. iii. 6.)

I name another passage:—“For there shall arise,” says Jesus, “false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matt. xxiv. 24.) The plain and obvious meaning of this latter clause is, that it is not possible to deceive, or allure to their final ruin, the adopted sons and daughters of God, those whom He has chosen to be His. Nothing less, we believe, was intended by the Gracious Speaker, and we see not how any other meaning can be consistently given to the language which He here uses. The words, “If it were possible,” only say, in another form, “*It is not possible.*”

I now name such texts as connect faith, or believing in Christ, with salvation, of which the following are a few:—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.” “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (John ii. 16, v. 24, vi. 47, 50, 51, 57; Rom. i. 16.) The plain teaching of these, and many similar passages, is, that every believer in Jesus *hath* everlasting life. They teach this or they teach nothing. Is this be not their meaning, what is? But, can that which is everlasting cease to be? Can it come to an end? No words can more plainly assert than these do, that whosoever *believeth* in Jesus SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; that all believers in him shall enjoy “everlasting life.” We take these gracious assurances as proving, to the fullest extent, the doctrine for which we plead. If the belief of the Gospel be not followed, in every instance, by eternal blessedness, what did Paul mean when he said, “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation *to every one* that believeth?” (Rom. i. 16.) If, at the last day, a single one be unsaved of those who had believed the Gospel, who had been united to Christ by faith in His name—the apostle’s words must needs be falsified—his teaching is not true. This, at least, is our opinion. No amount of adverse criticism can set aside the evidence that such verses as these furnish in support of the blessed doctrine which we now defend.

Hear Christ again:—"My sheep," he says, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." We regard this entire passage as one of the most delightful and consoling in the Scriptures. It teaches most unequivocally,—in the plainest, strongest, and most conclusive terms,—that Christ's believing ones "SHALL NEVER PERISH;" that no enemy, human or hellish, shall be able to wrench them out of His or His Father's covenanted and secure grasp. Infinite power, no less than infinite love—both existing in their God and Saviour—stand guarantee for their security! Neither men nor demons shall be able to defeat or overturn the purpose of Divine grace concerning them! Difficulties, many and sharp, may surround them; and temptations, fierce and fiery, may assault their souls; but Divine love, wisdom, grace, and power shall be ever on their side. Jesus, the "faithful and true witness," says, "THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH." Elsewhere He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 17) The spiritual life of believers is in HIS keeping, and He here declares that it is as secure as His own. If He dies, and continues not to be their "Advocate with the Father," (1 John ii. 1) their Intercessor "at the right hand of God," (Rom. viii. 34) then may they die also, but not otherwise. In perfect keeping with his Lord's words are those which Paul uses, when referring to the same subject. "For if," he says, "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10) That is, we shall be preserved in that state of reconciliation by Christ's intercessory life at God's right hand in heaven. He, the God-man, lives there as Mediator, for them: He holds and exercises "all power in heaven and on earth" for the welfare and safety of His church. And they cannot die while He lives. The power that is to destroy the spiritual life of the weakest saint must first destroy the life of that saint's Head. "Their life," as the Holy Spirit by Paul elsewhere teaches, "is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). Where, brethren, could it be safer, or as safe? In whose care or keeping could it be so secure? It is "hid with Christ in God." Not only so, but the Apostle goes on to say, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him IN GLORY." This, to say the least of it, is a glorious statement and declaration. Can language, we ask, go beyond that which is used in these texts to guarantee the eternal salvation of every believer in Jesus? The Head and members shall never be separated. They are bound up in an inseparable and an unchanging union.

Hear a Divine lesson given in another place:—"Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30).

When it is said, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called," we must interpret the word "called" to mean very much more than *invited*; for the Apostle goes on to say, "Whom He called, them He also justified." We know that this is only true of those who believe in Jesus—who are effectually called or drawn, by the combined operations of the Word and Spirit of God, into the blessed fellowship and joys of the Gospel (1 Cor. i. 9). That those, and only those, who *believe* in Christ are justified, is the uniform lesson of the Divine Word (John iii. 16, 36; Acts xiii. 39, 40; Rom. i. 16, iii. 22, 28). Let it be noted that Paul affirms three things here. The first is—"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." The second is—"Whom He called, them He also justified." And the third is—"Whom He justified, them He also glorified." What, then, does he mean by the expression "glorified?" Does he, or can he mean anything less than the enjoyment of everlasting life? We say, then, that were only a single individual out of the whole number of those who have



been, or shall be “justified” by faith in Jesus, to come short of heaven, the declaration would not be true that “Whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

Hear another Divine proclamation relative to the security of God’s people:—“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. viii. 38, 39). These, brethren, are notes of the most triumphant character, relative to the ultimate blessedness of believers in Jesus. The terms which are here used are such as leave no doubt as to what the Holy Spirit, speaking by Paul, meant to teach. We deliberately affirm that language has no power to assert the doctrine for which we contend more conclusively than is here done. Words have no meaning, nor are they of any use in communicating thought, if these words were not used by a man who believed as we do on the matter in hand. And we are entirely willing to believe or disbelieve with the Apostle Paul, neither more nor less.

I quote him again. Hear what he wrote to the Church at Philippi:—“Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” I well remember how greatly this strengthened my own soul when, in the morning of my religious life, I was passing through much mental conflict. And are not these words well calculated to comfort the hearts of those who, through grace, have believed in the Saviour? Is there any room for objecting criticism here, or is there any ambiguity in the language employed? No, there is none whatever: the Apostle was “confident of this very thing.” What “very thing?” Why, that wherever the Divine Spirit had commenced this “good work” of grace in the soul, He would complete it. No other power could have begun it, and no other power is competent to carry it forward to completion. That He who commences that “good work” is *able* to finish it, no professing Christian will deny: that He *will* finish it, this verse most clearly teaches. The Apostle Paul was “confident of THIS VERY THING;” and so are we.

Let us give attention to other words of the same sacred penman. Addressing one of the primitive Churches, he says:—“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thes. ii. 13). This is a most important portion of Scripture in relation to the question—What is the end of election? In what does it, or is it to terminate? What does it secure? Are its subjects merely chosen to enjoy the light of the gospel, the means of grace, and no more? Or, are they chosen to enjoy, in its full measure, everlasting life; the priceless favour and blissful fellowship of God here and for ever? This question is definitely settled by the language of inspiration employed here. The Apostle declares that the choice is “to salvation;” or, in other words, which he also uses in this place, “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This means, of course, eternal life in heaven, as well as all that precedes and prepares for it on earth. But how can this be realized? How can it be said, they were “chosen to *salvation*,” if they may all apostatize finally from Jesus, fall out of the Divine favour, and be for ever numbered with the lost? The thing is, of course, impossible. If not *saved*,—fully and for ever,—it would not be true to say they were chosen “to salvation.”

I beg to name one passage more. Speaking of believers, a divinely inspired teacher says:—“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter, i. 5). Here we are distinctly taught what the Divine Being is doing and will continue to do for His believing people. The Apostle asserts, that they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” If so, nothing is more certain than that they shall reach it, and enjoy it for ever. Had Peter believed that it was possible

for any number of them to become outcasts from God, and die in their sins, he would never have employed the language which is found here. The declaration that believers are “kept” or garrisoned in (for such is the meaning of the term here employed) “by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation,” settles the point with us, and leaves us nothing more to desire in the shape of statement or promise. This is, indeed, a glorious declaration. Fellow pilgrims, let it fill you with the highest joy, as it gives you the fullest assurance that you are safe in the grasp and guardianship of Jehovah of hosts.

We hold and teach too, that the certain enjoyment of everlasting life is inseparably connected with continued faith in the Divine testimony concerning sin, Jesus, and His salvation. They shall be preserved in the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, until they shall enter upon the possession of the heavenly inheritance. This is clearly taught here, and nothing less.

I have now referred to a few out of the many portions of God’s word which teach the doctrine for which we contend. God’s people shall be preserved, and will persevere to the end, for they were given to Christ in the everlasting covenant, that covenant which is “ordered in all things and sure:” the stability of which is as safe as the oath, and promise, and power of God can make it (Psalm lxxxix. 30, 34; Heb. vi. 18, 19). They are “loved by Him with an everlasting love” (Jer. xxxi. 3); they are “chosen to salvation” (Eph. i. 4; 2 Thes. ii. 13); and God, their gracious and reconciled Father, “will rest in His love” (Zeph. iii. 17). Their safety, as believers in Jesus, is secured by the word and promise of the “God that cannot lie.” He has said that He will never leave them nor forsake them (Heb. xiii. 2); that they shall never perish” (John x. 28); and that He will confirm them unto the end” (1 Cor. i. 8).

For this purpose the ever-availing intercession of Jesus is employed. He is at the right hand of God as their Brother, Representative, and Advocate. He prays for them that their faith fail not (Luke xxii. 32). They are, each and all, borne on His heart, and pleaded for in His gracious and ever-successful intercession. “Father,” says he, “I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory” (John xvii. 24). Oh, what priceless joy do these words afford to the believer’s heart! No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. Their Almighty King will vanquish all their spiritual foes. He will so aid them that they shall contend victoriously against “the world, the flesh, and the devil.” They shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved them (Rom. viii. 37). They shall be the saved of His right arm, and the everlasting monuments and trophies of His grace, love, and power. They are “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is *the earnest* of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession” (2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Eph. i. 13, 14). Having received the “earnest,” the pledge which guarantees the fulfilment of their Heavenly Father’s covenant to save them, they are perfectly and for ever secure.

We build our faith in this doctrine on God’s plain teaching. We extort no meaning from His word which cannot be found there by the simple and ordinary reader of it. We take its statements in their plain and grammatical sense, just as they would be interpreted by any unprejudiced expounder of language. We should be content to abide by the interpretation of them which would be given by any man, infidel or other, who felt no interest in our controversy, and who was entirely careless relative to our differences of opinion. One unequivocal passage teaching this doctrine would be, or should be sufficient to establish it, and to bring our opinions into harmony with Divine teaching; but we are not confined to one, or five, or ten; we have line upon line, promise upon promise, assurance upon assurance, and declaration upon declaration to this effect. So that we would fain

ask,—If the doctrine be not taught in the portions of Scripture that I have named, what is taught in them? What is their import? What do they teach? Or, what language or terms would be thought sufficient to teach it? It is our firm conviction that no doctrine of religion is more clearly taught in the Bible than is this. It is expressed as plainly as words can possibly do it.

And are we, with these inspired declarations before us, to suppose it possible for wicked men or demons to say, when pointing to numbers of the lost,—“The Most High began to build up His kingdom in their souls, but He was not able to finish it! He quickened them into spiritual life,—renewed, pardoned, justified, and sanctified them; but now they are torn from His grasp, His enemies *were* able—contrary to the words of Jesus (1 John x. 21)—’to pluck them out of His hand,’ *and they have done it.*“

This would, indeed, make short work of many plain and positive declarations found in the Bible: it would prove, beyond doubt, that its promises, and assurances, and declarations are of very little value.

Let me, before I close, say—and say with the fullest emphasis possible—that we believe as firmly as any man living, as firmly as we believe any truth taught in the Bible, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. xii. 14). We know no other evidence of being in Christ, or of being a Christian, than that which is furnished by a life and behaviour becoming the Gospel. And though holiness is not the cause of God’s first or continued love to His people, it is the effect and fruit of that love, and a main part of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus—that salvation to which they are chosen (Eph. i. 4); and he who is satisfying himself with the notion that he is safe for eternity, while he is living in any known sin, is turning the grace of our God into licentiousness, and is a deadly enemy of the Cross of Christ. The blessed doctrine which the Bible teaches, and in which we glory, is—the doctrine of the *saints’* final perseverance, and that doctrine was never designed to comfort any man who is not living a life of faith in the Son of God, intensely anxious to please God in all things, and to be the holy and happy subject of that mind which was in Jesus.

Very interesting, then, is the question, when asked in no wrong spirit—Are there few that be saved? If GOD does not hold up His people, if He does not keep them by His grace and power, they will be very few indeed—a child may count them, and, in fact, have none, not one, to count. But let no man charge our views with being “narrow,” or “embracing only a few,” or contemplating the eternal salvation of “a very limited number” of our race, for, according to the view which we hold and teach, they will be a numberless number. We believe, and our hearts swell with high and holy joy in believing, that *every* child of man who loved God,—*every one* of Adam’s race who was renewed in heart,—*all* who were ever on the Lord’s side,—will be found among the saved. Not one will be lost. Not one will be missed from the eternal banquet. Not one, will be outside the gates of the holy city. All, all shall be there, and there for ever, and ever, and ever!

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
He will not, He cannot, give up to His foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
He’ll never! no, never! no, never forsake!”

## Jehovah Tsidkenu: The Lord Our Righteousness

A Sermon

(No. 395)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 2nd, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.—Jeremiah 23:6.

MAN BY THE FALL sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature, and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned; he was therefore no longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command; he therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he *committed*, and in that which he *omitted*, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked. Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the fall for his people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command, that he has removed by his precious blood. His agony and bloody sweat have for ever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by his one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in his flesh. He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Still it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eye of God without sin. But it was required of man that he should actually keep the command. It was not enough that he did not break it, or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He must keep it, he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. How is this necessity supplied? Man must have a righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience, or else God cannot reward him. Should He give heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the law; that were to give the reward where the service is not done, and that before God would be an act which might impeach his justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the law, and reward him for so doing? Surely, my brethren, none of you are so besotted as to think that this righteousness can be wrought out by yourselves. You must despair of ever being able to keep the law perfectly. Each day you sin. Since you have passed from death unto life, the old Adam still struggles for dominion within you. And by the force of the lusts of the flesh you are brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members. The good you would do, you do not, and the evil you would not, that you too often do. Some have thought the works of the Holy Spirit in us would give us a righteousness in which we might stand. I am sure, my brethren, we would not say a word derogatory to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is divine. But we hold it to be a great cardinal point in divinity that the work of the Spirit never meant to supplant the merits of the Son. We could not depreciate the Lord Jesus Christ in order to exalt the office of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that each particular branch of the divine salvation which was espoused by the persons of the Trinity has been carried out by each one to perfection. Now as we are accepted in the Beloved, it must be by a something that the Beloved did; as we are justified in Christ it must be by a something not that the Spirit has done, but which Christ has done. We must believe, then,—for there is no other alternative—that the righteousness in which we must be clothed, and through which we must be accepted, and by which we are made meet to inherit eternal life, can be no other than the work of Jesus Christ. We,

therefore, assert, believing that Scripture fully warrants us, that the life of Christ constitutes the righteousness in which his people are to be clothed. His death washed away their sins, his life covered them from head to foot; his death the sneaky to God, his life was the gift to man, by which man satisfies the demands of the law. Herein the law is honored and the soul is accepted. I find that many young Christians who are very clear about being saved by the merits of Christ's death, do not seem to understand the merits of his life. Remember, young believers, that from the first moment when Christ did lie in the cradle until the time when he ascended up on high, he was at work for his people; and from the moment when he was seen in Mary's arms, till the instant when in the arms of death he "bowed his head and gave up the ghost," he was at work for your salvation and mine. He completed the work of obedience in his life, and said to his Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Then he completed the work of atonement in his death, and knowing that all things were accomplished, he cried, "It is finished." He was through his life spinning the web for making the royal garment, and in his death he dipped that garment in his blood. In his life he was gathering together the precious gold, in his death he hammered it out to make for us a garment which is of wrought gold. You have as much to thank Christ for loving as for dying, and you should be as reverently and devoutly grateful for his spotless life as for his terrible and fearful death. The text speaking of Christ, the son of David, the branch out of the root of Jesse, styles him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Having introduced the doctrine of imputed righteousness, I proofed to map out my subject. First, by way of *affirmation*; we say of the text—it is so—Christ is the Lord or righteousness; secondly, I shall exhort you to do him *homage*; let us call him so: for this is the name whereby he shall be called; and thirdly, I shall appeal to your *gratitude*; let us wonder at the reigning grace, which has caused us to fulfill the promise, for have been sweetly compelled to call him the Lord our righteousness.

First, then, *He is so*. Jesus Christ is the Lord *our* righteousness. There are but three words, "JEHOVAH"—for so it is in the original,—"OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He is Jehovah. Read that verse, and you will clearly perceive that the Messiah of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth the Saviour of the Gentiles, is certainly Jehovah. He hath the incommunicable title of the Most High God. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Oh, ye Arians and Socinians, who monstrously deny the Lord who bought you and put him to open shame by denying his divinity, read you that verse and let your blasphemous tongues be silent, and let your obdurate hearts melt in penitence because ye have so foully sinned against him. He *is* Jehovah, or, mark you, the whole of God's word is false, and there is no noun for a sinner's hope. We know, and this day we testify in his name, that the very Christ who did lie in the manger as an infant was infinite even then; that he who cried, cried for very pain as a child, was nevertheless saluted at that very moment as God by the songs of the creatures that his hands had made. He who walked in pain over the flinty acres of Palestine, was at the same time possessor of heaven and earth. He who had not where to lay his head, and was despised and rejected of men, was at the same instant God over all, blessed for evermore. He that sweat great drops of blood did bear the earth upon his shoulders. He who was flagellated in Pilate's hall was adored by spirits of the just made perfect. He who did hang upon the tree had the oration hanging upon him. He who died on the cross was the ever living, the everlasting One. As a man he died, as God he lives. As

Mary's son he bled, as the son of the Eternal God he had the sway and the dominion over all the world. In nature Christ proves himself to be universal God. Without him was not anything made that was made. By him all things consist. Who less than God could make the heavens and the earth? Bow before him, bow before him, for he made you, and should not the creatures acknowledge their Creator?

Providence attests his Godhead. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Creatures that are animate have their breath from his nostrils; inanimate creatures that are strong and mighty stand only by his strength. He can say concerning the earth, "I bear the pillars thereof." In the deep foundations of the sea his power is felt, and in the towering arches of the starry heavens his might is recognized to the full. And as for Grace, we claim for Christ that he is Jehovah in the great kingdom of his grace. Who less than God could have carried your sins and mine and cast them all away? Who less than God could have interposed to deliver us from the jaws of hell's lions, and bring us up from the pit, having found a ransom? On whom less than God could we rely to keep us from the innumerable temptations that beset us? How can he be less than God, when he says, "Lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world?" How could he be omnipresent if he were not God! How could he hear our prayers, the prayers of millions, scattered through the leagues of earth, and attend to them all, and give acceptance to all, if he were not infinite in understanding and infinite in merit? How were this if he were less than God? Let Atheists scoff, let Deists sneer, let the vain Socinian boast, let the Arian lift up his puny voice, but we will glory in this fact, that he that bought us with his blood is Jehovah—very God of very God. At his footstool we bow and pay him the very homage that we pay to his Father and to the Spirit.

"Blessings more than we can give,  
Be Lord for ever thine."

But the text speaks about righteousness too—"Jehovah our righteousness." And he is so. Christ in his life was so righteous, that we may say of the life, taken as a vehicle, that it is righteousness itself. Christ is the law incarnate. Understand me. He lived out the law of God to the very full, and while you see God's precepts written in fire on Sinai's brow, you see them written in flesh in the person of Christ.

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in thy word,  
But in thy life the law appears  
Drawn out in living characters."

He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From his eye there never flashed the fire of unhallowed anger. On his lip there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of his reins no fault was hidden. In his understanding was no defect; in his judgment no error. In his miracles there was no ostentation. In him there was indeed no guile. His powers being ruled by his understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection's very self, so that never was there any flaw of omission or stain of commission. The law consists in this first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." He did so. It was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. Never man spent himself as he did. Hunger and thirst and nakedness were nothing to him, nor death itself if he might so be baptised with the baptism wherewith he must be baptized, and drink the cup which his Father had set before him. The law consists also in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In all he did, and in all he suffered he more than fulfilled the precept, for "he saved others himself he

could not save.” He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving. He loved man better than his own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of hell and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls his Father gave him should be cast away. He carried out the law, then, I say to the very letter he spelt out its mystic syllables, and verily he magnified it, and made it honorable. He loved the Lord his God, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and he loved his neighbors as himself. Jesus Christ was righteousness impersonated. “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” he might well say. One thousand eight hundred years have passed since then, and blasphemy itself has not been able to charge him with a fault. Strange as it may appear, the most perverted judges have nevertheless acknowledged the awful dignity of his character. They have railed at his miracles; they have denied his Godhead; but his righteous character I know not that they have dared to impugn. They have hatched jokes about his generation; they have made his poverty a jest, and his death has been the theme of ribald song; but his life has staggered even the most unbelieving, and made the careless wonder how such a character could have been conceived even if it be a fiction, and much more, how it could have been executed if it be a fact. No one that I know of has dared to charge Christ with unrighteousness to man, or with a want of devotedness to God. See then, it is so. We do not stay to prove his righteousness any more than we did to prove his Godhead. The day is coming when men shall acknowledge him to be Jehovah, and when looking upon all his life while he was incarnate here, they shall be compelled to say that his life was righteousness itself. The pith, however, of the title, lies in the little word “our,”—“Jehovah *our* righteousness.” This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on him—this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of his immaculate righteousness. This is the saved rivet by which our souls are joined to him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul toucheth him, and he becometh to us all in all, “Jehovah *our* Righteousness”

You will now observe that there is a most precious *doctrine* unfolded in this title of our Lord and Saviour. I think we may take it thus: When we believe in Christ, by faith we receive our justification. As the merit of his blood takes away our sin, so the merit of his obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ here our works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves,—as though our hands had been bony at the loom, and though the fabric and the stuff which have been worked up into the fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, had been grown in our own fields. God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though *his* life had been *our* life—and accepts, blesses, and rewards us as though all that he did had been done by us, his believing people. Accordingly, if you will turn to the thirty-third chapter of this same prophet Jeremiah, and look at the sixteenth verse, you will see it written, “This is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.” I know that Socinus in his day used to call this an execrable, detectable, and licentious doctrine: probably it was, because he was an execrable, detectable, and licentious man. Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other persons; they are so well acquainted with their own characters, and so suspicious of themselves, that they think it best, before another can express the suspicion, to attach the very same accusation to someone else. Now we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not execrable, but most delightful, that it is not abominable, but Godlike, that it is not licentious, but holy: and let others say what they will of it, we will repeat the praise which we have been singing,—

“Jesus, thy perfect righteousness  
 My beauty is, my glorious dress;”  
 and we will day when all things shall be tried by fire, for we feel confident that—  
 “Bold shall we stand in that great day,  
 For who aught to our charge shall lay,”  
 when we are clothed with the righteousness divine?

Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the righteousness of Christ, lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of Scripture. How did we fall, my brethren? We fell by the imputation of Adam’s sin to us. Adam was our federal head; he represented us; and when he sinned, we sinned representatively in him, and what he did was imputed to us. You say that you never agreed to the imputation. Nay, but I would not have you say thus, for as by representation we fell, it is by the representative system that we rise. The angels fell personally and individually, and they never rise, but we fell in another, and we have therefore the power given by divine grace to rise in another. The root of the fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed; thus we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine, and I ask you—How are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has been offered for sin by Christ? Very well then, but that satisfaction must be imputed to them, or else how is God just in giving to them the results of the death of another, unless that death of the other be fire? of all imputed to them? When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to an believing souls, we do not hold forth an exceptional theory, but we expound a grand truth, which is so consistent with the theory of the fall and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the gospel clear. I think it was this doctrine which Martin Luther called the article of standing or falling of the Church. I find a passage in his works which seems to me to refer to this doctrine rather than to justification by faith. He ought certainly to have said, “Justification by faith is *the* doctrine of standing or falling of the Church.” But in Luther’s mind, imputed righteousness we, so interwoven with justification by faith, that he could not see any distinction between the two. And I must confess, in trying to observe a difference, I do not see much. I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil, but then imputed righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it; and if you dig down through the great truth of a sinners being justified by faith in Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that simple doctrine rests.

And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—“The Lord our righteousness.” Brethren, the Law-giver has himself obeyed the law Do you not think that his obedience will be sufficient? Jehovah has himself become man that so he may do man’s work: think you that he has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—he who girds the angels that excel in strength—has taken upon him the form of a servant that he may become obedient: think you that his service will be incomplete? Let the fact that the Saviour is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be ye bold. Be ye very courageous. Face heaven, and earth, and hell with the challenge of the apostle. “Who shall say anything to the charge of God’s elect? “Look back upon your past sins, look upon your present infirmities, and all your future errors, and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch your cheek. You stand before God to-day robed in your Saviour’s garments, “with his spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One.” Not Adam when he walked in Eden’s bowers was more accepted than you are,—not more pleasing to the eye of the all-judging, the



sin-hating God than you are if clothed in Jesus' righteousness and sprinkled with his blood. You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness; your garments are divine. He had a robe complete, it is true, but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete, but *heaven* has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of this great truth and boast exceedingly, and glory in your God; and let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul: "Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness."

You will remember that in Scripture, Christ's righteousness is compared to fair white linen; then I am, if I wear it, without spot. It is compared to wrought gold; then I am, if I wear it, dignified and beautiful, and worthy to sit at the wedding feast of the King of kings. It is compared, in the parable of the prodigal son, to the best robe; then I wear a better robe than angels have, full they have not the best; but I, poor prodigal, once clothed in rage, companion to the nobility of the sty,—I, fresh from the husks that swine do eat, am nevertheless clothed in the best robe, and am so accepted in the Beloved.

Moreover, it is also everlasting righteousness. Oh! this is, perhaps, the fairest point of it—that the robe be shall never be worn out; no thread of it shall ever give way. It shall never hang in tatters upon the sinner's back. He shall live, and even though it were a Methusaleh's life, the robe shall be as if it were woven yesterday. He shall pass through the stream of death, and the black stream shall not foul it. He shall climb the hills of heaven, and the angels shall wonder what this whiteness is which the sinner wears, and think that some new star is coming up from earth to thine in heaven. He shall wear it among principalities and powers, and find himself no whit inferior to them all. Cherubic garments and seraphic mantles shall not be so lordly so priestly, so divine, as this robe of righteousness this everlasting perfection which Christ has wrought out, and brought in and given to all his people. Glory unto thee, O Jesus, glory unto thee! Unto thee be hallels for ever; Hallelu—jah! Thou art you—"Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness."

II. Having thus expounded and vindicated this title of our Saviour, I would now APPEAL TO YOUR FAITH.

Let us call him so. "This is the name whereby he shall be *called*, the Lord our righteousness." Let us call him by this great name, which the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath named. Let *us* call him—poor sinners!—even we, who are today smitten down with grief on account of sin. I want this text to be fulfilled in your ears and in your case to-day. You are guilty. Your own conscience acknowledges that the law condemns you, and you dread the penalty. Soul! he that trusteth Christ Jesus is saved, and he that believeth on him is not condemned. To every trustful spirit Christ is "the Lord our righteousness." Call him so, I pray thee. "I have no good thing of my own," sayest thou? Here is every good thing in him. "I have broken the law," sayest thou? There is his blood for thee. Believe in him, he will wash thee. "But then I have not kept the law. "There is his keeping of the law for thee. Take it, sinner, take it. Believe on him. "Oh, but I dare not," saith one. Do him the honor to dare it. "Oh, but it seems impossible." Honour him by believing the impossibility then. "Oh, but how can he save such a wretch as I am?" Soul! Christ is glorified in saving wretches. As I told you the other day, Christ cures incurable sinners; so I say now he accepts unacceptable sinners. He receives sinners that think they are not fit to be received. Only do thou trust him and say, "He shall be *my* righteousness to-day." "But suppose I should do it and be presumptuous? It is impossible. He bids you, he commands you. Let that be your warrant. "This is *the* commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." If you cannot say it with a loud voice, yet with the trembling silence of your soul let heaven hear it. Yes, Jesus, "All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but

sin, yet I dare with fervent venture of these quivering lips to call thee, and to call upon thee now, as the Lord my righteousness.”

And you who have passed from a state of trembling hope into that of lively faith, I beseech you call him so. Let your faith say, as you see him suffering, bleeding, dying, “Thus my sins were washed away.” But let not your faith stay there. As you see him sweating, toiling, living a self-denying laborious life, say, “Thus the law was kept for me.” Come up to the foot of Sinai now, and if you see its lightnings flash, and hear its thunders roar, be brave, and say like Moses, “I will ascend above those thunders, I will stand enwrapped within the storm-cloud, and I will talk with God, for I have no cause for fear, there are no thunderbolts for me; for me no lightning flash can spend its arrow, I am perfectly, completely justified in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Say that, child of God! Does yesterday’s sin make thee stammer? In the teeth of all thy sins believe that he is thy righteousness still. Thy good works do not improve his righteousness; thy bad works do not sully it. This is a robe which thy best deeds cannot mend and thy worst deeds cannot mar. Thou standest in him, not in thyself. Whatever, then, thy doubts and fears may have been, do now, poor troubled, distressed, distracted believer, say again, “Yes, he *is* the Lord my righteousness.”

And some of us can say it yet better than that: for we can say it not merely by faith, but by fruition. We remember well the day when we first called him “the Lord our righteousness.” Oh, the peace it brought, the joy, the gladness, the transport! Since then we have proved it to be true, for we have had privileges we could not have had if he had not been our righteousness. We have had the privilege of reconciliation with God; and He could not be reconciled to one that had not a perfect righteousness, we have had access with boldness to God himself, and He would never have suffered us to have access if we had not worn our brother’s garments. We have had adoption into the family, and the Spirit of adoption, and God could not have adopted into his family any but righteous ones. How should the righteous Father be God of an unrighteous family? Our prayers have been heard, and we have had gracious answers, and that could not have been—for he could not heal the prayer of the wicked; he could not have heard us—if it had not been that he seemed to hear Christ crying through us, and to have seen Christ’s merits in us. And therefore granted the desire of our hearts. We have had in daily rich and sweet experience such manifestations of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, that to us it is a matter of fact as well as a matter of faith, a matter of praise as well as a matter of profession, that Jesus Christ is “the Lord our righteousness.”

Brethren, your divinity must be experimental or it will not profit you. I would not give a straw for your theology if you learned it merely out of a pollee, or out of a system of man’s teaching. No, no, we must prove these things to be true in our lives. I can say it, and I must say it—the testimony is not egotistical—I *know* there is a comfort in the faith of Christ’s imputed righteousness which no other doctrine can yield. There is something that a man can sleep on and wake on, can live on and die on, in the firm conviction that he is received by God as though the deeds of Christ were his deeds, and the righteousness of Christ his righteousness. Take away his filthy garments from him, set a fair mitre on his head, array him in fine linen. O, Joshua, priest of the Most High, thou man greatly beloved, come thou forth now in thy garments and offer acceptable sacrifice, seeing, thou wearest the garments of Jesus, our great High Priest.” Let *us*, then, call upon his name and extol him in our worship as “the Lord *our* righteousness.”

And now let the whole universal Church of Christ, in one glad song, call Jesus Christ the Lord their righteousness. Wake up, ye isles of the sea; shout, thou wilderness that Kedar doth inhabit; ye people of God, scattered and peeled, banished among the heathen, vexed with the filthy conversation of the idolaters, from your huts, from the destitute places that ye inhabit, sing, "The Lord our righteousness!" Let no heir of heaven be silent at this hour; let every soul be stirred. Though tempest-tossed and half a wreck, yet, mariner in Christ, say, "Thou art the Lord my righteousness." Though cast down into the deep dungeon, thou despairing soul, yet say, "The Lord my righteousness." Let no one of the entire believing family keel; back his song but together let us sing, "The Lord our righteousness." And you, ye spirits that walk in white, ye glorious ones that "day without night circle his throne rejoicing," ye saints that ere his day beheld him, and died, not having received the promise, but having beheld it afar off,—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and Samuel, and Jephthah, and David, and Solomon, and all the mighty host, sing ye, sing ye, sing ye unto him to-day; and let this be the summit of your song, "The Lord our righteousness." Our spirit bows before him now. Sweet fellowship beyond the stream! Me clasp our hands with those that went before; and while the cherubim can only say, "Holy, holy, holy; he is righteous," we lift up a higher note, and say, "yes, thrice holy, but the Lord our righteousness is he." Let none, then, of all his saints in heaven and in earth, refuse to call him "the Lord our righteousness"

III. I now conclude, in the third place, by appealing to your GRATITUDE. Let us admire that wonderful and reigning grace which has led you and me to call him, "The Lord our righteousness."

When I look back some ten or twelve years upon a foolish boy, who cared little for the things of God, who was burdened with an awful sense of sin, and thought that he never could be pardoned—clad so often driven to the borders of despair that he was fain to make away with his own life, because he thought there was no happiness on earth for him—I can only say for my own self. O the riches of the grace of God in Christ, that ever *I* should stand not only conscious that he is the Lord my righteousness, but to preach him to you! O God, thou hast done wonderful things! Thou saidst by the mouth of Jeremy, "This is the name whereby he shall be called." I call him so this day from my inmost soul. Jesus of Nazareth! suffering man! glorious God! thou art the Lord my righteousness! If I were to pass this question round these galleries, and down below oh, what hundreds of responses would there be from such as joyously obey the summons of gratitude! And among those about to be added to the Church (I am sure they would permit me to tell, for the honor of the glorious grace of God), there are very many who are special instances of that grace which has sweetly constrained them to call Christ their righteousness. Some of them, according to their own confession before us at the Church meeting, were not only revelling in drunkenness, one until he had well nigh drank away his reason by thirty years of habitual intoxication; but others of them were unclean and unchaste, till they had rioted in debauchery, and gone to the utmost lengths of crime. There be many in this place to-day, who would not, though they would blush for the past, refuse to tell, to the honor of redeeming grace, that once they had committed every crime in the catalogue except murder; and if they have not committed that, it was nothing but the sovereign grace of God that restrained them. Some members of this Church have sinned in every part of the world—have sinned in every quarter of the globe—have committed every form of lust and vice—and if you had asked them ten years ago whether they should ever be in a place of worship, they would have repelled with an oath what they would have thought an insult, and would have cursed you for supposing that they should so degrade themselves as to profess the faith of Christ. Brothers and

sisters, I should not be surprised if you were to stand up now and say, “Yes, still Jehovah Jesus is the Lord our righteousness.” Oh!—

“Wonders of grace to God belong;  
Repeat his mercies in your song.”

Who would have thought that the lip of the blasphemer should fulfill that very prophecy—that the tongue that could scarce move without an oath should, nevertheless, glorify Christ,—that the heart that was black with accumulated lust,—the mouth which must have become a very sepulcher, breathing forth deadly miasma, has now become a place for song, and the heart a house for music, while heart and tongue say, “Yes, he is the Lord my righteousness this very day!”

It would be a wonder if God should vow that the devils should yet sing his praise; but I do not think it would be a greater wonder than when he makes some of us sing his glorious praise. Brethren, you and I know that there is nothing in freewill doctrine; for in our case, at any rate, it was not true. Left to ourselves, where should we have been? What could Arminianism have done for us? Oh, no! it was irresistible grace that brought us to call him “the Lord our righteousness.” It was that divine *shall* that broke in pieces our *will*. It was that strong arm that broke the iron sinew of our proud neck, and made us bow, even us, who would not have this man to reign over us. It was his finger that opened the blind eye; for once we could see now beauty in him. It was his breath that thawed our icy heart; for once we felt no love to him;—

“But now, subdued by sovereign grace,  
Our spirit longs for his embrace;  
Our beauty this our glorious dress,  
Jesus the Lord our righteousness.”

And this shall be our glory here, and our song forever—“The Lord our righteousness.”

## Climbing the Mountain

A Sermon

(No. 396)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June the 16th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?”—Psalm 24:3.

THERE IS little doubt that this Psalm has a primary reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who alone ascended up on high by his own merits, and by virtue of a perfect obedience stands in God's holy place. He alone of mortal race hath clean hands and a pure heart; he hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor hath he sworn deceitfully therefore hath he received the blessing and righteousness from the God of his salvation. At his ascension the glorified spirits flooded heaven with music while they sang the language of the seventh verse, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.” It would be a delightful theme for Christian meditation to consider the ascension of Christ, in relation to his work, what we obtain by it, and the glories with which it was accompanied, when, with a shout of saved joy, he returned to his own throne and sat down for ever having finished the labor which he had undertaken to perform. But, this morning, I must take the text apart from its connection, for I desire to make it the basis of a set of parables or illustrations with regard to Christian life. I think we may fairly compare the life of a Christian to the ascent of a mountain, and we may then ask the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” This has been, in fact, a favorite metaphor, and even that mighty master of allegory, John Bunyan, who needed never to borrow from another, must have the Hill Difficulty somewhere or other to make his story complete; he must tell how the pilgrim “fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and knees because of the steepness of the place.” Without putting any strain upon the text, I conceive I may use it as a most serious question, while I picture our course to heaven as an ascent into the hill of the Lord.

Behold, then, before your eyes believer, the hill of God; it is a high hill even as the hill of Bashan, on the top thereof is that Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all; that rest

“To which our laboring souls aspire,  
With fervent pangs of strong desire.”

This mount of which we speak is not Mount Sinai, but the chosen hill whereon are gathered the glorious company of angels, the spirit of the just made perfect, the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. And we are the pilgrims, full often joyous with faith, but sometimes weary and footsore, making the best of our way to the top of this mountain of God, where we shall see his face, and rejoice in him for evermore.

I, your fellow pilgrim, propose the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” No sooner does the question escape my lips, than I hear a jubilant shout from a company yonder who cry, “We shall; assuredly we shall; there is no doubt about our eternal safety. *We* shall most certainly attain the summit, rest our wearied feet thereon, and dwell with God for ever.” Well, confidence is good if it be good, but if it be presumption, nothing can be more ill. Let us, then, look at those who are so sure that they shall ascend into the hill of the Lord.

I notice, first, that some who speak thus are *young beginners*; they have not yet trodden the rough part of the mountain; they have only as yet danced upon the green knolls which are at the base of it; no wonder that their untried sinews find it easy work to ascend an easy pathway. Their limbs are supple, their muscles strong, and the marrow in their bones is as yet not dried up. They laugh at difficulty and they defy danger. "Ah!" they say, "whatever the danger may be, we can brave it; and however stern the toil, we are sufficient to surmount it." Ah! young man, but be thou warned; if thou speakest thus in thine own strength, thou shalt soon find it fail that for the boastful man who journeys in his own strength is like the snail which, though it doth but crawl, yet spendeth its own life and wasteth itself, whilst it maketh but sorry way. Thy strength is perfect weakness; and thy weakness such that difficulties shall soon subdue thee, and terror shall cow thy spirit. Oh! dost thou not know there are troubles to come, and thou hast not endured them yet; there are attacks of Satan; there are temptations from without and from within? Thou wilt find it go hard with thee if thou hast nothing but thine own strength; thou wilt lie down to die of despair before thou hast reached one-tenth of the way, and the summit thou shalt never see. Oh, young man! there are rocks most sharp and steep which mortal strength can never chub, and there are rugged ravines so tangled with briars and so bestrewn with flint stones that they shall cut thy feet, nay, cut thy very heart and make it bleed, if thou hast not something better to trust to than thine own strength. How much of our early courage in the Christian life is the courage of the flesh; and though it be a sorrowful thing to lose this, yet it is a blessed loss. To be weak is to be strong, but to be strong is to be weak. It may seem a paradox, but we are never really so mighty as when our might has fled, and never so truly weak as when we are filled with our own strength, and are reckonings upon ease and security. Be not so bold; take warning and look thou to a superior arm.

"For they that trust their native strength  
 Shall melt away and droop, and die;"  
 whilst those who trust in the Lord,  
 "Swift as the eagle cuts the air,  
 Shall mount aloft to his abode;  
 On wings of love their souls shall fly  
 Nor tire amidst the heavenly road."

In looking upon this group who are so confident that they shall ascend the hill of the Lord, I detect some others who speak out of sheer *ignorance*. "Oh," say they, "it is not far to heaven, it is little matter to be a Christian, you have but to say, 'God be merciful to me,' and the thing is done, it is but a mere trifle. As for the new birth," say they, "no doubt it is a great mystery, but possibly it may be of very little importance. It will be, no doubt, found after all, that ministers and Christians make much ado about nothing, for it is a mere run to the mountain summit." Ah, poor ignorant soul, your folly is too common. To the unaccustomed traveler there is nothing more deceptive than a lofty Alp. You say, "I could reach the mountain-top in half-an-hour," and you find it to be a day's full journey, for its twisting roads, and rugged—sides, and precipitous acclivities come not into the reckoning of a distant observer. And so is it with religion; men think it so simple, so easy, but when they once begin to ascend, they find it stern work to climb to glory. The young soldier gets on his armor, and says, "One rush and I will win the battle," but when his banner is torn, and his armor is indented and battered with the heavy blows of the adversary, he finds it quite another thing. I beseech you, count the cost, you who say that you can ascend into the hill of the Lord. I tell you, sirs, that it is so hard a thing, that the righteous scarcely are saved; and where shall the ungodly

and the wicked appear? It is by the skin of their teeth, and often so as by fire that many who are saved, enter into the eternal rest. I will not merely say it is *hard*, but I will say it is impossible. It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for any man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, if he rely in any degree upon his own strength, or think that the passage thereto is easy, and he needeth no help that he may pass through it. Be thou persuaded, O ignorant man, that the hill of God is higher than thou drest. That is not the summit which thou seest, the mountains brow is far beyond thine eyesight. It is higher than thine understanding, it is loftier than thy grovelling conceptions; the eagle's wing hath not reached it, man hath his eye beheld it; to the spiritual only is it manifest, and they know that it is higher than the clouds. Be not thou so ignorantly brave, but learn the road from the lips, of Jesus, and then ask him to help thee to run therein.

But amongst this very presumptuous group I perceive others who say, "We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, "for in their hearts they imagine that they have found out a smooth grassy icy which they shall avoid all the roughness of the road. Some new prophet has preached to them a new salvation. Some modern impostor has declared to them another way besides the good old path, and they think that they shall now, without wearying their limbs and blistering their feet, be able to ascend to the summit. Take care, take care, presumptuous soul, for rest assured the greener the path may look the more is the danger of it. On the sloping sides of the lofty mountains there are verdant splits, so deliciously green that one never saw the grass itself after the shower look like them, but only put your foot upon them for a moment, only venture your weight, and you will be swallowed up, unless there be some one nigh at hand to lay hold upon you. The green mantle covers a tremulous mass of mire, the verdant carpet is only a coverlet for a deadly bed of bottomless bog, for the bogs and quagmires are deceptive enough. And so these new systems of divinity, these new schemes of getting to heaven by some universal fatherhood, or by part-obedience, or gorgeous ceremonies,—I tell you, sirs, these are but quagmires which shall swallow up your souls, green deceptions, they may seem to be like velvet beneath your feet, but they shall be as hell if you dare to trust them. Still to this day, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it." Still as there is no royal road to learning, there is no royal road to heaven, no way by which you can pamper your sins and yet be saved, indulge the flesh and yet inherit eternal life. There is no way by which you can avoid the new birth and still escape from the wrath to come, no way by which you may enter into heaven with iniquity hidden in your soul. Corruptions must be taken away. Lust must be denied. The right arm must be cut off and the right eye must be plucked out. There is no new, no easier path to heaven, and you who think you have found it are mistaken in very deed.

Some few others I mark in this group who say, "We shall ascend into the hill of the Lord," and why, sirs? You look as if you had a heavy load to carry. "Ay! Ay!" say they, "but these are necessaries for the journey. We have half a dozen staves under our arm, that if one of them should break we may take another and we have bottles of rich wine that we may refresh ourselves, we have food wherewith, when we grow weary, we may recruit our strength. We have excellent garments that when a storm comes on we may cover ourselves from it. We are fully provided for the journey—we shall certainly ascend the mountain." This is just the way in which the worldly-wise and self-sufficient talk; and those who are rich and lumbered with much serving in this world. "Ah!" say they, "we shall readily ascend to heaven; we are not poor—we are not ignorant—we are not led away by the depraved vices of the vulgar mass; we shall be able to climb certainly, for we have all things and abound." Yes, but this is what makes your climbing difficult. You have a load

to carry, you would ascend better if you had it not; one staff is good for a traveler, a competence you may seek for, but a bundle of staves must be heavy to carry; and multiplied riches make it hard to climb the narrow way of life, for they brine many cares and many sorrows, and thus they cause the feet to slip when they might stand fast. Say not because of your wit, and your wisdom, and your own moral strength, that you are the better equipped for the journey; these are your dangers; your confidences are your weaknesses; that on which you rest shall give you no rest, and that on which you depend, if it be anything but God, shall pierce you try the very soul. O sirs, if you can say, "I shall ascend into the hill of God," if with your hand upon your heart you can appeal to heaven and say, "The ground-work of my confidence is not in myself, but in the promise, not in the flesh, but in the spirit; not in man but in God, not in what I am but in what God has promised to do for me;" then be as confident as you will, then let no stammering stop you of your boasting, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. But if this confidence springs from anything short of a firm fixed, simple, unmingled faith in Christ, I pray you give it up, for it is a deadly snare, and will certainly destroy your soul.

We have thus paused to listen to the group who are so sure of ascending the hill of the Lord. But hark! I can hear groans, and sobs, and moans, I look around, and certainly, my eyes are gladdened with the aspect of these men who seem to be so sad. Why mourn you, brethren. Why are *you* sad? "Oh," say they, "we shall never ascend the hill of God, we shall never reach the topmost height." Brethren, if I had been allowed to judge I should have thought you the very men who would ascend, and yet you say you shall not. And if I had looked at the other group, I should have thought they never would gain the top, and yet they say they shall. How singular it is! Men so often misjudge their own state, that the most unlikely think themselves sure, while the most holy are the most afraid. Come, only brethren, I would stop your mourning, and wipe your eyes; I would put a song into your mouths instead of the notes of lamentation. Let me have your reasons think you shall never ascend the hill of God. The first reply is, "I shall never get there, for *I am weak*, and the hill is exceeding high; and, sir, you have told us that godliness is a great steep, and that true religion is a towering up, and I am so weak; to will is present with me, but how to perform I find not. I can do nothing, I am emptied entirely, I know that this can never be performed by me. To perfect holiness and perfect rest I can never come, for I am the weakest of the entire family, and that steep is too lofty to be attained by tottering feet like mine. My bones ache, my knees bend, hot sweat drenches my garments, my head is giddy, and I drag my bleeding feet with anguish from crag to crag." Oh! my dear brother, be of good cheer; if that be thine only cause of mourning, lay it aside, for remember, whilst thou art weak, it is not thy strength which is to carry thee there, but God's, if nature had undertaken to ascend into the celestial mountain, indeed, you might despair but it is grace, all-conquering grace that is to do it.

"Weak as you are, yet through his might,

You all things shall perform."

It is true the hill is steep, but then God is omnipotent, it is certain that the Alp is high, but higher still is the love and grace of God. He hath borne you, he hath carried you, and he will carry you even to the end: when you cannot walk he will take you in his arms, and when the road is so rough that you cannot even creep along it, he will hear you as on eagles' wings, till he bring you to his promised rest. Again, I say, if it were yourself that you had to look to, it would be right in you to mourn, but you are not to look to self. Trust thou in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. "Ah! but," says a second, "my difficulty is this—not only am I weak, but I



am so sore tried, the road is very rough to me, you spoke of grass just now, there is none where I am, I have looked at that promise, 'He maketh me to lay down in green pastures,' and I cannot say it is true of me. Instead of it I must say he leadeth me by the rough torrents, and suffereth me not to lie down at all, but upon the steep ascents, where the stones cut my feet, he leads my weary and sorrowful way. I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, all his waves and his billows have gone over me. If the road be rough like this, I shall never ascend into the hill of God." O Christian, Christian! I beseech thee take down thy harp from the willow now; for if this be all thy fear, it is a foolish fear indeed. Why, man, "the road is rough:" is this a new thing? The road to heaven never was anything else but rough, and so thou mayest be the better assured that this is the right way. If your road were smooth, you might fear that you were like the wicked who stand in slippery places. Because your pathway is rough, the better foothold for a mountain-climber. There is nothing *MO* much to be feared as that smooth glass-faced rock on which the foot slips back and slides. No, those stones and flints give foothold. Stand then, strong in the strength of God, and be of good courage. Your afflictions are proofs of your sonship. Bastards may escape the rod, but the tree-born child of God must not—would not if he might. You know too, that these afflictions are working for your good. They are rough waves, but the; are driving your ship into port, they are blustering winds, but they make your ship scud over the briny deep into the eternal rest which remaineth for your soul. Your troubles, I tell you, are your best Mercies. Where did the Israelites get their jewels, their ear-rings, and necklaces? Why, from Egypt, from Egypt only; and so you, too, though you have lien among the pots, shall yet be as the dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Let not the roughness of the road dismay thee—it is the better proof that it is the right road to heaven. Why, you will have a worse trouble yet, perhaps. That is poor consolation, say you; but, then, save your tears till you get to it. Cease your weeping now, and if this be poor comfort, yet methinks it is true common sense. You will come to places soon where you will have to crawl on your hands and knees, and when you think to grasp the root of some tree to drag you up you will grasp a thorn, and every thorn shall pierce your flesh; but even then those thorns shall be heavenly lancets to let out your bad blood; and that roughest part of the road shall be the speediest way to heaven, for the steeper the road, the sooner we shawl be at the summit. So be of good cheer and mourn not, until thou comest where there is more cause to mourn; and then mourn not, for thou shalt come to a place where there is more cause for joy. The more sorrow, the more consolation. Therefore up, thou poor dispirited one; thou shalt yet ascend into the hill of God!

"But *I*," saith another—"I have been sorely tempted. Across my path there is a torrent—a swollen torrent; and I cannot wade it through, fear the deep waters would carry me down and dash me from the rocks. I shall never be able to ascend." During last sleek, while in one of the wild valleys of Cumberland, we were rained up for two or three days, so that we could not get home; and I feared I should not be able to arrive in town to preach to-day; for across a high mountain-pass which we had to traverse, the little brooks had been swollen by the heavy rains, till they roared like thundering rivers, and it would have been impossible for any creature to pass without great danger of being swept away. So it sometimes happens in the Christian's career. Temptation gets swollen to its brim, nay, bursts its banks, and roaring like an angry torrent, it bears all before it. Ah, well, Christian, the Lord knows how to deliver thee out of thy trouble. He never did yet send temptation without making a way of escape. I was pleased to notice but last Thursday, how, across these brooks, the sheep which fed upon the mountain side could spring from stone to stone, rest a moment in the

middle, while the angry flood roared on either side; and then leap and spring again you would think they must be drowned; but yet their feet were fast and firm. I thought then of that text, "He maketh my feet like hind's feet, and maketh me to stand on my high places." Do not you know, tried Christians, that others have gone through as much temptation as you, and they did not perish?—nor will you. Job was sorely tried—the brook was swollen indeed, but it did not carry him away. He was safe, for he could say, "Though he stay me, yet will I trust in him." Come, now there are stepping-stones across the brook, if you have but faith enough to find them you shall leap from statue to stone; though they be wide apart, they shall not be too wide for thee; and though they shall seem as though they would be moved yet they shall never be, till you have safely passed by the swelling danger.

"Ah," saith another, "but my trouble is worse than that, I have lost my way altogether. I cannot see a step before me; a thick fog of doubt and fear hangs over me, I shall never ascend into the hill of the Lord." And we, too, have passed through the damp and clinging mists. The dense mists on the mountain summit wet you through very speedily, ruin the prospect, and cause alarm to the timid. The descent on the left hand seems bottomless, and the ascent on the right appears to be lost in cloud. Mist is the mother of exaggeration, all things loom out in indefinite greatness. The little brook magnified by the haze swells into a river, and the tarn enlarges into a tremendous lake; while the mountain tops are in the seventh heavens. Every stone becomes a rock in the mist—such is the exaggeration which an imagination can perform when nature wears her veil. So when a poor Christian gem into doubts and fears, everything looks bad and black against him. "Oh," says he, "I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy." It is only a cart-rut, he is sure he will be drowned in it. It is only a stone, which he might put into a sling and throw at some Goliath but he fears it is a tremendous rock, and shall never be able to pass it by. He is in a mist and sees no light, and knows not his way. Well, Christian, so you say you shall never get to the top because of this. Why, man, there have been tens of thousands who have been in quite as thick a mist as you, and yet they have found their way. Many a Christian has had quite as black doubts and fears as you, and yet has come light at last. Doubts and fears never kill the Christian. They are like the tooth-ache, they are very painful, but they are never mortal. So doubts and fears are very grievous to a believer, but a myriad doubts and fears will not suffice to kill him, or deprive his soul of his interest in Christ. Come, man, do you not know what the text says? "If any man walk in darkness and see no light, let him"—do what? Let him despair? No, "let him trust in the Lord!" "Now is the season for faith. When you have nothing else to trust to, put your hand within the hand of the Eternal God, and he will wisely lead, and powerfully sustain and bring you on your way to the promised rest. Let not these doubts fret you, nor distress you, nor cast you down. It is this very mist through which David passed, and an God's people have been surrounded with more or less of it, and it does not prove that you are out of the way.

"But," saith another, "my woe is worse. I have been going down hill. My faith is not so strong as it was: I am afraid my love has grown cold; I never felt so much of the blackness of my nature as I do now. I think I have grown worse; my depravity has broken up like the floods in the days of Noah. I am sure now it is all over with me. I thought I was vile when I began; but I know I am depraved now. I shall never ascend to the hill of God." And so, believer, you have been going down hill, have you? Allow you not that most men who have to go up had must sometimes descend? You say, "How is that?" Well, in climbing a mountain, it often occurs that the path winds downward for a season, to enable the traveler to avoid a precipice, or comb a beetling crag, or reach another

peak of the range. Part of the road to Mont Blanc, the king of the Alps, is a descent, and on the great mountain passes there are frequent spots where the load runs readily at the horse's heels. "But how can going down help me to get up?" you say. It is a strange paradox, but I do not believe Christians ever mount better than when they descend. When they find out more of the baseness of their hearts, when they are taken from chamber to chamber and shown the idolatry and blasphemy of their hearts, it is then they are growing in grace. "Oh," say they, "it is all over with me now." It would have been all over with you if you had not come here. "Ah," say they, "the Lord is about to slay me now." No, no,—only to slay your pride. He is putting you in your proper place.

"If to-day he deign to bless us,  
With a sense of pardoned sin;  
He to-morrow may distress us,  
Make us feel the plague within.  
All to make us  
Sick of self, and fond of him."

It is all up hill, brethren, even when it is down hill. It is all towards God, even when sometimes it seems to be away from him. And when we are discovering most our own baseness and vileness, it is only that our eyes washed with tears, may be like the eyes of doves washed with milk and fitly set, that we may behold the King in his beauty, seeing, less of self and more of him.

I will not keep you much longer on that point, for I fear by the aspect of some of your countenances that I weary you; and yet I know not why I should; for surely this is a question which is important to each of us, and I seek to put it in as comely a parable as I can. I hear yet another groan. "Ah," saith one, "I shall never ascend into the hill of God." Why? "Oh," saith he, "because, though I have come up a little way, I feel in such danger." Brethren, do you know when a Christian man looks down it is enough to make his head swim? The Christian life is very much like the walk of Blondin upon his lofty rope. There he is high up in the air; if he look down he must perish. Sometimes Christians with a little faith think of liking down—and what a cold shudder thrills them! The hypocrite has fallen; I may fall; such-and-such a professor has come down, I may come down too. There is the roar of a tumultuous crowd beneath, who are expecting that we may fall, nay, they are longing to say, "Aha! aha! The eyes of Samson are put out, and the mighty are destroyed." Now Little-faith, what business have you with looking down? Look up, man; look up! The Scripture does not say, "Let us run with trembling the race that is set before us, looking to our own tottering legs;" no; but it says, "Let us run with patience the race that inset before us, looking unto Jesus." What if the crag be steep, and the precipice be grim; what is that to thee? You will never fall while your faith is fixed on your God! What if the jaws of death be open wide, and his teeth be sharp as knives—what is that to you? Because Christ lives, you shall live also. What if the fires of hell be hot, and the flames of Tophet vehement, what is that to you? There is no damnation to him that is in Christ Jesus, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Up man! look up! As the poor sea boy, climbing the giddy mast, dares not look down upon the awful deep, but upward to the calm blue sky, where shines the bright unclouded sun; so must you look up to the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; or if it be dark with you, up to yon star of Bethlehem, who shineth still calmly, lovingly above your head; he bids you silently look unto him, and stand securely. Look up, poor Little-faith, and thou Much-afraid, for thou shalt ascend into the hill of the Lord.

I shall crave your attention a moment or two, while I now, in the third place,—having listened to those who said they could climb, and to those who said they could not climb,—picture to you the man who is able to ascend into the hill of the Lord. Methinks I see him. He has nothing in himself; but he has everything in his God. Let us look at him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. You notice, first, that he has put on shoes of iron and of brass; his feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You will want those shoes, O heavenly pilgrim! When the Lord said he would give you those shoes of iron, you thought they would be too heavy for you, but you will find out that you have to tread on stones that are hard as iron. When he said he would give you shoes that were made of brass, you thought they would be too strong. You will find it a long way, and a steep ascent, and anything else than brass would be worn out. Young Christian, have you had your feet shod yet? You are of no use for climbing unless you have. Unless you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, which is the preparation of the gospel of peace, you can never ascend into the hill of the Lord. But observe that the pilgrim is girt about his loins to keep his garment from tripping him up, he is girt with the girdle of truth and sincerity. You, too, my hearer, must be sincere in your profession, your heart must be right in the sight of God, or else climbing will be fatal work to you, because you climb presumptuously, and you shall come down desperately. I observe that the pilgrim has in his hand a strong staff, it is cut from the tree of life, it is called the Staff of Promise. And he knows how to thrust his Alpenstock deep into the ground, and to draw himself up thereby, or stop himself as he is going down a crag, lest, his foot slipping, he fall. He has a staff of promise. See to it that you get it. Get a promise every day. Don't be content when you pray, unless you can plead the promise of God, or else you will be like a man going to the bankers without a cheque. You must take the promise when you go to God, and you will get that bestowed upon you which the promise guarantees. Go not up the mountain, pilgrim, without this staff.

Take warning once more. If yonder pilgrim is ever to ascend the summit, his shoes of iron and of brass will not be enough—his girdle not enough, his staff not enough—he must have a guide. He that travels without a guide will lose his way in this ascent to the hill of God. It reminds me of the old story of the man who said to his advocate when he was about to be tried—“I'll be hanged if I don't plead for myself.” “You will be banged if you do,” said the lawyer. So there be some men who say they will try for themselves, they will be their own guide, they will find their own way. Ay, but they will be lost if they try it. If they put their souls into their own keeping, and rely upon their own wisdom, they shall find their wisdom to be fully full blown. Christian, rely upon your Guide, your Comforter—the Holy Spirit. Go not one step of the way apart from his monitions and his promptings, wait on him, be of good courage, saying, “I waited patiently for the Lord, for he will assuredly direct me in the path of peace.”

But even with a guide, that man will never gain the summit unless he marks the way. And what is the way? The way to the hill of God, you know, as well as I can tell you, is Christ himself. “I am,” saith he, “the way.” We begin in Christ, we must go on with Christ, we must end with Christ. As guilty sinners we come to Christ for pardon, as needy sinners we must come to him to receive of his fullness day by day, and at the last, when with joyful spring we shall leap to the flowery summit and be safe, that last spring must still be taken in the one blood-besprinkled way—the open side, the pierced hands and feet of Christ, for other way to the summit of the hill of God there is none, and he that thinks there may be shall be mistaken now, and fatally deluded at the last. Be thou wise, then, pilgrim, and with thy shoe upon thy foot with thy staff in thy hand, thy girdle about

thy loins, thy guide by thy side, and the loving Lord before thee, climb with patience into the hill of God. But take care that thou lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset thee, or the road will be painful to thee, and thy end shall not be such as thou wouldst desire.

I come, in the last place to complete the picture, to end the allegory and to stimulate the exertions of every climber of this heavenly mountain, by describing what is to be seen and to be enjoyed upon the summit. He who shall ever climb the hill of God, and come to heaven at last, will find, first of all, that all his toil is done—

“Servant of God, well done  
Rest from thy lov’d employ,  
The battle’s fought, the victory’s won,  
Enter thy rest of joy.”

No crags, no slippery places now; no roaring torrents, nor ascending or descending paths—  
“Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me,  
Now shall my labors have an end,  
In joy and peace and thee.”

Brethren, do you and I think enough of heaven? Do we not think too much of earth? Do we not think too much of the toil, and too little of the time when it shall all be over? A few more days and you and I, believers, shall have dolls fighting with Satan, have done with temptations, have done with cares, have done with woes. An hour’s work and an eternity of rest! One day’s toil; and when I shall have accomplished as an hireling my day, then thou comest, O sweet and gentle rest! “For they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them “Courage, pilgrim courage! Up that crag, man! Now put hand and knee to it—up!—for when you have climbed a little higher, ay, but a very little, you shall lie down to rest, and then no more fatigue or sorrow. And there too, when we come to the top of the hill of God, we shall be above all the clouds of worldly care, and sin, and temptation. Oh! how deep is the rest of the people of God above! How calm is their sky!

“No vain discourse shall tempt my soul,  
Nor trifles vex my ear.”

No need to go out to a business which distracts my longing spirit. No need to toil at a labor which fags my body, and thus puts my soul into an in state for prayer; no need to mix with worldly-minded men, who make a jest of my solemnities, and would engage my mind with trifles unworthy of notice. No, above the world, above its distractions and attractions, my soul shall rise when it shall ascend into the hill of God. And, brethren, what a prospect there shall be from the summit! When we shall mount to the hill of God, what sights we shall see! You know from lofty mountains you can look on that side and see the lakes and the rivers; and on this side the green and laughing valleys, and far away, the wild black forest. The view is wide, but what a view is that which we shall have in heaven! There shall I know even as I am known. “Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face.” And chief and foremost, best of all, my eyes shall see the King in his beauty. We shall behold his face; we shall look into his eyes, we shall drink love from the fountain of his heart, and hear the music of his love from the sweet organ of his lips; we shall be entranced in his society, emparadised on his bosom. Up, Christian, up, Christ waits for thee! Come, man, tread thou the thorny way and climb, for Christ stands on the summit stretching out his hands, and saying, “Come up hither, to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father upon his throne.”

And there is this sweet reflection to close with—all that we shall see upon the top of the hill of God thou be ours. We look from earthly mountains and we see, but we do not possess. That mansion yonder is not ours; that crystal abeam belongs not to us, those wide-spread lawns are beautiful, but they are not in our possession. But on the hill-tops of heaven, all that we are we shall possess. We shall possess the streets of gold, the harps of harmony, the palms of victory, the shouts of angels, the songs of cherubim, the joy of the Divine Trinity, and the song of God as he rears in his love, and rejoices over us with singing, nay, God the Eternal One himself shall be ours, and ours for ever and for ever. What better encouragement can I give to you poor tired, fagged, wearied, and all-but-despairing Christians? Take courage. The last six days have tired you very much. Put away your trials to-day, you have had enough to cast you down, but is not the reflection of to-day enough to lift you up? Oh! remember the summit will repay you for the toil in climbing it. Though rough may be the road, it is but short at the longest, and the rest, the rest, will make amends. O man! men will suffer more to get rich than you do to be found in Christ. Go on, go on, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, and having done all, still stand.

Would that some here who have never tried to climb that mountain would remember that if they climb it not now, they will have to descend for ever! If now they turn not their faces to the steep ascent and go up it like men, they must fall eternally. Good God, what a fall! On what slippery places do they stand! I see them reeling even now! what a desperate dash was that! They fall, they fall, on through darkness, through blackest darkness, black as death and hell: on, on they fall, for the pit is bottomless! No feat shall they ever reach, down, down descending from the lower depths to the lowest depths, from hell to hell's profounder deep, from eternity of woe, on, on, on to woe trebled, multiplied sevenfold! May God grant that we, having faith in Christ, may tread the blood-marked way, and enter into "the rest which remaineth for the people of God!"

## Fire! Fire! Fire!

A Sermon

(No. 397)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 23rd, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”—Isaiah 43:2.

BEFORE we explain the metaphor of the text, it may be well for us to remark that we are not sufficiently grateful, I fear, for the preservation which God affords to us from fire. To be startled at the dead of night with the alarming cry, and to find one's self and children and goods in danger of being immediately consumed, must be no small trial. I have felt myself extreme gratitude to God that while both on the right hand and on the left the flames have raged, he has been pleased to spare to us this temple of our solemnities, this place where we delight to worship. And is it not meet that we should each and all render to him our hearty thanks for sparing our habitations preserving the roof under which we rest, enabling us to go out and to come in in perfect safety? Or, probably, I may be addressing some this morning who have had escaped from the very midst of the fires. Let such not only bless God for preservation in the past, but let them celebrate his goodness in plucking them as brands out of the burning. Let them be extremely grateful to God that while others this day are dying as a black heap of ashes who but yesterday were living men, we are still in the land of the dying unburned and unsinged. It was at least the trap of many of you, during the past week, and again last night, to witness a conflagration of awful grandeur, in which tongues of flame, mountains of fire, and pillars of smoke, made a spectacle to be gazed at with interest while it produced terrors and apprehensions that could awe the wildest mob into silence. With you and me it is a common mercy to be preserved day by day, and night by night from the devouring element. Yet when the dreadful catastrophe is within view—when those we know personally or by repute are sufferers—and when at the same time we look on with a sense of our own present security—then surely we ought to give more than a common expression of gratitude to God for mercies that at other times we are too apt to paste over unheeded as but the effects of a common Providence. Never was a truer sentence uttered than when one said, “These mercies are not valued until they are lost, and these preservations are not esteemed until they are withdrawn.” Let us thank God while we have the mercies, lest he be provoked by our ingratitude and take forth his rod and scourge us. Then, indeed, might we cry out under the smart, and wish and desire that we had our mercies back again. Thus much I could not in my conscience withhold at a time when there are judgments around us enough to make us tremble, and mercies enough in the little circles of home to make us exceedingly grateful. Let us now take the text in its real signification. Of course the walking through the fire here is put for the severest form of trouble: You have, in the commencement of the verse, trouble described as passing through the water. This represents the overwhelming influence of trial in which the soul is sometimes so covered that it becomes like a man sinking in the waves. “When thou goest through the rivers,”—those mountain torrents which with terrific force are often sufficient to carry a man away. This expresses the force of trouble, the power with which it sometimes lifts a man from the

foothold of his stability, and carries him before it. "When thou passest through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." But going through the fire expresses not so much the overwhelming character and the upsetting power of trouble as the actual consuming and destructive power of trouble and temptation. The metaphor is more vivid, not to, say more terrific, than that which is employed in the first sentence, and yet vivid and awful though it be, it is certainly not too strong a figure to be used as the emblem of the tribulations, temptations and afflictions, through which the Church and people of God have been called to pass. We may apprise the richness of the promise in proportion to the astonishing character of the metaphor, and we ought to value the privilege which it confers in the precise ratio of the dreadful character of the danger against which it preserves us. "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

We shall talk of three things, this morning, as the Holy Ghost may enable us; first of all, *a terrible pathway*,—walking around the fire; secondly, *an awful danger*,—the danger of being burned and utterly consumed; and thirdly, *a double insurance*,—"Thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the fire kindle upon thee."

I. First, then, let us speak a little upon this TERRIBLE PATHWAY.

The sacramental host of God's elect has never had an easy road along which to journey. I see the fields on fire, the prairie is in a blaze, the very heavens are like a furnace, and the clouds seem rather to be made of fire than water. Across that prairie lies the pathway to heaven, beneath that blazing sky the whole Church of God must make its perpetual journey. It started at the first in fire, and its very glory at the last shall take place in the midst of the fiery passing away of all things. When first there was a Church of God on earth, in the person of Abel it was persecuted, Cain lifted up his cruel club to slay his brother; and when the children of Seth were the representatives of God's chosen, they were without doubt the subject of the jeer and gibe of the descendants of Cain. Noah, the preacher of righteousness endured during his one hundred and twenty years, the hardness of heart and carelessness of an unthinking world; he and his family, who were the remnant of the Church in the latter part of those days, were constantly exposed to the laughter and persecution of men. When God had destroyed the earth with water, and the whole race of man was contained within the ark, you would think that then, certainly, the Church within the ark would be secure from molestation. But no, we find him ready to detect the failings of his parents, and no doubt a ringleader of everything that was vile and vicious, just as we have reason to hope that some of his brethren adhered to the most true God. From that day forward, whether you read through the life of Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, it still standeth true, "He that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the Spirit." Whether we refer you to the history of Israel by the side of the brick-kilns of Egypt, or to the host of God constantly beset by the marauders of the Amalekites, you find it still to be true that through much tribulation the people of God must wade their way to Canaan. And if you look further on in history, between David and Saul, between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, between the faithful followers of God after the captivity who would rebuild the temple, and Sanballat the Horonite; between the Maccabees and Antiochus Epiphanes, there must always be preserved a deadly feud, to let it be seen that the world must hate God's people, and must harass them and seek to hunt them out, while they, on the other hand, must steadily pursue their onward march through the midst of billows of fire till they come at last to their eternal rest. Find me the abode of the Church of God and I can smell the furnace not far off. Show me the follower of the God of Abraham and I shall soon find the host of enemies ready for the attack. Up till the days of the Saviour the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, not only from its friends who would take it,



but from those enemies who world assault it. From the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zecharias the son of Barachias, the pathway of the Church hath been a blood-besprinkled time. Since that day, what tongue can tell the sufferings of the people of God? Since Christ became martyr as well as Redeemer, has there been a season in which God's people have not somewhere or other been made to feel that they are not of the world, and that the world does not love them because they are not of the world? In apostolic times, Stephen expires beneath a shower of stones, James is killed with a sword, certain others of the saints are vexed; believers are scattered abroad. The Roman lion takes up the fight, Herod delights in the gore of the Christians, and smears the confessors of that holy faith with pitch and sets them in his gardens that they might be literally, as they were spiritually, the lights of the world. Let the catacombs of Rome witness to their sorrowful lives and let the Capitol witness to their terrible deaths. Let the old dungeons, some of which still remain, testify to the places where they wore out their dreary lives, and let the blood-stained Campus Martius still show where they cheerfully surrendered those lives for Christ. Oh! if the lands could speak, if the Earth could vomit forth her blood what stories could still be told of the way they were slain. Some of them were tortured, others sawn asunder, some stoned, and others burnt to death; though of them the world was not worthy. All the Roman Emperors, with but few exceptions, were persecutors; and the Christian emperors were as bad as the Pagan, for the Christian emperors were not Christians, nor were they members, as I believe, of *a* Christian Church. The Christian Church, and especially that Church of which we are still members, which has never defiled its garments, but which, never having had any alliance with the Church of Rome, has never needed to be reformed,—that Church under its different names, Paulitians, Novations, Albigenses, Lollards, Wyckliffites, Anabaptists, Baptists, has always suffered. It matters not what state, what Church, may have been dominant, whether it has been Christian or anti-Christian, the pure Church of Christ has always been the victim of persecution, and though she has persecuted never, but has always maintained inviolate, disunion from the state, and an utter hatred of all laws which would bind the conscience of man, yet has she been especially destitute, afflicted, tormented, and if she hath to-day a little breathing time, perhaps it is rather owing to the timidity which has made us keep back our sentiments, than to any charity towards ourselves. Find the Church of Christ wherever you will, and you shall find her scorned and despised of man. Find her in Scotland, and her Covenanters have to hide themselves in the midst of the mountain, and read the Word of God by the lightning flash, to escape from the dragoons of Claverhouse. Find her in England and where was she? Not in the cathedrals of her cities, but in the dungeons of her rural towns like Bedford with John Bunyan; not among the great and noble who were the persecutors, but among the poor and conscientious who were the persecuted. "If you want to find the drunkards and sinners of the worst dye," said one of our preachers at or before Cromwell's time, "you can find them in Church and state, but if you wish to find the men who are holy and who serve God, you must look into the felon's dungeons for them, for that is where they have been cast by the powers that be." Everywhere from the first day until now, it is not respectable to be a follower of Christ. If we follow Christ fully and faithfully before God, it is not equitable and praiseworthy before men. To take up his cross and to perform the ceremonies which he ordains, man hates. To adhere to truths which never were and never can be palatable to the carnal mind of man, is, and ever has been to excite animosity. The pathway of the Church, then, has been one of fire and flame. As it has been so with the Church, we may suspect there is some reason for it, and that reason has to be found in the great fact that the Church is in an enemy's country. She is not among her friends, she is a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth. She is a bird that has lost her

place, and all the birds round about her are against her, because she is a speckled one and belongs not to the common flock. If we were of the world, the world would love its own, but "because," said Christ, "ye are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "We know," said he, "it hated me before it hated you." True Christians are aliens, foreigners, men that speak another speech, men who are actuated by different motives, men who live for different ends, who are governed by different maxima from the rest of the men of this world, therefore it is that their pathway must be one of trial and opposition. All things the Christian teaches are so dead against the pleasures of the worldling and his gain, that it is no wonder he opposes us. Men hate the gospel because the gospel does not like them. That Church is never true to her Christ, nor true to herself which does not draw upon herself the hatred of ungodly men, by a faithful testimony against their sins.

It hath fared well with the Church when she hath been persecuted, and her pathway hath been through fire. Her feet are shod with iron and brass. She ought not to tread on paths strewed with flowers; it is her proper place to suffer. Christ redeemed the world with agonies, and the Church must teach the world by the example of her anguish. First of all, the blood of Christ was shed meritoriously, and afterwards the blood of his Church is shed testimonially, to will the world by suffering. When you hear of the massacre of Christians in Madagascar, weep for their death, but do not be utterly cast down. This is a good work. This is the way the Church grows. There is no loss in the army of Christ when the best preachers fall and the mightiest evangelists are put to death. They are not lost, the blood is well shed and gloriously well spent. It is buying victory. It is procuring crowns for Jesus Christ. It is after all accomplishing higher results by dying than could have been effected by doing. It is under the heaviest fire of artillery that the loyal, the brave, and the true do the most daring feats of prowess. When one hero falls, from his ashes other heroes arise. The post of danger is the post of honor, therefore fresh aspirants will be found ready to lead the brigade. Moreover, my friends, if the path of fire be always a path of terror, it is often a path of progress. Melancholy as it is to mark the ruins of a conflagration, while the dying embers smoulder, how often you must have observed more majestic edifices raised to replace the structures that have been consumed! Thus fearful disasters are made to stimulate industry and nourish enterprise.

No doubt the sufferings of the Church, and the fact that she has to pass through the fire, must be ascribed to the great truth that thus her God is glorified.

Brethren, you and I do not glorify God much; for we have very little to suffer. The blood red crown of martyrdom is such an object of ambition, or it should be, to the believer that he might almost regret that it is not in his power to coin it. We! what do we suffer? Somebody slanders our character. What is that? Somebody abuses us in the newspaper, what is that? We are accused of one crime and another. What can it signify to a man who knows his conscience is right in the sight of God? What does he care if all the babbling tongues of all the liars in earth and hell should be let loose against him; he can bear all that and endure it quietly. It is nothing. When I read the stories of the Book of Martyrs, and note how our great reformers fought for Christ, and manfully won the victory, I blush for ourselves. Why, brethren, we live in such silken times that glory is scarce possible to us. We have much to do, but we have nothing to suffer. We cannot prove our love to Christ as they did. They indeed were a highly honored people who were permitted to glorify Christ even in the very fires. Look at it in this light, and the light afflictions you have to endure, will seem to be as nothing at all, when you think of the weight of glory which they shall bring to your Lord and to yourself. But as history confirms the statement that the Church of Christ must walk through

the fire, so does the history of each individual Christian teach him that he must walk through the fire too.

“The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”

Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom. Think it no strange thing when the fiery trial shall happen to you. If you have the common afflictions of the world do not wonder. You must have them. The same thing happeneth both to the evil and to the good. You lose in business, you have reverses and disappointments, do not stagger at these in the way to heaven. You must have these, they are necessary to your spiritual health. Worse than that, you have strange temptations, you are placed in a position where you are constantly exposed to sin. It must be so. This too, is the pathway of God's people, you must have these fiery temptations, that you, being tried in the fire, may come forth as “gold seven times purified.” You have mental anxieties. Neither let these seem a wonder to you. They fall to the lot of all the saints of the Most High. Moreover, you will have to endure the attacks of Satan, you must go through the valley of the shadow of death, and fight with Apollyon as Christian did, you are not to be exempted from the hardness of Christian warfare. If you will mount the hill, you must climb; if you are to win the crown, you must win it by sheer might. Think not this a strange thing. And if in doing good you meet with difficulties, let not that stagger you. It is but right and natural. I tell you again, if there be any pathway in which there be not fire, tremble, but if your lot be hard, thank God for it. If your sufferings be great, bless the Lord for them, and if the difficulties in your pathway be many, surmount them by faith, but let them not cast you down. Be of good courage, and wait on the Lord, setting this constantly in your minds that he has not promised to keep you from trouble, but to preserve you in it. It is not written, “I will save thee from the fire,” but “I will save thee in the fire,” not “I will quench the coals,” but “they shall not burn thee,” not “I will put out the furnace,” but “the flames shall not kindle upon thee.” Write it down and expect it to come true, that in this world thou shalt have tribulation. Only follow thy glorious leader, be it through flood or flame.

II. We will now turn to our second point—there is AN AWFUL DANGER.

The promise of the text is based on a prophecy that follows it. As I glance my eye down the chapter, I see that it tells us how God taught his people by terrible things in the past; and how he hath terrible lessons to teach them in the future. If the judgment of Egypt, and of Ethiopia, and Seba, are behind us, we have startling destinies that rise up to view before us. There is a people to be gathered in, and we are to be the agents in gathering them. Fear not, saith the Lord, though thou walkest through the fire in fulfilling my mission. God speaks to the north, “Give up;” and to the south, “Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” But the manner of Egypt is repeated again. The monarch said, “I will not let them go.” Jealousy is stirred. The fire burns: the coals thereof have a vehement flame. And they that come forth from the bondage of this world must walk through the fire, even as those that came forth from Egypt had to pass through water. The fire of prophecy is no poetic fiction, it is real fire. It *will* burn. If it doth not burn the believer, it is not for want of energy, it is because some supernatural restraint is laid on it, or some supernatural protection vouchsafed to the saint. My brethren, the Church has had very painful experience that persecution is a fire which does burn. How many ministers of Christ, when the day of tribulation came, forsook their flocks and fled. When King Edward the Sixth was on the throne, there were many who professed to be Protestants and preached justification by faith. When Mary returned the vicar of Bray was but a specimen of a great class, his principles being to

keep his living. When again Elizabeth was upon the throne, there were plenty who found it to be profitable to profess the reformed faith. But when acts of conformity were passed afterwards by which those who had hitherto used a Christian freedom in the Church of England, were driven out, there were some who said they did not love prelacy but hated it, while others who had heretofore professed the old Puritanical doctrines, finding that their livings were to be lost thereby, held fast to this world, and let the things of the next world shift for themselves. Too many have forsaken the Church as Demas forsook Paul. Their piety would not stand the fire, they could walk with Christ in silvery slippers, but they could not go barefoot; they had no objection whatever to accompany him to his throne, but they had some slight difficulties about going with him to his cross; they would not mind bearing the weight of his glory, but the weight of the cross of tribulation was much too great for their constitutions. Persecution is a fire which does burn.

Again: I see iniquity raging on every side. Its flames are fanned by every wind of fashion. And fresh victims are being constantly drawn in. It spreads to every class. Not the palace nor the hovel are safe. Not the lofty piles that are raised for merchandise, nor the graceful edifice that is constructed for worship. Iniquity, whose contagion is fearful as fire, spreads and preys upon all things that are homely and comely, things useful and things sacred are not exempt. We must walk through the fire. We who are God's witnesses must stand in its very midst, to pour the streams of living water upon the burning fuel, and if not able to quench it, at least we must strive to prevent its spread. There are young men whose youthful lusts, inflammable as they are, have not yet ignited. They are in imminent danger. "Fire! fire!" we may well cry. We may give the alarm this morning to you, young man who are in the midst of ribald companions. I may cry "fire!" to you who are compelled to live in a house where you are perpetual tempted to evil, I may cry, "fire!" to you who are marked each day, and have to bear the sneer of the ungodly—"fire!" to you who are losing your property and suffering in the flesh, for many have perished thereby. Oh! may God grant you never may! I see today before my mind's eye the blackened skeletons of hundreds of fair professions. Multitudes—multitudes have perished in the valley of temptation who once, to all human judgment, had bid fair for heaven and made a show in the flesh! How many, too, have fallen under the attacks of Satan! This is a fire that does burn. Many a man has said, "I will be a pilgrim;" but he has met Apollyon on the road and he has turned back. Many a man has put on the harness, but he has given up the battle soon,—put his hand to the plough and looked back. There are more pillars of salt than one. If Lot's wife were a solitary specimen, it were well, but there have been tens of thousands who, like her, have looked back to the plains of Sodom, and like her, as they are in their spirit, have stood for ever what they were,—lost souls. We ought not to look upon our dangers with contempt. They are dangers, they are trials, we ought to look upon our temptations as fires. Oh, they are fires! If you think they are not fires you are mistaken. If you enter then, in your own strength, saying "Oh I could bear them," you will find that they are real fires, which, with forked tongues, shall lick up your blood, consume it in an instant, if you have not some better guard than your own creature power.

III. I will not tarry longer here, because I want to get to the pith and marrow of the promise. "Though thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Here is A DOUBLE INSURANCE.

Dr. Alexander, an eminent and most admirable American commentator says there appears to be some mistake in the translation here, because he thinks the two sentences are an anti-climax. "Thou shalt not be burned;" and then follows, "neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." It strikes

me, however, that in the second clause we have the higher gradation of a climax. "Thou shalt not be burned," to the destruction of thy life, nor even scorched to give thee the most superficial injury, for "the flames shall not kindle upon thee." Just as when the three holy children came out of the fiery furnace; it is said, "upon their bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed; neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them." "So the text seems to me to teach that the Christian Church under all its trials has not been consumed, but more than that—it has not lost anything by its trials. The Lord's Church has never been destroyed yet by her persecutors and her trials. They have thought they crushed her, but she lives still. They had imagined that they had taken away her life, but she sprang up more vigorous than before. I suppose there is not a nation out of which Christ's Church has ever been utterly driven. Even Spain, which seemed at last to have accomplished it by the most persevering barbarities, finds still a few believers to be a thorn in the side of her bigotry; and as for our own denomination, in the very country, where by the most frightful massacres, it was believed that the sect of Anabaptists had been utterly extinguished, our good and esteemed brother Mr. Oncken has been the means of reviving it, so that throughout all Germany, and in parts of Denmark, and Prussia, and Poland, and even Russia itself, we have sprung up into a new, vigorous, and even wonderful existence. And in Sweden where, under Lutheran government, the most persecuting edicts had been passed against us, we have been astonished to find within ten years three hundred churches suddenly spring up, for the truth has in it a living seed which is not to be destroyed.

But I have said that the Church not only does not lose her existence, but she does not lose anything at all. The Church has never lost her numbers. Persecutions have winnowed her and driven away the chaff; but not one grain of wheat has been taken away from the heap. Nay, not even in visible fellowship has the Church been decreased by persecution. She is like Israel in Egypt; the more they were afflicted the more they multiplied. Was a bishop put to death to-day? Ten young men came the next morning before the Roman proctor and offered themselves to die, having that very night been baptised for the dead bishop, having made their confession of faith that they might occupy his position. "I fill up the vacancy in the Church, and then die as he did." Was a woman strangled or tortured publicly? Twenty women appeared the next day and craved to suffer as she suffered, that they might honor Christ. Did the Church of Rome in more modern times burn one of our glorious reformers—John Huss—yet did not Martin Luther come forward as if the ashes of Huss had begotten Luther? When Wycliffe had passed away, did not the very feet of Wycliffe being persecuted help to spread his doctrines, and were there not found hundreds of young men who in every market-town in England read the Lollard's Scriptures and proclaimed the Lollard's faith? And so depend upon it, it shall ever be. Give a dog a bad name and you hang him, give a Christian a bad name and you honor him. Do but give to any Christian some ill name and before long a Christian denomination will take that name to itself, and it will become a title of honor. When George Fox was called "Quaker" it was a strange name, one to laugh at, but those men of God who followed him, called themselves Quakers too and so it lost its reproach. They called the followers of Whitfield and Wesley "Methodists," they took the title of Methodists and it became a respectful designation. When many of our Baptist forefathers, persecuted in England, went over to America to find shelter, they imagined that among the Puritans they would have a perfect rest, but Puritan liberty of conscience meant, "The right and liberty to think as they did, but no toleration to those who differed." The Puritans of New England as soon as ever a Baptist made his appearance amongst them, persecuted him with as little compunction as the Episcopalians had the Puritans. No sooner

was there a Baptist, than he was hunted up and brought before his own Christian brethren. Mark you, he was brought up for fine, for imprisonment, confiscation and banishment before the very men who had themselves suffered persecution. And what was the effect of this? The effect has been that in America where we were persecuted, we are the largest body of Christians. Where the fire burnt the most furiously, there the good old Calvinistic doctrine was taught, and the Baptist became the more decidedly a Baptist than anywhere else, with the most purity and the least dross. Nor have we ever lost the firmness of our grip upon the fundamental doctrine, for which our forefathers stained the baptismal pool with blood, by all the trials and persecutions that have been laid upon us, and never shall we.

Upon the entire Church, at the last, there shall not be even the smell of fire. I see her come out of the furnace. I see her advance up the hill towards her final glory with her Lord and Master, and the angels look at her garments; they are not tattered. Nay, the fangs of her enemies have not been able to make a single rent therein. They draw near to her, they look upon her flowing ringlets, and they are not crisp with heat: they look upon her very feet, and though she has trodden the coals they are not blistered, and her eyes have not been dried up by the furiousness of the seven times heated flame. She has been made more beautiful, more fair, more glorious, by the fires, but hurt she has not been, nor can she be. Turn, then, to the individual Christian, and remember, that the promise stands alike firm and fast with each believer. Christian, if you be truly a child of God, your trials cannot destroy you, and what is better still, you can lose nothing by them. You may seem to lose for to-day, but when the account comes to be settled, you shall not be found to be a farthing the loser by all the temptations of the world, of all the attacks of Satan which you have endured. Nay, more, you shall be wondrously the gainer. Your trials having worked patience and experience, shall make you rich. Your temptations have taught you your weakness, and shown you where your strength lieth, shall make you strong.

From your first trouble, till the last enemy shall be destroyed, you shall not lose a fraction, jot, or tittle, by anything or every thing which God in his providence, or the world in its fury, or Satan in his craftiness, shall ever be able to lay upon you. Upon you, not the smell of fire shall have passed. You shall not be burned, neither shall your hosen, nor your hats, but like the men that you read of in Daniel, you shall be wholly preserved intact from the flame.

I shall close now, having spoken the general truth by making some particular applications of this precious promise. There is a brother here who during the last three or four months has had wave upon wave of affliction: everything goes against him. He is an upright, honest, indefatigable merchant, yet, let him do what he will, his substance wastes away like snow before the sun. It appears that for every ship of his the wind blows the wrong way, and where others will by the venture he loses all.

“He sees each day new straights attend,  
And wonders when the scene shall end.”

When I spoke of walking through the fire just now, he said, “Ah! that is what I have been doing, I have been walking through it these months, to God and my own soul alone is it known how hot the furnace is.” Brother, will you take home my text this morning. Perhaps God sent you here not for the sermon, but for the text. Perhaps you strolled here to-day, not being a regular attendant, on purpose that this text might comfort you. “When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.” When your troubles are all over, you shall still be left, and what is more, “neither the flame shall kindle upon you.” When the winding up time comes, you shall not be any the loser.

While you think you have lost substance, you shall find when you read Scripture, that you only lose shadows. Your substance was always safe, being laid up in the keeping of Christ in Heaven. You shall discover in the issue, that these trials of yours were the best things that could happen to you. The day shall come when you will say with David, "I will sing of judgment and mercy." "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." Or perhaps there is some young woman here,—and the case I am about to paint is a very common one—alas, too common in this city. You love the Saviour my sister, but you are very poor, and you have to earn your living by that sorriest of all means. When the sun rises in the morning he sees you with that needle in your hand,

"Sewing at once with a double thread  
A shroud as well as a shirt."

and all day long you have scarcely time to rest for meals, and at eventime, when the fingers are worn and the eyes are heavy, you shall have need to refrain from sleep because the pittance is so small that you can scarcely live upon it. We know hundreds of that class who always constrain our pity, because they work go hard for so little wage. Peradventure your mother is dead, and your father does not care about you. He is a drunken sot, and you would be sorry to meet him perhaps in the street. You have no helper, no friends. You do not care to tell anybody, you would not like to take anything if charity should offer it to you; you feel it the hardest thing all is to be tempted as you are. There seems to you to be by the path open the road to plenty, and in some degree to delight. But you have said, "No, no," and you have loathed the temptation, and you have stood—and I have known how year after year some of you have fought with temptation, and struggled on, when sometimes you were well nigh starved; but you would not do this great wickedness against God.

My sister, I pray you take the encouragement of this text to strengthen you for the future battles. You have been going through the fires. But you are not consumed yet, and I bless God, upon your garments the smell of fire has not passed. Hold on my sister, hold on, through all the sorrow thou hast, and all the bitterness which is heavy enough to crush thy spirit; hold on, for thy Master sees thee. He will encourage and strengthen thee, and bring thee more than conqueror through it all in the end. I address, too, this morning, some youthful minds. Young men who love Christ, and as soon as they get home after attending the house of prayer, the taunting enquiry made by their fellow-workmen is—"You have been to some meeting-house, I dare say." How cruel sometimes worldly young men are to Christian young men! Cruel, for when there are a dozen worldlings and only one Christian they consider it to be honorable for the dozen to set upon one. Twelve big tall fellows will sometimes think it a fine game to pass from hand to hand some little lad of fifteen, and make sport and mockery of him. There is honor, it is said, among thieves, but there seems to be no honor at all among worldlings when they get a young Christian in this way. Well, young man, you have borne with it; you have said, "I will hold my tongue and won't say a word," "though your heart was hot within you, and while you were musing the fire burned." Remember what I have often said to you, the anvil does not get broken even if you keep on striking it, but it breaks all the hammers. Do you do the same. Only hold on, and these fires shall not consume you. If the fires should burn up your piety, it would only prove that your piety was not worth having. If you cannot stand a few jokes and jeers, why, you are not builded together in that habitation of God which he hath made fire-proof. Bear up and in the end you will find that this hard lot of yours, this severe discipline, did you a deal of good, and made you a better man than you ever would have been if you had been dandled on the lap of piety, and kept from the battle. In after years your high and

eminent post of usefulness may be, perhaps, owing to the severe and harsh discipline to which you were put in your younger days. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. "Or, mayhap, I am speaking to some one who has met with opposition from his own ungodly relations. Remember how Jesus said, "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled? From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, two against three and three against two." Perhaps your father has threatened you, or what is more bitter still, your husband has threatened to discard you. Now indeed you are walking through the fires. He rails at your godliness, makes a mock of everything you love, and does his best by cruelty to break your heart. My dear sister in Christ, you shall not be burned by the fire. If grace be in your heart the devil can't drive it out, much less your husband. If the Lord has called you by his grace, all the men on earth, and all the fiends in hell can reverse the calling, and you shall find in the end that you have not suffered any loss; the flame has not kindled upon you. You shall go through the fire and bless God for it. From a dying bed, or at least through the gates of Paradise you shall look back upon the dark path of the way and say it was well, it was well for me that I had to carry that cross, and that now I am permitted to wear this crown. Who is on the Lord's side this morning of this congregation? While Jehovah speaks on high in the thunder, let us speak on earth in tones of earnestness. Who is on the Lord's side among you? You that are not, be warned. "Tophet is ordained of old. He hath made it deep and large. The pile thereof is fire and much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." You that are on his side, set up your banners to-day. He saith, "Fear not, I am with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." May the Lord bless the words we have spoken. Though hastily suggested to our minds, and weakly delivered to you, the Lord bless them for Christ's sake.



## The New Nature

A Sermon

(No. 398)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, June the 30th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”—1 Peter 1:23-25.

PETER HAD earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other “with a pure heart fervently,” and he wisely fetches his argument, not from the law, nor from nature, nor from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God hath implanted in his people. Love each other with a pure heart fervently, for ye have been born again, not with corruptible seed, but with incorruptible. I might compare Peter to some judicious tutor of the princes of the blood, who labors to beget and foster a kingly spirit in the king’s sons. From their position and descent he brings argument for a dignified behavior: “Do not act foolishly, it would be unseemly in a king; speak not so, ribald language would be unbecoming to a prince; indulge not in these vanities, such folk would be degrading to the illustrious of the earth.” So looking upon God’s people, as being heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth’s true and only real aristocracy, Peter saith to them, “See that ye love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of flesh shall fade, and even its very existence shall cease. I think it would be well, my brethren, if in a spirit of humility, you and I recognized the free dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. Oh! what is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king’s royalty often lieth only in his crown, but with a Christian it is infused into his very nature. Compare him with a senator, with a mighty warrior, or a master of wisdom, and he far excelleth them all. He is of another race than those who are only born of woman. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as man is above the beast that perisheth. As humanity towers in dignity high above the grovelling brute, so doth the regenerate man o’ertop the best of human once-born mortals. Surely he ought to bear himself, and act as one who is not of the multitude, one who has been chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among “the peculiar people,” and who therefore cannot grovel as others grovel, nor own think as others think. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, make you cleave to holiness, and hate the very appearance of evil.

In the text there are three points which, I think, will well repay our very serious attention. The apostle evidently speaks of two lives, the one, the life which is natural, born, matured, and perfected only by the flesh; the other, the life which is spiritual, born of the spirit, in antagonism with the flesh, surviving it and triumphantly rising to celestial glory. Now, in speaking of these two lives, the apostle brings out, first of all, *a comparison and a contrast between the two births*, for each life

hath its own birth. Then he brings out *a contrast between the manifest existence of the two lives*; and then lastly, *between the glory of the two lives*, for each life hath its glory, but the glory of the spiritual life far excelleth the glory of the natural.

I. First, then, the apostle Peter draws A COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS WHICH ARE THE DOORWAYS OF THE TWO LIVES.

First, we have said that every life is prefaced by rib birth. It is so naturally—we are born; it is so spiritually—we are *born again*. Except a man be born he cannot enter into the kingdom of nature; except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Birth is the lowly gateway by which we enter into life, and the lofty portal by which we are admitted into the kingdom of heaven.

Now there is a comparison between the two births; in both there is a *solemn mystery*. I have read, I have even heard sermons, in which the minister seemed to me rather to play the part of a physician than of a divine, exposing and explaining the mysteries of our natural birth, across which both God in nature and the good man in delicacy must ever throw a veil. It is a hallowed thing to be born, as surely as it is a solemnity to die. Birthdays and deathdays are days of awe. Birth is very frequently used in Scripture as one of the most graphic pictures of solemn mystery. Into this, no man may idly pry, and Science herself, when she has dared to look within the veil, has turned back awestricken, from those “lower parts of the earth” in which David declares us to be “curiously wrought.” Greater still is the mystery of the *new birth*. That we are born again we know, but how, we cannot tell. How the Spirit of God openeth upon the mind, how it is that he renews the faculties and imparts fresh desires by which those faculties should be guided, how it is that he enlightens the understanding, subdues the will, purifies the intellect, reverses the desire, lifts up the hope, and puts the fear in its right channel, we cannot tell, we must leave this among the secret things which belong unto God. The Holy Ghost worketh, but the manner of his operation is not to be comprehended. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Oh! my hearers, have you *felt* this mystery? Explain it you cannot, nor can I, nor ought we to attempt an explanation, for where God is silent it is perhaps profanity, and certainly impertinence for us to speak. The two births then are alike in their solemn mystery.

But, then, we know this much of our natural birth, that in birth there is *a life created*. Yonder infant is beginning his being, another creature has lifted up its feeble cry to heaven, another mortal has come to tread this theater of action, to breathe, to live, to die. And so in the new birth, there is an absolute creation, we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, there is another spirit born to pray, to believe in Christ to love him here, and to rejoice in him hereafter. As no one doubts but that birth is the manifestation of a creation, so let no one doubt but that regeneration is the manifestation of a creation of God, as divine, as much beyond the power of man, as the creation of the human mind itself.

But we know also that in birth there is not only a life created, but a *life communicated*. Each child hath its parent. The very flowers trace themselves back to a parental seed. We spring, not from our own loins, we are not self-created, there is a life communicated. We have links between the son and the father, and back till we come to father Adam. So in regeneration there is a life, not merely created, but communicated, even the very life of God, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope. As truly as the father lives in the child, so truly doth the every life and nature of God live in every Swiss born heir of heaven. We are as certainly partakers of the divine nature by the

new birth as we were partakers of the human nature by the old birth: so far the comparison holds good.

Equally certain is it, that in the natural and in the spiritual birth there is *life entailed*. There are certain propensities which we inherit, from which this side the grave we shall not be free. Our temperament brave or gay, our passions slow or hasty, our propensities sensual or aspiring, our faculties contracted or expansive are to a great measure an entailed inheritance as much linked to our future portion as are wings to an eagle or a shed to a snail. No doubt much of our history is born within us, and the infant hath within himself germ of his future actions. If I may so speak, there are those qualities, that composition and disposition of nature which will naturally, if circumstances assist, work out in full development certain results. So is it with us when we are born again: a heavenly nature is entailed upon us. We cannot but be holy; the new nature cannot but serve God, it must, it will pant to be nearer to Christ, and more like him. It hath aspirations which time cannot satisfy, desires which earth cannot surfeit, longings which heaven itself alone can gratify. There is a life entailed upon us in the moment when we pass from death unto life in the solemn mystery of regeneration.

In the old birth, and in the new birth also, *a life* is also brought forth which is *complete in all its parts* and only needs to be developed. Yon infant in the oracle shall never have another limb, or another eye. Its limb hardens, it grows, it gathers strength, its brain also enlarges its sphere, but the faculties are there already, they are not implanted afterward. Verily, so is it in the new-born child of God. Faith love, hope, and every grace are there the moment he believes in Christ. They grow 'tis true, but they were all there in the instant of regeneration. The babe in grace who is just now born to God, hath every part of the spiritual man, it only needs to grow till he becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Thus far, you perceive, that the two births have a very close resemblance to one another. I pray you, now that I have introduced the subject, do not turn from it till you have thought of the reality of the new birth, as you must of the reality of the first. You were not here if you had not been born, you shall never be in heaven unless you are born again, you had not been able to-day to hear, or think, or see, if you had not been born. You are not to-day able to pray or to believe in Christ, unless you are born again. The enjoyments of this world you could never have known, if it had not been for birth, the saved delight of God you do not know to-day, and you never shall know unless you be born again. Do not look upon regeneration as though it were a fancy or a fiction. I do assure you, my hearers, it is as real as is the natural birth; for spiritual is not the same as fanciful, but the spiritual is as real as even nature itself. To be born again is as much a matter of fact to be realised, to be discerned, and to be discovered, as to be born for the first time into this vale of tears.

But now comes *the contrast*—"being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible." Herein lieth the contrast between the two. That child which has just experienced the first birth has been made partaker of *corruptible seed*. The depravity of his parent lieth sleeping within him. Could he speak, he might say so. David did,—“Behold, I was born in sin and shaped in iniquity.” He receiveth the evil virus which was first infused into us by the fall. Not so, however, is it when we are born again. No sin is then sown within us. This sin of the old flesh remains but there is no sin in the newborn nature, it cannot sin because it is born of God himself; it is as impossible for that new nature to sin as for the Deity itself to be defiled. It is a part of the divine nature—a spark struck off from the rental orb of light and life, and dead or dark it cannot be, because it would be contrary to its nature to be either the one or the other. Oh, what a difference! In the first birth—born to sin, in

the next—born to holiness; in the first—partakers of corruption, in the next—heirs of incorruption in the first—depravity, in the second—perfection. What broader contrast could there be! What should make us more thoroughly long for this new birth than the glorious fact that we are by its means consciously lifted up from the ruins of the fall, and made perfect in Christ Jesus.

In the birth of the flesh too, what *dread uncertainties* attend it! What shall become of yonder child? It may live to curse the day in which it was born, as did the poor troubled patriarch of old. What sorrow may drive its ploughshares along its yet unwrinkled brow? Ah! child, thou shalt be gray-headed one day, but ere that comes thou shalt have felt a thousand storms beating about thine heart and head. Little dost thou know thy destiny, but assuredly thou shalt be of few days and full of trouble. Not so in the regeneration, we shall never rue the day in which we are born again, never look back upon that with sorrow, but always with ecstasy and delight, for we are ushered then, not into the hovel of humanity, but into the palace of Deity. We are not then born into a valley of tears, but into an inheritance in the Canaan of God.

That child too, so fondly the object of its mother's love may one day vex or break its parent's heart. Are not children doubtful mercies? Bring they not with them sad forebodings of what they yet may be? Alas for the pretty prattlers who have grown up to be convicted criminals! But blessed be God, they who are sons of God shalt never break their father's heart. Their new nature shall be worthy of Him that gave it existence. They shall live to honor him, they shall die to be perfectly like him, and shall rise to glorify him for ever. We have sometimes said that God her a very naughty family, but surely the naughtiness is in the old Adam nature, and not in Jehovah's gracious work. There is no naughtiness in the new creature. In that new creature there is no taint of sin. God's child as descended from his loins, can never sin. The new nature which God hath put into it doth never wander, death never transgress. It were not the new nature if it did, it were not God's offspring, if it all, for that which cometh of God is like Him, holy, pure, and undefiled, separate from sin. In this indeed lieth a strange difference. We know not to what that first nature tendeth, who can tell what bitterness it shall bring forth? But we know whither the new nature tendeth, for it ripeneth towards the perfect image of Him that created us in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps without my endeavoring to enlarge further you could yourselves muse upon this theme. It remains but for me upon this first head to return with earnestness to that point upon which I fear the greatest difficulty lies—the realisation of this birth—for we repeat it, we are speaking of a fact and not a dream, a reality and not metaphor.

Some tell you that the child is regenerated when the drops fall from priestly fingers. My brethren, a more fond and foul delusion was never perpetrated upon earth. Rome itself did never discourse upon a wilder error than this. Dream not of it. O think not that it is so. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord himself addresses this sentence not to an infant but to a fullgrown man. Nicodemus—one who was circumcised according to the Jewish law, but who yet, though he had received the seal of that covenant, needed as a man to be born again. We all without exception must know this change. Your life may have been moral, but it will not suffice. The most moralised human nature can never attain to the divine nature. You may cleanse and purge the fruit of the first birth, but still the inevitable decree demands the second birth for all. If from your youth up you have been so trained that you have scarcely known the vices of the people; so tended, hedged in, and kept from contamination with sin, that you have not known temptation, yet you must be born again, and this birth, I repeat it, must be as much a fact, as true, as real, and as sure as was that first birth in which you were ushered into this world. What do you know of this,

my hearer? What do you know of this? It is a thing you cannot perform for yourself. You cannot regenerate yourself any more than you could cause yourself to be born. It is a matter out of the range of human power it is supernatural, it is divine. Have you partaken of it? Do not merely look back to some hour in which you felt mysterious feelings. No, but judge by the fruits. Have your fears and hopes changed places? Do you love the things you once hated, and hate the things you once loved? Are old things passed away? Have all things become new? Christian brethren, I put the query to you as well as to the rest. It is so easy to be deceived here. We shall find it no trifle to be born again. It is a solemn, it is a momentous matter. Let us not take it for granted because we have given up drunkenness that we are therefore converted, because we do not swear, because now we attend a place of worship. There is more wanted than this. Do not think you are saved because you have some good feelings, some good thoughts. There is more required than this—ye must be *born again*. And oh, Christian parents, train up your children in the fear of God, but do not be content with your training—they must be born again. And Christian husbands, and Christian wives, be not satisfied with merely praying that your partner's characters may become moral and honest; ask that something may be done for them which they cannot do for themselves. And you, philanthropists, who think that building new cottages, using fresh plans for drainage, teaching the poor economy, will be the means of emparadising the world; I pray you go further than such schemes as these. You must change the heart. It is but little use to alter the outward till you have renewed the inward. It is not the bark of the tree that is wrong so much as the sap. It is not the skin—it is the blood—nay, deeper than the blood—the very essence of the nature must be altered. The man must be as much made anew as if he never had an existence. Nay, a greater miracle than this, these must be two miracles combined—the old things must pass away, and new things must be created by the Holy Ghost. I tremble while I speak upon this theme, lest I, your minister, should know in theory but not in experience a mystery so sublime as this. What shall we do but together offer a prayer like this—“O God, if we be not regenerate let us know the worst of our state, and if we be, let us never cease to plead and pray for others till they too shall be renewed by the Holy Ghost.” That which is born of the flesh is flesh; its best endeavors go no higher than flesh, and the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That which is born of the Spirit alone is spirit, and only the Spirit can enter into spiritual things, inherit the spiritual portion which God has provided for his people. I have thus passed through the somewhat delicate and extremely difficult task of bringing out the apostle's meaning—the comparison between the two births, which are the door-steps of the two lives.

## II. I now come to the second point—THE MANIFEST DIFFERENCE OF THE TWO LIVES RESULTING FROM THE TWO BIRTHS.

Brethren, look around you. To what shall we compare this immense assembly? As I look upon the many colors, and the varied faces, even if it were not in the text, I am certain that a meadow thickly besprinkled with flowers would rise up before my imagination. Look at the mass of people gathered together, and doth it not remind you of the field in its full summer glory, when the king-cups, daisies, cloves, and grass blooms, are sunning themselves in countless varieties of beauty? Ay, but not only in the poet's eye is there a resemblance, but in the mind of God, and in the experience of man. “All flesh is grass;” all that is born of the first birth, if we compare it to grass in poetry, may be compared to it also in fact, from the frailty and shortness of its existence. We passed the meadows but a month ago, and they were moved in verdant billows by the breeze like waves of ocean when they are softly stirred with the evening gale. We looked upon the whole

scene, and it was exceeding fair. We passed it yesterday and the mower's scythe had cut asunder beauty from its roots, and there it lay in heaps ready to be gathered when fully dry. The grass is cut down so soon, but if it stood, it would wither, and handfuls of dust would take the place of the green and coloured leaves, for doth not the grass wither and the flowers thereof fall avidly? Such is mortal life. We are not living, brethren, we are dying. We begin to breathe, and we make the number of our breaths the less. Our pulse is "beating funeral marches to the tomb." The sand runs down from the upper bulb of the glass, and it is emptying fast. Death is written upon every brow. Man, know that thou art mortal, for thou art born of woman. Thy first birth gave thee life and death together. Thou dost only breathe awhile to keep thee from the jaws of the grave, when that breath is spent, into the dust of death thou tallest there and then. Everything, especially during the last few weeks, has taught us the frailty of human life. The senator who guided the affairs of nations and beheld the rise of a free kingdom, lived not to see it fully organized, but expired with many a weighty secret unspoken. The judge who has sentenced many, receives his own sentence at the last. From this earth, since last we met together, master-minds have been taken away, and even the monarch on his throne has owned the monarchy of Death. How many of the masses too have fallen, and have been carried to their long home! There have been funerals, some of them funerals of honored men who perished doing their Master's will in saving human life, and alas, there have been unhonoured burials of others who did the will of Satan, and have inherited the flame. There have been deaths abundant on the right hand and on the left, and well have Peter's words been proved—"All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."

Now, brethren, let us look at the other side of the question. The second birth gave us a nature too—Will that also die? Is it like grass, and its glory like the flower of the field? No, most certainly not. The first nature dies because the seed was corruptible. But the second nature was not created by corruptible seed, but with incorruptible, even the Word of God into which God has infused his own life, so that it quickens us by the Spirit. That incorruptible word produces an incorruptible life. The child of God in his new nature never dies. He can never see death. Christ, who is in him, is the immortality and the life. "He that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die." And yet again, "Though he were dead yet shall he live." When we are born again, we receive a nature which is indestructible by accident, which is not to be consumed by fire, drowned by riveter, weakened by old age, or smitten down by blast of pestilence; a nature invulnerable to poison; a nature which shall not be destroyed by the sword; a nature which can never die till the God that gave it should himself expire and Deity die out. Think of this, my brethren, and surely you will find reason to rejoice. But perhaps, you ask me, why it is the new nature can never die? I am sure the text teaches it never can. "But not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." If that does not teach that the spiritual nature which is given us by the new birth never dies, it does not teach anything at all; and if it does teach that, where goes Arminian doctrine of falling from grace; where go your Arminian fears of perishing after all? But let me show you why it is that this nature never dies. First, *from the fact of its nature*. It is in itself incorruptible. Every like produces in like. Man, dying man, produces dying man; God, eternal God, produces everlasting nature when he begets again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy:" the earthy dies, we who are earthy die too. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly," the heavenly never dies, and if we are born as the heavenly, the heavenly nature dieth neither. "The first Adam was made a living

soul." We are made living souls too, but that soul at last is separated from the body. "The second Adam is made a quickening spirit," and that spirit is not only alive but quickening. Do you not perceive it?—the first was a quickened soul—quickened, receiving life full a season; the second is a quickening spirit, giving out life, rather than receiving it; like that angel whom some poet pictures, who perpetually shot forth sparklers of fire, having within himself an undying flame, the fountain of perpetual floods of light and heat. So is it with the new nature within us, it is not merely a quickened thing which may die, but a quickening thing which cannot die, being Snide like unto Christ the quickening Spirit. But then, more than this, the new nature cannot die, because *the Holy Spirit perpetually supplies it with life*. "He giveth more grace"—grace upon grace. You know the apostle puts it thus: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by *his life*." Is not the Holy Spirit the divine agent by whom the life of Christ is infused into us? Now, the life-floods which the Holy Spirit sends into us, co-work with the immortality of the new-born spirit, and so doubly preserve the eternity of our bliss. But then, again, *we are in vital union with Christ*, and to suppose that the new nature could die out, were to imagine that a member of Christ would die, that a finger, a hand, an arm, could rot from the person of Jesus, that he could be maimed and divided. Doth not the apostle say, "Is Christ divided?" And was it not written, "Not a bone of him shall be broken?" and how were this true, if we were broken from him, or rolled from his body? My brethren, we receive the divine sap through Christ the stem that divine sap keeps us alive but more the very fact that we are joined to Christ preserves our life, "Because I live ye shall live also." The new life cannot die, *because God is pledged to keep it alive*. "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." And yet again, "The water which I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." And yet again, "He that believeth in me shall never hunger and never thirst." And so might we repeat multitudes of passages where the divine promise engages omnipotence and divine wisdom, to preserve the new life. So then, let us gather these all up in one. As a man born of the flesh, I shall die, as a new man born of the Spirit, I shall never die. Thou, O flesh, the offspring of flesh thou shalt see corruption. Thou, O spirit, new-created spirit, offspring of the Lord corruption thou shalt never see. With our glorious Covenant Head we may exclaim "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." I shall die, yet never die. My life shall flee, yet never flee. I shall pass away, and yet abide; I shall be carried to the tomb, and yet, soaring upward, the tomb can ne'er contain the quickened Spirit. Oh, children of God, I know not any subject that ought more thoroughly to lift you out of yourselves than this. Now let the divine nature live in you; come, put down the animal for a moment, put down the mere mental faculty; let the living spark blaze up; come, let the divine element, the newborn nature that God has given to you, let that now speak, and let its voice be praise; let it look up and let it breathe its own atmosphere, the heaven of God, in which it shall shortly rejoice. O God, our Father, help us to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, seeing that we have by thine own self been quickened to an immortal life.

III. I now come to the last, and perhaps the most interesting point of all. THE GLORY OF THE TWO NATURES IS CONTRASTED. Every nature has its glory. Brethren, look at the field again. There is not only the grass but there is the flower which is the glory of the field. Sometimes many coloured hues begem the pastures with beauty. Now, the painted flower is the glory of the verdant field. It conies up later than the grass, and it dies sooner, for the grass is up a long while before the

flower blooms, and when the flower is dead, the stalk of the grass still retains vitality. It is precisely so with us. Our nature has its glory, but that glory does not arrive for years. The babe has not yet the glory of full manhood, and when that glory does come, it dies before our nature dies, for “they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few.” The man loses his glory and becomes a tottering imbecile before life becomes extinct. The flower comes up last and dies first, our glory comes last and dies first, too. O flesh! O flesh! what contempt is passed upon thee! Thy very existence is frail and feeble, but thy glory more frail and feeble still. It grows but late and then it dies, alas how soon! But what is the glory of the flesh? Give me your attention for a moment while I tell you briefly. In some, the glory of the flesh is BEAUTY. Their face is fair to look upon, and as the handiwork of the Great Worker, it should be admired. When a person becometh vain of it, beauty becomes shame; but to have well-proportioned features is, doubtless, no mean endowment. There is a glory in the beauty of the flesh, but how late it is developed, and how soon it fades! How soon do the cheeks become hollow! how frequently does the complexion grow sallow, and the bright eyes are dimmed, and the comely visage is marred! A part, too, of the glory of the flesh is *physical strength*. To be a strong man, to have the bones well set and the muscles well braced,—to have good muscular vigor is no small thing. Many men take delight in the legs of a man, and in the strength of his arm. Well, as God made him, he is a wonderful creature, and ‘twere wrong for us not to admire the masterpiece of God. But how late does muscular strength arrive! There are the days of infancy, and there are the days of youth, when as yet the strong man is but feeble; and then, when he has had his little hey-day of strength, how doth the stalwart frame begin to rock and reel! and the rotting teeth and the whitened hair show that death has begun to claim the heriot clay, and will soon take possession of it for himself “The glory thereof falleth away.” To others, the glory of the flesh lies rather *in the mind*. They have eloquence, they can so speak as to enchant the ears of the multitude. The bees of eloquence have made their hives between the lips of the orator, and honey distils with every word. Yes, but how late is this a coming! How many years before the child speaks articulately, and before the young man is able to deliver himself with courage! And then, how soon it goes!—till, mumbling from between his toothless jaws, the poor man would speak the words of wisdom, but the lips of age deny him utterance. Or, let the glory be *wisdom*. There is a man whose glory is his masterly power over others. He can foresee and look further than other men, he can match craft by craft: he is so wise that his fellows put confidence in him. This is the glory of the flesh; how late is it in coming!—from the puking child, what a distance up to the wise man! And then how soon it is gone! How often, while yet the man himself in his flesh is in vigor has the mind strewn symptoms of decay! Well, take what ye will to be the glory of the flesh, I will still pronounce over it “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” If the flesh be frail, the glory of the flesh is frailer still, if the grass wither, certainly the flower of the grass withereth before it.

But is this true of the new nature? Brethren, is this true of that which was implanted at the second birth? I have just shown you, I think, that the existence of the new nature is eternal, because it was not born of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. I have tried to show that it can never perish and can never die. But your unbelief suggests, “Perhaps its glory may.” No, its glory never can. And what is the glory of the new-born nature? Why, its glory first of all is *beauty*. But what is its beauty? It is to be like the Lord Jesus. We are, when we shall see him as he is, to be like him. But that beauty shall never fade, eternity itself shall not hollow the cheeks of this seraphic comeliness, nor dim the brilliant eye of this celestial radiance. We shall be like Christ, but the likeness shall



ne'er be marred by time, nor consumed by decay. I said just now that the glory of the flesh consisted sometimes in its strength, so does the glory of the Spirit consist in its vigor, but then it is a force that never shall be expended. The strength of the new-born nature is the Holy Ghost himself, and while Deity remains omnipotent, our new nature shall go on increasing in vigor till we come first to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, and next come to be glorified men standing before his throne. The flower of the new nature you cannot see much of yet, you see through a glass darkly. That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in eloquence. "Eloquence," say you, "how can that be?" I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new, but this is the eloquence—"Abba Father." This is an eloquence you can use now. It is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience, shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of heaven. You shall be able to say, "Abba Father," in the very pangs of death, and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, "Hallelujah," you shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim, and through eternity your glory shall never part awry. And then, if wisdom be glory, your wisdom, the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's who is made of God unto us, wisdom shall never fade, in fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook to-day, you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow; you see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom by-and-bye; for the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, gloryfying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail. Brethren, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But though he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away. The only question we have to ask, and with that we wish, is—are we born again? Brethren, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth, and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart. I say—*are you born again?* Do not stand up and say, "I am a Churchman, I was baptized and confirmed." That you may be, and yet not be born again. Do not say, "I am a Baptist, I have professed my faith and was immersed." That you may be, and not be born again. Do not say, "I am of Christian parents." That you may be, and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others. Are you born again? Oh! souls, may God the Holy Ghost reveal Christ to you, and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith, then be it known unto you that you are born again and that you have passed from death unto life, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." God help you to believe!

## A Peal of Bells

A Sermon

(No. 399)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July the 7th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”—Zechariah 14:20.

THERE ARE MANY days *already past* which we might well have wished to see. Who would not have rejoiced to have beheld the day when God smote Rabab and broke the dragon in the deep waters, when Miriam took the timbrel and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea?” Who might not have wished to have witnessed the glorious victories of the judges when they put to rout the oppressors of Israel, or that day when David returned from the slaughter of Goliath, or that auspicious morn when Solomon’s temple, glittering in unrivalled magnificence, was dedicated by a vast concourse of people with generous sacrifice to the worship of the true God? Many days there were in the chronicles of the Jewish Church which are never to be forgotten earth’s red letter days when God made bare his arm and showed forth his might. Days there were, too, in Christ’s history which it was a high privilege to see. The day of his birth—would that we had been among the shepherds on the plain when they heard the angels sing “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men, “or the day of his death when he cried, “It is finished,” and yielded up be ghost, or, better still, the day of his resurrection, when he routed all our foes by rising again for our justification, or the day of his ascension, when he led captivity captive and ascended up on high, or even that day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of God fell on the disciples, and when they, preaching with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance multitudes being added to the Church of these who were ordained unto eternal life. Those days are gone, we look back upon them with faith, and as Abraham rejoiced in prospect, so would we do in retrospect. But there are days *yet to come* for whose advent we may well be eager. There is the day when Ephraim shall not envy Judah nor Judah vex Ephraim, for all the Church of Christ shall be one in spirit. There is the day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. There is the day, too, when Israel shall be restored to its own land, when its country shall be called no more desolate, but Beulah, and no more forsaken, but Hepzibah shall its name be, for the Lord delighteth in it. There is specially the day of the Second Advent, that day of days for which methinks all other days that went before were made, that day which shall be the summing up, the total of all ages, for the fullness of time shall come, and Christ in the fullness of his glory shall reign among the sons of men. I think I may with your permission add to the test of days which we might desire to see that which is spoken of in the text—“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.” What connection there may be between that day and others which I have mentioned it is not my purpose this morning to explain. I would that this were to us personally the day when it should be fulfilled in us as individuals, and may the Lord hasten the happy day when universally

throughout the Church this text has be fulfilled, and upon the bells of the horses there shall be “Holiness unto the Lord!”

The text, as you perceive, deals with horses which were unclean under the Jewish law yet, in the day spoken of in the text, the horses themselves shall be purged from commonness or uncleanness, and their harness shall be dedicated to God as certainly as the vestments of the High Priest himself. It will be a happy day indeed when the men who deal with horses, too often a race anything but honest and upbeat shall exhibit in their common transactions a consecration to God, so that on the horses’ furniture shall be written. Holiness to the Lord. The original Hebrew word translated “bells” is a very singular one, because nobody knows precisely what it means. The fact is, the Hebrews knew so little of horses from being interdicted from their use that they had not a very large vocabulary to describe the harness and other equipments of the horse. The word is translated by some critics, “bells,” by others, “bits,” by some, “frontlets,” by others, “collars,” by some, and by Calvin especially, “blinkers,” and Calvin also hints that the word may mean “stables.” The words must then mean—“The furniture of the horses shall be, Holiness to the Lord,” and there is no doubt a comparison between the horses and the High Priest: if it be the frontier—just as the High Priest upon his brow the Hebrew letters in gold “Holiness to the Lord,” so on the frontlet of the horses shall be Holiness to the Lord, and as the High Priest wore bells about his garments, so the horses are decorated with their silver bells, there shall be on the bells, Holiness to the Lord, and if it signify any other kind of vestment, even as on the very ornaments of the Priest, on his ephod and breastplate holiness was written, so in every article that shall be by the horse shall holiness to God be most clearly manifest, yea, even the stables, unconsecrated as one could suppose they must always remain, shall be consecrated to God. The commonest buildings, set apart to meanest uses, being frequented by worshippers of the Lord, shall become temples of him dwelleth in humble and contrite hearts.

The simple meaning of the text is just this, that the day shall come when in common life holiness shall be the guiding star, when the ordinary actions of human existence shall be as much the worship of God as the sacrifice of the altar or the mission of the high priest when he went within the veil. Everything, that which was most despised—the horses, the places seemed the least likely to be consecrated—the stables, and those things which seemed the least holy, even the horses’ harness,—all shall be so thoroughly used in obedience to God’s will that everywhere there shall be, “Holiness unto Jehovah.” Common things, then, in the day spoken of by Zechariah, are to be dedicated to God and used in his service.

I shall work out this great thought in a somewhat novel manner. First, let us *hear the horses’ bells*; secondly, let us *commend their music*; and then, thirdly, let us *go home and tune our bells*, that they may be in harmony with this sacred chime—“Holiness unto the Lord!”

I. First of all, let us HEAR THESE HORSES BELLS, which, according to the text are to be tuned to the heavenly note of “Holiness unto the Lord.”

First, let us mark the trappings of the steed as he goeth forth *to war*. “He champs his bit and is eager for the fray: his snortings are terrible, his neck is clothed with lightning, and he crieth in the midst of the battle, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” War is to our minds the most difficult thing to sanctify to God. The genius of the Christian religion is altogether contrary to everything like strife of any kind, much more to the deadly clash of arms. Yet it may be possible that occasions may arise in which war itself might become hallowed; and certainly we must not deny that many of those who have to deal with war are at this day consecrated men, like Cornelius’ devout soldier, and as truly servants

of Christ in the arm as though they were civilians. Now I say again, I am no apologist for war, from my soul I loathe it, and I do not understand the position of a Christian man as a warrior, but still I greatly rejoice that there are to be found at this present day in the ranks many of those who fear God and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. I may almost venture to say that the war against the tyrant, Charles I., was a consecrated fight. The people of God had been hunted like partridges upon the mountains, in the reigns of Elizabeth, and James, and Charles. At last their lion-like spirits turned at bay, and their enemies driven back before their gallant fury; Cromwell, the Christian hero, mounted his charger, and bade his saintly warriors, with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, fight for England's liberty. I think in those valiant charges when they shouted their battle-cry—"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge"—there was, as if ever there was, upon the frontlets of the horses, their collars, and their bits, "Holiness unto the Lord." May such a war never rise again, but honor to the ashes of the consecrated brave! If I could believe that there were in America a sincere desire on the part of the Northerners to set free every slave, I would say, "God speed their swords and bless their arms." If I could believe that the chain would be broken, and that it was their intent to do it,—if I did not fear that they will yet compromise and make terms with the bloodhound's master, and let him still hold his blood-stained property in the souls and bodies of men, I would say that that might be, if war ever could be, a consecrated war, and the bits of the horses would be "Holiness unto the Lord." But since that is a difficult point to speak of, since, as I have said before, the very genius and spirit of Christianity go against war altogether, though I must believe there have been occasions in which the bells of war-horses have been Holiness unto the Lord, yet I would rather speak of individuals. If there ever lived a man who, disinterested in spirit, and without any desire of aggrandizement or selfish honor, held in his hand a consecrated sword, it is Garibaldi. I think of him, for his speeches make me believe it, not only as a hero, but as a Christian, as the scourge of Popery and the enemy of all despotism, it might be said that his war-garments are Holiness to the Lord. The like might we say of Hedley Vicars, whose history, so well-written, you have all so often read and of Havelock, our own true Havelock, who for the deliverance of our own wives and sisters, in silence rushed upon his prey, and delivered women and children out of the fierce jaws of the blood-loving tiger. These men preached Christ wherever they went. I love not their trade, but I love them. I would wish them to put up their swords into their scabbards, but when they did draw them, I am sure they did it in the full conviction that they were doing their duty, and though even that may not justify the error, yet it must prevent any of us from condemning them. I believe that they did it as in the sight of God, and what they did was to them Holiness unto the Lord Oh! may there never be war again! may peace reign! but if there must be wars, may they all be just ones! if there must be fighting may it ever be for the freedom of the slave and the deliverance of the helpless! and in all this may Jehovah, even in the battle in the garments rolled in blood, and in the fire and vapor of smoke, still be acknowledged and across the field of fire may there be written, "Holiness to the Lord!"

We turn aside awhile, for other horses are coming, and their bells are ringing forth Holiness unto the Lord. Horses are used in state. In splendor, kings, princes, and judges of the land ride through the crowd. The text says, "Upon the bells of the horses shall be, Holiness unto the Lord." Drawn by noble steeds, glittering with rich caparisons, an exalted personage passes through the thronging mass, it is a sovereign and oh! when the sovereign of a nation hath a heart which boweth before God, and hath a hope of an immortal and an imperishable crown, then regal state is sanctified and the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord. When a Sir Matthew Hale rode in the

judge's chariot to distribute justice, surely the state which attended the Lord Chief Justice of the land was holiness to God, and when a Sir Thomas Abney even on the night of the Lord Mayor's banquet, retired awhile that he might have prayer with his family and his servants, surely then the too gaudy show of civic pomp was for that once Holiness unto the Lord. And, I think, when Wilberforce went to the House of Commons, however he might ride, the bit of his horse was Holiness to the Lord. Since we cannot dispense with the ceremonial honor which surrounds governors, we must consecrate it, as long as kingdoms remain, it must be the prayer of Christians that the state may be a holy state, and that its officers and governors may be devout and upright men. Little do we know, my brethren, what mischief would soon be done in the high places of the land, if we had back again upon the throne a George the Fourth, if once again our eminent men were found indulging in the lowest pastimes of the very scum of this city, if again unblushing bribery defiled the judgment-seat; if a bloody Jeffreys could browbeat the saints of God once more—then we should consider it a matter of importance to pray to God for kings and those in authority. Had we not, my brethren, better think it a matter of importance now, and pray daily to God that he would cause the state to be more and more consecrated to him, so that the very bells upon the horses, as they walk in solemn pomp, may be Holiness unto the Lord?

But I hear the tinkling of other bells. The day is to come when, not only war and the states shall be consecrated to Christ, but even pleasure and recreation shall become Holiness to the Lord. When you are travelling in Alpine regions, you will be amused by the ringing of the little bells upon the horses. You are there for rest, to recruit the body, but let that rest be taken in the spirit of holiness. I fear that many leave their religion behind them when they go to the sea-side, or to continental countries. It ought not to be so, in our pleasures as well as in everything else, on the very berms of the horses there should be, Holiness unto the Lord. A Christian man needs recreation as well as another man, the bow must be unstrung, for the soul always bent to work shall soon lose the energy to labor. There must be times for breathing the fresh country air, and looking upon the meadows and the fields. I wish such days came oftener to the poor toiling population of this huge labyrinth of bricks; would that you could oftener see the laughing face of the verdant earth, and the smokeless heavens! But mark this, let us as Christian men see to it that we carry the spirit of this text with us wherever we go; that the bells of the horses be, Holiness to the Lord, and our very recreations be done as sacredly and as much in the sight of God as our sacraments and our solemn feast days. Does recreation mean sin? Then, indeed, you have nothing to do with it. Does pleasure mean iniquity? Deny, deny yourselves. But there are pleasures which mean no such thing. As you traverse Alpine regions, let your thoughts stand on the mountain-tops and talk with God, or if you walk the fair lanes of England, let the cool retreat become an oratory for your soul. Why everything that your eye looks upon, from the king-cup in the meadow to the cedar upon the mountain may make you praise God, and when it is so, then the bells upon the horses are Holiness to the Lord. If in seeking rest you are really desiring to get strength that you may spend it in his service, if you take rest not for your pleasure's sake, but that stringing your muscles once more and getting your soul into tune, you may with greater vigor serve him in days to come; then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord. And if you avail yourself of any opportunities which your recreation throws in your way, to speak a kind word and a word for Christ to those whom you pass or with whom you have chance communion in your travellings, then, again, the bells of the horses are Holiness to the Lord. It is greatly to be regretted that the mass of our people who go to the sea-side, and especially who go to Paris, leave their godliness behind them. One of the Ministers of the

Church at L'Oratoire told me, the manner in which English Christians spend their Sabbath days in Paris is a very serious impediment to the growth of religion in France. Men think that when they are abroad they may leave their habits which they practiced at home behind them. Full often have I known that at the sea-side, Christians knowingly and wilfully keep the proprietors of the houses where they lodge from places of worship, to prepare their sumptuous repasts on the Sabbath day, and so virtually prevent them from hearing the Word of God for six or nine months in the year. There may be some of you who are going out by-and-bye, I beg you in your recreation not to leave your religion behind you. You will put on your black coat and put on your tourist's suit, but take your Christian character with you I beseech you. Why should it be thought of you that your religion is a local thing, and that out of the way of society, which is a sort of check upon you, you may be free to sin as others do.

Listen to the bells again. Horses are used for journeying. We must all journey sometimes, and when we do, the bells upon the horses and the shrill scream of the steam-engine should still be—"Holiness unto the Lord." The missionary is crossing the sea; perhaps at this very hour while we are sitting quietly here, his boat is leaping the billows and springing from mountain-wave to mountain-wave. I believe that every motion of the paddles is holiness to the Lord, because the ship is carrying forth God's appointed messenger to proclaim the gospel among the heathen. There are Christian men on board who are not giving forth to preach, but to emigrate and settle down now if they intend in emigrating to establish a Church of Christ where they are to live and to preach the gospel where they may be called to go, every motion of the vessel is Holiness unto the Lord. Perhaps she carries merchants who go abroad to trade and return again, but if they are about to trade as Christians, and then consecrate their substance unto God, that vessel, though when she leaves a black trail across the sky in her cloud of smoke, is as accepted as the smoke of sacrifice—is Holiness unto the Lord. Where there is a true heart, the horse that bears it is a consecrated one. Let our goings out be in the Lord's night. We are lights: if the light is moved, it should be to illuminate other places. We are salt: if the salt be scattered, it should be that the conserving influence should be felt the more widely. Do not go from home unless you feel that you can take your Master with you; and when you are from home, ever seek to be doing something for your Master, that when you are gone, you may leave a fragrance behind you. How much good might some do who are called to travel continually! There are some few in this Church, for instance, who travel as commercial gentlemen; I know one or two of them who scarcely ever go into a town without preaching the Word there, and I know others of them who, in the commercial room where they meet with some who despise the religion of Christ, speak boldly for the truth as it is in Jesus, and are as useful in their daily journeyings as any Christian men could be who filled up a place in the Sabbath-school, or officiated as deacons in the Church at home. Let your journeyings, then, always be with the ringing of these bells, "Holiness until the Lord!"

But horses of old were also used for merchandise, and when the pack-horses went in long strings, the fore-horses always had bells that the others might be guided in the darkness. I think there is an allusion to that in the text, for such may have been the custom of the Eastern caravans, as indeed it was, and the text means, then, that merchandise and our common trade should be Holiness unto the Lord. O sirs! when you take down your shutters in the morning, let it be with a prayer that your business of the day may be as much a sacrifice to God as the business which I may have to transact as the pastor of the Church, and when you stand behind the counter ask of God, that in your dealings, though they be common to the eyes of men, there may be an inward spirituality

which God shall discover, that thus there may be Holiness to the Lord. Sometimes when some of you have been stored up by a sermon, you have come to me and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, could I go to China? Could I become a missionary? Could I become a minister?" In very many cases the brethren who offer are exceedingly unfit for any service of the kind, for they have very little gift of expression, very little natural genius, and no adaptation for such a work, and I have constantly and frequently to say, "My dear brother, be consecrated to Christ in your daily calling; do not seek to take a spiritual office, but spiritualise your common office." Why, the cobbler can consecrate his lapstone while many a minister has desecrated his pulpit. The ploughman can put his hand to the plough in as holy a manner as ever did minister to the sacramental bread. In dealing with your ribbons and your groceries, in handling your bricks and your jackplanes, you can be as truly priests to God as were those who slew the bullocks and burned them with the holy fire in the days of yore. This old fact needs to be brought out again. We do not so much want great preachers as good upright traders, it is not so much deacons and elders we long for as it is to have men who are deacons for Christ in common life, and are really elders of the Church in their ordinary conversation. Sirs, Christ did not come into the world to take all fishermen from their nets though he did take some, nor to call all publicans from the receipt of custom though he did call one, he did not come to make every Martha into a Mary though he did bless a Martha and a Mary too. He would have you be housewives still, be sisters of mercy in your own habitations. He would have you be traders, buyers, and sellers, workers and toilers still, for the end of Christianity is not to make preachers, but to make holy men, the preacher is but the tool; he may be sometimes but the scaffold of the house; but *ye* are God's husbandry; *ye* are God's building; *ye*, in your common acts and your common deeds, are they who are to serve God. That wicked fiction of the Church of Rome, that her *cathedrals* are holy, has made us think that our *houses* are not holy. Why, my friends, our houses are as holy, or ought to be, as ever church or chapel. Some seem to think that there is some peculiar sanctity about aisles and oak seats, stone pillars and gothic arches. Holiness cannot belong to stones, holiness has to do with nothing except the acts and thoughts of intelligent subjects, and if holiness can by metaphor belong to places or substances, it must be through the Christian holy minds that are in contact with them. I will not have it that yonder parish church or that this place is one who more holy than that room where you live if you there offer prayer and praise. Oh! brethren, you must not think that the table, and the font, and the baptistry are holy; no, no, if there be holiness in them so may there be in your own table, in your own labors, and in your own tools which you handle, at least, there will be as much in one as in the other if with a holy mind you serve God in both. Not confined holiness—that is superstition; universal holiness—that is Christianity, not the bowls upon the altar holy—that is Judaism, but the bells upon the horses holy—that is true living godliness and vital Christianity. See to it, then, Christian friends, in your common daily doings, that the bells upon the horses are Holiness unto the Lord.

But horses were also used, as they still are, for *toil*, and toil though I have already anticipated the subject, toil is to be holiness to the Lord. The horse is turning over the furrow with the plough, and if it be held by a godly husbandman, the bells upon that horse are Holiness unto the Lord. And now it is time when the hay should be cut down and carted, if with gratitude in his bosom, the husbandman takes home the fruit of the earth, the carting is Holiness to the Lord. And when harvest-time comes round, and all the country is glad, every shout of harvest-time ought to be a holy shout, every smile that is on the brow of the tiller of the soil should be a holy smile; and when he has consecrated his wave-sheaf unto his God, when he has given a part of his increase to the

poor and needy, and when he has bowed his knee and thanked the Universal Giver of all good, then the farmer's toil is Holiness to the Lord. I would, my dear brethren, that you would make your common toils Holiness unto the Lord. Come to look upon your meals as though they were sacraments, your clothes as though they were priestly vestments; your common words as though you were preaching daily sermons; and your every-day thoughts as though you were thinking for the Sabbath of holy things. It is not to be always talking religion, but to be talking religiously that makes the Christian; it is not to be performing outward symbols, it is to be possessing the inward spirit. I do believe that there is more piety in going to visit the poor and needy and scattering your substance among them; more piety in teaching the poor ignorant ragged child, more piety in seeking to help some poor struggling tradesman, than there is in many a long prayer, and many a sanctimonious whine, ay and in many a long and eloquent discourse. That common piety which like common sense is oftenest the uncommonest of all, is what we need to have, and if I could make one man among you become thus consecrated, I should think I had, under God, done as much as though I poured you out in scores upon the plain of Hindostan, or sent you to edify the Chinese, or to instruct the Ethiopian. We want you as missionaries *here*; we want you as missionaries in daily life, and we must have you too, or else the Church will not increase, nor will the name of Christ be magnified. I have thus sought to make you listen to the ringing of these bells.

II. Now for the second point; let us COMMEND THE MUSIC of the bells upon the horses.

The religion of common life I must commend, first of all, for its *loudness*. These are many men who do not hear the Church bell, who will hear the bells upon the horses, by which I mean that preach as frequently as we may, some people will never believe us, but they cannot help believing what they see in your lives. We may extol Christ, and they will say, "It is his office and duty," but if your actions are what they should be, if your lives are saturated with the spirit of Jesus, they cannot help hearing them. They may put their fingers in their ears and not hear *our* sermons, but they *must* hear *your* sermons, for they can hear them through their eyes as well as through their ears, if you in your daily walk act as becometh the gospel of Christ.

Then, again, I commend the music of these horses' bells, not only for loudness, but for *clearness*. Many people cannot understand our sermons. There are words we use that they do not try to comprehend, and some which the carnal mind cannot receive but they can understand *your* sermons, if they cannot mine. If you have traded honourably, if you, instead of taking undue advantage, have only taken that which is your due, if they have seen you refuse to tell a lie though you might have gained much by it, if they have known you to stand firm in your integrity, while others laughed at you as a fool and a madman, they can understand it. *My* sermons may be mistifying, but *yours* would not be. The church bell may sometimes have a cracked note, but the bells upon the horses will be so clear that they will be compelled in their consciences to believe what you teach.

Again, I commend the music of these bells for its *constancy*. The church bell rings but once a week; I am preaching to you some three or four sermons in a week, but you if you consecrate your common things, will be preaching all day long. You will keep the bells upon the horses ringing every time the horses nod their heads. Every time they move there will be a fresh peal, and that is the advantage of putting the bells not on the steeple, but on the horse, so that they must always ring. This place is shut up a great portion of the week, and only opened occasionally for worship, but *you* ought to keep your preaching places open always. There, behind the counter, should be *your* pulpit, or in the Corn Exchange, or the Market, or in the family; you should be always preaching.



Your life should be always one continual sacrament, always one constant service of God. I commend this music, then, for its constancy as well as for its loudness and for its clearness.

Again, we must praise it for its *universality*. My church bell can only ring in one place, and the bells in the parish church only ring in the steeples where they hang; but the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go; and so with your piety, it will ring wherever you go. You can preach in the lodging-house, you can preach in the backroom yonder, where poverty has found a haunt, you can preach wherever God in his providence has cast you; at the Boardroom table, in the midst of the Corporation, in the Senate, in the House of Commons, you can preach wherever God calls you. I say again, the bells upon the horses ring wherever the horses go, and so must your piety ring wherever you are. This universal preaching in every court, and lane, and alley, is better far for effect than our preaching ever can be.

Once more, I commend the bells upon the horses for their *harmony*. You know our church bells ring different notes. You go into one, you hear Puseyism; you go into another, and you hear sound evangelical doctrine, you enter another and you hear all but infidelity. Church bells run through the octave of tone. Among true Christians, our bells often ring a little differently. My Wesleyan brothers' bell does not ring quite the same as mine, nor mine exactly the same as the Independents'; but, mark, the bells on the horses all are alike. One Christian man's life is like another Christian man's life. There is nothing contradictory in the practical sermon, if there be in the doctrinal. If the vocal testimony of the Church should be somewhat divided, yet the loving testimony of the Church is always one, if it be always holiness, holiness, holiness unto the Lord. See to it, then, that you ring these bells upon the horses for their lovely harmony, and the absence of all discord.

And then once more. I commend the bells upon the horses, for they ring out a *divine* note. Our church bells do not always do that. Sometimes our sermons are a little to the honor and glory of the speaker, a little to the honor and glory of a particular Church, but the bells on the horses ring out not the glory of man, but holiness to the Lord, to the Lord, to the Lord. And so if you consecrate your whole life, the testimony of that life may be to *your* credit, but still it will be far more to the honor and glory of *God*. There will be no fear that *man* shall take the honor of your pious consecration, of your holy watchfulness, of your humble integrity, of your industry, your perseverance, and your constancy in the path of right. The bells upon your horses shall ring a diviner note than I fear will yet be rung from the bells of our pulpit. I have thus sought to commend the music.

III. And now I close, by asking you to go home and TUNE YOUR BELLS TO THIS NOTE.

You have many bells in your house, go home and tune first of all the *chamber* bell. It is an ill thing when a Christian husband is a worse husband than a wordly one; it is an evil thing when the husband and wife do not live together as partakers of the grace of Christ. Perhaps you will say this is a very homely remark, but I think it is a very necessary one, for if a man cannot conduct himself well in his own family, what is he in the Church? I fear there have been many who have been mighty men in the Church who, if their private affairs had been a little examined, might have come out a little scarred and marred in the ordeal. Should I have a Christian man here who is not acting according to the Christian mandate, should I have a Christian woman here who pulleth her house down with her own hands, through idleness and carelessness, let me speak to them. How can the husband think of edifying others at the prayer-meeting until first he is what he should be before his own house? The husband is to love his wife, even as Christ loved the Church, the wife must see that she reverence

her husband, the children must be obedient, and the household affairs must be ordered with discretion, or else your bells are not Holiness unto the Lord.

Then when you have looked at that, look at the *kitchen-bell*; see that it sounds forth Holiness to the Lord. Let the servant, not with eye-service, as a man pleaser, serve her master, and let the master take care that he giveth unto his servant that which is just and equal. Oh! it is a blessed thing when there is piety in the kitchen, and when the whole household is a Church. Indeed, my brethren, I can speak the joy of one who has servants that fear God, very often have my eyes been filled with tears through the peace, and joy, and rest of spirit that I have had in my own household since God has given me those that fear his name. See to it, that the kitchen-bell does not ring a contrary note to your parlour-bell, for if the kitchen can say, "My master is pious abroad, but he is wicked at home; he can talk very well in the pulpit, and pray very nicely at the prayer-meeting, but he neglects us; he is harsh, over-bearing, and passionate, it will spoil all my sermons. If you say to the servants "Come and hear our minister," she will say, "I do not want to hear him, if he is not a better man than you are, he will not do much good to me." Mark then, if the bells of the horses are to be holy, certainly the bells of the kitchen should be holy too.

Then some of you have got a *shop* bell, a little bell which rings as soon as ever any one comes in. Now take care that this is Holiness to the Lord. If people get cheated at other shops, do not let them get cheated at yours, or they still be sure to say, "Ah!" *you* hear Spurgeon; that is your religion, is it?" They shall be sure to throw the blame on your *religion* and not on *you*. If there be a place where they get short-weight, let it never be at yours; if there be a place where there is a want of integrity, or civility, or attention, let it not be yours, but seek so to act that you do not make your religion help your trade, yet you keep your trade always in subservience to your religion, and seek to glorify God in all that you do. Some of you have got a *factory* bell, that bell rings at certain hours, and I see your men come streaming down the street to work. Now make that bell Holiness to the Lord. When will the time come when all these quarrellings shall be done with between master and man? When shall the day come when both of them shall seek to have perfect peace and harmony? For it is to their mutual interest, let them know. Oh! when shall it be that the workman shall feel that he has all that which is just and equal? And on the other hand when shall the master feel that he has not to deal with men who when given an inch will take an ell, but who are content to deal as fairly with him as he would with them. If I have any of your great cotton lords here, if I have any men who have many servants, let them take care that their religion turns their factory-bell, or else I would not give a farthing for all their religion, let them give what they may towards the maintenance of it. Then some of you have got *visiting*-bell, for I have seen it marked over, "*visitors*." And what are visits among the higher classes? It was my misfortune once to sit in the corner of a drawing-room, and listen to the conversation during a visit. If it had been condensed into the sense or usefulness it contained, it might have been spoken in something like the thousandth part of a second. But there it went on, talk, talk, talk, about nothing at all and when it was done they went away I have no doubt greatly refreshed. Now I think the visits of Christian people should never be of that kind. If you go to see anybody, know what you are going for and have a message to go with, and go with some intention. If God had meant you and me to waste our time in flying visits he would have made us butterflies and not men. He would have made us so that we might sip the nectar from the flowers like bees instead of which he has made men whose time is precious and whose hours cannot be weighed in the scale with diamonds. Let your visits be rather to the sick to give them comfort, to the poor to give them help, to your friends to show yourself friendly, and to

the godly to get godly refreshment, than to the frivolous to waste an hour or to the fashionable to maintain a fancied dignity. Let everything, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do be done to the glory of God. Physician, there is a bell at your door, let that be holiness to the Lord. Let those kind acts of yours to the distressed poor, let those divine acts of stooping down to the poor wayfarer in his suffering, consecrate your practice. Let your bell be Holiness to the Lord. Let each of you, whatever his calling may be, seek to find some special way in which that calling may conduce to the glory of Christ. You are a little star in the Pleiades, do not wish to be the pole-star, if you were taken out of the Pleiades, the constellation would not be what it now is. Keep where you are, but shed your special rays upon the earth; and if you be but a little star, do not the little stars together shed much light, and earth were dark if they all were quenched? I have tried to preach a plain homely sermon, but, perhaps I have not hit the mark, perhaps I have not made you feel what I want you to feel. Why, I would have every dustman's bell Holiness unto the Lord. Whatever your business is, though you are a scavenger, though you sweep a crossing, though you black shoes—whatever you have to do, let everything be done to the glory of God. And, if any say it cannot be done, do you show them the way, for the best practical proof is the proof of fact. I may preach to-day, and preach twenty days about making the bells upon the horses holiness to the Lord, but if you do not tune your own private conversation, the text will but excite laughter among some, and no practical profit will it be to any. Is there anything wrong at home? go and set it to rights. Is there anything wrong in the shop or in the kitchen? If you have not done what you ought to have done as a Christian man, if you have not acted as you ought to have done in your trade, go and do better. Not that you are to be saved by works, I have been speaking to those who *are* saved already. Being saved, show by your profession what you believe and would by your acts glorify your Master. Let me pray you to think often of this text—"In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord."

## Our Miseries, Messengers of Mercy

A Sermon

(No. 400)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July the 14th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”—Hosea 6:1-2.

TENDER FATHERS seek first to will their children by gentle means. The Lord, in his long-suffering, dealt very kindly with his erring Israel, sending them favor after favor, and blessing after blessing, saying by his acts, “I have given them their corn, and their wine, and their oil, they will surely turn unto me and say, ‘Our Father, thou shalt be the guide of our youth.’ But the more he multiplied his bounties, the more they multiplied their iniquities, and they burned sacrifice unto the gods of Edom, and of Moab, even to those that were no gods, saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which have given unto thee thy corn, and thy wine, and thy oil;” so they spent the mercies of God in sacrifice upon their idols, and committed transgressions with the false gods of the heathen, consuming upon their lusts the very mercies which God had sent to bring them to repentance. When at last God saw that this measure did not move them, because their sin was written as with an iron pen, and graven upon the very horns of their altars, then he tried harsher means; he hewed them by the prophets; they rose early and they prophesied until the going down of the sun, giving line upon line, precept upon precept, threatening them with the anger and vengeance of God. At last that vengeance came; he carried them away captive, and they went into a land that they knew not, among a cruel people, whose speech they could not understand. Again he delivered them out of the hand of their enemy; and yet, again, because of their sin, he sold them to Assyria, and afterwards to Babylon, that at last, after they had been rent and torn, they might say within themselves, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” Now, my brethren, the people of Israel are but a picture of ourselves; especially are they representatives of a certain class, some of whom are now present. God has tried you with mercy upon mercy; kept you long in health, till you scarce ever had a day’s sickness; given you all that you could wish, till your cup was brimming and flowing over; but you used his mercies for your own self-indulgence, and the bodily strength which was given you to be a blessing you have made a curse. Streams of mercy never ceasing God has vouchsafed to you, but your only return has been stream of sin, broad, and black, and deep. And now to-day he has been changing his ways with you. I am speaking to some whom God has of late heavily afflicted; seeing gentler means would not do, he has turned your wine into wormwood, and your honey into gall; he has made you sick in body and dispirited in mind; your earthly goods are melting like snow before the summer’s sun; your children die before your very eyes, and the desire of your heart is taken away with a stroke. God has made all his waves and his billows go over you; the law has sounded its trumpet in your ear and brought your sin to remembrance; conscience has started up in alarm from its long sleep and cries like a mighty man that waketh up from his slumber and finds the camp besieged. You are troubled and sore broken; your heart is melted like wax in the midst of your

bowels, so that while you are sitting in the house of God to-day you are complaining.—“I am the man that has seen affliction;” and perhaps worse than that you are groaning, “His wrath lieth hard upon me, I cannot look up.” It is to you I am about to speak this morning. I single you out from the crowd, and yet I trust while I address *you* there may be also some words of comfort or of instruction for the rest of the congregation. Oh! may you, my hearer, you upon whom I fix my eye this morning, you whose case is the case of Israel in Hosea, may you say, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.” I desire to come straight up to you who are in this condition and put my hand inside yours, holding you fast while I strive in God’s name to reason with you, beseeching God the Holy Spirit to reason better than I can, sweetly moving your soul, till you say, “I will arise and go unto my Father.”

Three things I must do this morning; first, I must *deal a blow, at the old Tempter, who has got the first hand at you*; secondly, I will come to *reason comfortably with you*; and then, thirdly, I must *lovingly persuade you*, saying—“Come, let us return unto the Lord.”

I. First then, I must DEAL A BLOW AT THE OLD TEMPTER, WHO HAS GOT BEFORE ME AND HAS BEGUN TO DECEIVE YOU.

I cannot tell what is the precise temptation that Satan has been using with you, but I think it is very likely to be one of four.

The first one has been this—“Oh,” saith he, “see how troubled you are, nothing prospers with you; what pains of body you suffer, and how depressed you are in spirit. God is a tyrant to you, he treats you cruelly; *hate* him, set your teeth together and curse him; say *no*, if he treats me thus he is *not* a God that I can love, I will abhor him from my very soul.” I have uttered that temptation in startling language because such dark insinuations as this have been very common with much tried and troubled men. I remember many who, in telling their experience of how they were brought to Christ, have confessed that when first the hammer of God’s law fell upon their hearts it hardened them, when God smote, they were like the bullock which kicks against the pricks of the ox-goad; they felt like a high blooded, unbroken horse, the bit was in their mouths, but they pulled and tugged at it, and the more it cut and wounded them the more resolved they were that they would not turn, in fact, hatred was stirred up against God by what was intended to bring them to his feet. Soul, doth Satan tempt thee thus? Then indeed it is a sad proof that sin is madness. I can only compare thy case to you poor maniac, who has labored hard to destroy himself by existing himself into the fire or into the water. Some kind person, willing to bear all the inconveniences of such an office, has volunteered to be his keeper. See, the man is dashing to the water’s brink and means to throw himself into the stream, his keeper holds him back, and with stern words and sterner acts throws him down upon the ground, and binds him so that he cannot take the fatal leap. But look again, he longs to burn himself, he makes a tremendous effort to thrust his body into the flame, but his keeper shuts him up in a room where he cannot get at the devouring flame. All the “while this madman hates him, curses him, spits upon him, and would do anything if he could but kill his keeper and tear him to pieces in his fury. Mark you, when yonder maniac shall get back his reason, he will kiss the feet of that man whom now he hates, he will say—“I bless you for the loving violence which has restrained me from my own destruction, I thank you for denying me my own will, that you stood in my path and thwarted my mad desire, and that you would not let me ruin myself.” Now, poor sinner, God is doing this with you. Oh! do not hate him. He does not hate *you*; he is not coaling with you in wrath, but in mercy. There is still behind the black cloud the sun of his mercy shining.

Oh! that Satan may be cast out of you that you may not be tempted to hate God because of his sore smittings of you.

Or, perhaps, the temptations of Satan have taken another shape, not so much hatred as *sullenness*. You have lost all you care for now, and you think that your state does not matter much to you, you would as soon die as live, and as for your soul, you think you cannot be more wretched in hell itself than you are, and you say, "So let it be; it is so bad that it cannot be mended." You do not bestir yourself, but you sit down with a stony heart waiting to be crushed. You are like some poor man benighted on the frozen Alps, who feels sleep creeping upon him, and is content to lie down there and die, as he certainly must unless some friendly hand shall shake him out of his desperate sleep. There is a kind of numbness which pain brings to the body, which has its equivalent in the spirit, a numbness because the grief has been so acute, that nature could bear no more. Then death itself loses its horror in the nearer terrors of the soul. "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." Soul, Satan desireth to have thee that he may utterly destroy thee, and this is one of his ways, he seeks to make thee torpid that he may find thee dead; for when thou art sullen he knows that the warnings of the ministry, and the earnest exhortations of the gospel, will have but little force with thee. Wake, man, wake! thy dander is awful! Multitudes have perished here. Wake, I pray thee, wake! Oh! if thou hast any sensibility left, bestir thee. Depend on it, that bad as thy case is, it will be worse in the world to come, unless the badness of it be now blessed to thy soul. Oh! man, the pains thou hast had as yet are but as the finger-ache, they are but mere trifles compared with the miseries of eternity. Instead of opiates to make thee sleep, let them be goads to stir thy sluggish flesh, and make thee start from the deadly couch of presumption. I would be but too glad if I might thrust lancets into thee again, and again, anything sooner than you should sleep that sleep of death and be utterly destroyed.

Possibly, however, the temptation of Satan has taken the form of *despair*. "Oh," saith he, "there is no hope for you; you can clearly perceive that you are the subject of divine hatred; God has not dealt with others as he has with you; these trials are but to first drops of the long shower of his eternal wrath. Depend upon it," says Satan, "now that your conscience is in this state, your convictions will deepen into a settled remorse, and then that remorse will end in final despair, and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; your sins are too many and too great; there is hope for any man, but there is no hope for you; you are beyond the lines of mercy; the arm of grace is not long enough or strong enough to reach such a wretch as you are; you are not jammed in hell yet, but you are the same as if you were; you are reprobate; the decree shuts you out of heaven, while the greatness of your sin confirms it; you are bound up in fetters that cannot be broken and cast into a horrible pit out of which you never can be drawn." Satan, thou art a liar, oh! that this poor heart did know it: I tell thee this to thy face, for thou didst once bewitch *me* with thy falsehood. Thou didst bring me into this state of despair too till I was ready to put an end to myself, because I thought nothing awaited me but the wrath of God. Oh! thou lying hell-hound, how thou didst slander my Lord and Master. He was willing to receive me, but thou modest me think he would reject me; he stood waiting about the door of my heart, saying, "Open to me," and thou saidst that he had gone, that he had shut up the bowels of his compassion, and doomed for ever to destruction. I will be even with thee, thou great destroyer of souls, for thy cruel treachery with me, as long as I live I will raise the hue and cry against thee. Soul, do not thou believe him, he is a murderer of souls, and a liar from the beginning; there *is* hope for *you*; there is hope for you *now*. There is still the gospel preached to you: still is it freely presented in your hearing. May you say

today, "Come, let us return unto the Lord" and he *will* heal you; he *will* bind you up; he will receive you to his heart; he will in no wise cast you out.

But it may occur, that yet a fourth temptation has been tried with some of you. Satan has said, "Well, now, you can see it is of no use. Give it up altogether, and if you cannot be happy one way, try another; you clearly perceive that you are shut out of heaven, well, make the best of this world." "Now," says the devil, "Christ will not have you, what is the use of your going to a place of worship? Do not go, stay away, it is hopeless; the gospel will never be of any use to you; you have heard it these three or four years, and you only get more hardened; don't go again; besides, why make yourself miserable for nothing; drink your fill of the world's delight, if you cannot get the best good, get the other; eat, drink, and be merry; live a fast life, and satisfy yourself; you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb; you may as well perish for a great sin as perish for a little one. God evidently has cast you off, follow your own way and choose your own delight." Oh! soul, oh! soul, how sad it is that these afflictions and warnings of conscience which are meant to bring you *to* Christ should be used by Satan as the reason why you should go *from* Christ. Oh! soul, the Lord has designs of mercy for you now he has begun to try you in your circumstances and afflict you in your soul; and the devil knows it, and is afraid of losing you and so he wants you to get out of the way of mercy just when mercy is coming. What, suppose you have as yet gained no good by attending the means of grace, does that prove that you will not soon be blessed? You are travelling in the wilderness, you had a torch, and the wind blew it out: you lit it again, and it blew it out again, do not say that therefore you will never see. The sun is rising, the sun is rising, and the fact that torches have been blown out does not prove that the night will last for ever. If your false hopes have left you, and your self-righteous trusts have all been taken away, I am glad. I am glad it is dark with you, for the darkest part of the night is that which heralds the dawning of the day. I am glad the Lord has laid you low, for it is now he means to hit you up. Do not I pray you be cajoled out of this divine mercy by the temptations of the fiend of hell. Rouse thee, man! Cry, "Through he slay me yet will I trust in him! If I be at Bethesda's pool and the water be not stirred, yet will I die there," (that you will never do; mark that) "though I pray, and he hears me not, yet my cries even to my dying hour shall go up to him." And mark you, he will surely hear you; only, do not be led astray of the Evil One to turn what is the mercy of God into an excuse for excess of riot; but, do you rather listen now to the voice of wisdom and mercy, while I seek in the second place to reason with you comfortably that I may bring you to say, "Come, let us return unto the Lord."

II. Now forget your troubles, for a little while if you can, or only think of them as a background for the brightness of THE COMFORT which I would give you as God's messenger.

1. So you say you have had so many trials in life, and so many strivings of conscience, that therefore you feel you must be too guilty to be saved. Do you think that you have been punished for your sins? Permit me to remind you that this is not the place where the Judge of all the earth usually punishes sin; his wrath he reserves for the day of judgment and the world to come. All sorrow is the result of sin, but still it does not come to any particular man, except in some remarkable instances, because of any special sin in him. Now there was Job—will you equal him among the saints? Was he not one of the chief of them? Yet he was more tried than any other man; that evidently was not because he was a greater sinner than others. Do you not know the fact that often the most wicked men are the most prosperous, whilst the most holy are the most afflicted? Therefore this is not the place where God dispenses providence according to the sole and absolute rule of justice; that is to be in the world to come? How would you account for such an instance as this, which

occurred not long ago in a certain railway accident? There were two men who entered the train; one of them a Christian, the other a worldling. The Christian man took his seat; so did the other. At a station the worldly one said, "I should like a game of cards; will you get out and go with me?—there is So-and-so in such a carriage; come with me, and we will play together." "No," said the other, "I would much rather be out of your company, if that is what you are at." "Well then," said he, "good morning, I am going there." An accident of the most frightful character occurred; the Christian man saw those on each side of him killed; his two companions crushed, and himself such a mass of bruises and broken bones as you scarcely ever saw; his leg broken in seven different places, and himself as it seemed at death's door. His companion who went to play cards, was perfectly safe all the carriage in which he rode was untouched! Now, this plainly shows that this is of the world in which God deals with men according to the rules of justice. Ships sink whether men are at prayer, or whether they are cursing God. Providence here is not ordered according to the rule by which God shall dispense his favors or his fury in the world to come. This is the land of long-suffering rather than of execution. This is the land where God in his wise providence rather brings us to repentance than to punishment. Now I can see the hand of God in all. The man who escaped as a card player, I fear, was hardened by the providence by which he escaped. Yet, mark you, God was glorified, because his providence will become a savor of death unto death to that man should he live and die impenitent, while in the Christian who was thus injured God is honored, for if you could see him as I saw him, with his smiling face relating the fact that he has never murmured once, though he had laid upon his bed for very many weeks, you would only admire the favor and goodness of God which gave the sinner space for repentance, and gave the believer room to display the grace of patience. It was good for the one that he was afflicted, it was good for the other that he escaped. But this is not the hand of punishment, and your having more afflictions than others, may be because God loves you; certainly it is not because he hates you. I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading themselves like green bay-trees; and I have seen them in their death too, and they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; they are at ease, they are settled on their lees; they are not emptied from vessel to vessel. As for God's people, they are chastened every morning, and vexed every evening and the Lord's hand lieth heavy on them; yet there is God's goodness in that heavy hand, and infinite lovingkindness in their tribulations. God only gives the wicked prosperity as we give husks to swine; he gives them this world's transient things because he loves them not. I pray you then, do not misconstrue your sufferings of body and mind, they may be tokens of mercy; they certainly are not indicators of any special wrath.

*Secondly*, you will say that you have great distress of mind, and trials of soul, and therefore there is no hope for you. I say, therefore, *there is hope*. Perhaps some of those troubles of mind come from Satan. Now observe this, Satan very seldom troubles those men who are all his own. A poor negro who had been tempted by Satan was once laughed at by his master about it. Said he, "The devil never tempts me, I do not even know that there is such a being in existence." They went out sometime after shooting wild ducks, and as the master shot at a covey of them and borne of them were wounded he was exceedingly earnest with clubs and stones to secure those that were wounded, while he left those that were evidently dead to float on the stream till he had time to pick them up. This gave the negro a fine opportunity of explaining his master's experience. "Massa, whilst you was a splashin' in de water after dem wounded ducks, and lettin' de dead ones float on, it jist come into my mind why it is dat de debil troubles me so much whilst he lets you alone. You



are like de dead ducks, he's sure he's got you safe. I'm like de wounded ones, trying to git away from him, and he's afraid I'll die it, so he makes all de fuss after me and jist lets you float on down de stream. He knows he can get you any time, but he knows it now or never wid me. If you were to begin to flutter a little and show signs like you were a goin' to get away from him, he would make jist as big a splashin' after you as he does after me."

But again, you will remember that it is not God's way to send convictions of sin to reprobates. Do men plough the sand? Do they send their oxen upon the rock? No, they attempt to use materials that are utterly rotten? No, they give them up, and leave them alone. Now, why is the all-wise Jehovah at work with you unless he has gracious designs for you; I hope it is because he is about to bring you to himself.

Let me show you yet in the *third* place that this is according to the analogy of nature. Did you ever hear this parable? There was a certain shepherd who had a sheep, which he desired to lead into another and better field. He called it and it would not come, he led it and it would not follow, he drove it but it would only follow in own devices. At last he thought within himself "I will do this." The sheep had a little lamb by its side, and the shepherd took the lamb up in his arms, and carried it away, and then the ewe came too. And so with you, God has been calling to *you*, mother, and you did not come. Christ said "Come," and you would not, he sent affliction and you would not come, then he took your child away, and you came then, you followed the Saviour then. You see it was loving work on the shepherd's part, he did but take the lamb to save the sheep, the Saviour took your child to heaven that he might bring *you* to heaven. We had before the church the other night a sister who is here now I dare say, there were four in the family and the Lord took one child away. But that was not enough he took another, and another, and the fourth lay sick and ready to, die and then the mothers heart was broken, and mother and father both came to Jesus Oh! blessed afflictions, blessed losses, blessed deaths that end in spiritual life! Now this I trust is how God is dealing with you. You know, if a man has a field and desires to gather a harvest from it, what does he do? First of all he ploughs it. The field might say, "Why these scars across my face? Why thus upturn my sods?" Because there can be no sowing till there has been ploughing, sharp ploughshares make furrows for good seed. Or take yet another picture from nature. A man desireth to make of a rusty piece of iron a bright sword which shall be serviceable to a great warrior. What doth he do? He putteth it into the fire and melteth it, he taketh away all its dross and removeth all its till, then he fashioneth it with his hammer, he beateth it full sore upon the anvil, he anneals it in one fire after another till at last it comes out a good blade that will not snap in the day of warfare. This is what God doeth with you—I pray you do not misread the book of God's providence, for if you read it aright it runs thus—"I will have mercy on this man and therefore have I smitten him and wounded him. Come, therefore, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath wounded and he will heal, he hath smitten and he will bind us up."

I have other arguments to use, and you must bear with me somewhat patiently. Thou art wounded in spirit this morning, poor mourner, wilt thou remember that it is God's delight to bind up broken hearts. "He telleth the number of the stars." What its the next verse—do you remember it?—"He bindeth up the broken in heart." What a mighty stoop this is! From counting the stars and leading them forth, mighty worlds though they be, he bows to become a surgeon to the poor wounded heart. You know what Christ's occupation is in heaven—"If he shall wipe away tears from oft an faces." What a blessed occupation—wiping away tears! Soul, Christ will be glad to wipe away thy tears now. He delights to do it—Christ is never more happy than when he is showing his heart to shiners,

he is so glad when he can find his poor lost sheep, and put it on his shoulders and carry it home. It will make you glad to be saved; but he will be infinitely glad to save you, and delighted to receive you, for he delighteth in mercy.

Please remember, yet once again, that the wounds which you now feel *he* made himself, and if he is willing to heal any wounds, how much more those that he has himself made. There are some diseases in which the surgeon is compelled to wound; the proud flesh has gotten in; the cure has been a bad one, and in order that it may be thoroughly sound, he perhaps makes a cross cut, a deep cross cut that goes into the very core of the matter. Well, his lances has made a bad wound, do you think the doctor will not do his best to heal it? I will go to him and say, "Surgeon, thou didst thyself make the wound, thou modest it in order to my healing, heal the wound, I pray thee, heal me." Occasionally when a man has broken his leg, it has been badly set by some bungler, and when he has consulted a skillful surgeon, he says, "I can do nothing for you till I break your leg again." And so often is it with men's minds; they get peace, peace, when there is no peace, and there is no doing anything with them until God breaks their heart again. Suppose a surgeon should break a man's leg again, do you think he would go away and leave the poor man without setting it? No, he broke that he might heal, that he might make the cure a sound one. And so is it, perhaps, with your broken heart. Go to him, then, go to him; say, "Lord, thou didst break my heart; I was a hard blasphemer once, but thou hast brought me to my knees. I once said, 'I would never enter a place of worship;' Lord, thou knowest I go there now, though I get no comfort there, but I pray thee give me comfort. It was such-and-such a sermon that brought me to despair; Lord, guide thy servant to preach another that will bring me into liberty. Lord, if thou hast not broken my heart, break it now; but if thou hast broken it, Lord, I appeal to thee to heal it. Thou hast begun the work by killing me, finish the work by making me alive; thou hast begun by stripping me, Lord, clothe me." That is good argument; he will surely do it, he will not fail to carry on and complete that which he has begun to perform.

Once more only—and perhaps this will be the best argument of all—remember you have got his promise for it. The text I read as a promise. It looks at first sight as if it were spoken by man, and so it is; but then inasmuch as it is put in God's book as the utterance of God's inspired prophet, it is a part of God's word, and it is warranted to be most true. "He hath torn and he will heal." Go and put your finger on this text and say, "Lord, thou hast torn me, and it is written in thy word, 'He will heal us;'"

"Lord, I know thou canst not lie,  
Heal my soul or else I die."

Put your finger on the next—"He will bind us up." Say, "Lord, I do not deserve it; I deserve only to perish, but then *thou hast said* thou wilt do it, be as good as thy word. Lord, here is a poor sinner near despair, he comes to thee, bind up his broken heart; give him peace;"—and soul, the everlasting hills shall bow, the hoary deep shall itself be burned up, and earth's foundation shall be removed, but God's word shall never pass away, nor shall his promise fail in one single case. Only believe the promise; receive the promise, and this very day, poor broken heart, he will heal thy wounds, and thou shalt have joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. I shall not detain you much longer, but I have now the third point to dwell on upon which *earnestly*. And O Spirit of the living God bless these words, Jesu, do thou woo hearts to thyself whilst we seek to will them to thy love.

And now I would come LOVINGLY TO PERSUADE YOU, and the persuasion I would use is this—"Come, let *us* return unto the Lord." Do you see it! The prophet does not say, "Go," but

“*Come*,” he does not say, “Go you,” but “Come, let *us*.” Poor soul, thou sayest there is none like thyself; behold I take my place side-by-side with thee. Art thou a sinner? So am I. Dost thou deserve God’s wrath? So do I. Hast thou gone very far astray? So have I. Come, let *us* return, let us go together. Or if that comfort thee not enough, let me tell thee I have gone as thou now art; as despairing, perhaps more so; as cast down, perhaps worse, but I have found him to be a loving Saviour, a blessed Saviour, willing and able to save to the uttermost. Soul, come and try him, come and try him. My brothers and sisters in Christ in Christ reject you when you came to him? You were as bad as others, some in you were worse, did he reject you? I am sure that if I should ask it there would be not one thousand here but a vast company, who would rise and say, “I sought the Lord and he heard me, this poor man cried, and the Lord heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” Soul, come, let *us* return. He saved me; he will save you.

“Tell it unto sinners tell

*I am, I am saved from hell.*”

If he could and would save one, why not another; and if the thousands of Israel, why not poor sinful *you*?

Then, that I may persuade you further, let me remind you that to return to God is not a cruel request to you. He does not ask you to perform a pilgrimage and blister your weary feet, or to thrust an iron in your back and swing yourself aloft as does the Hindoo, he asks you not to lie on a bed of spikes or starve yourself till you can count your bones. He asks no suffering of you, for Christ has suffered for you. All he asks is than you would return to him, and what is that? That you would be unfeignedly sorry for your past sin, that you would ask his grace to keep you from it in the future, that you would now believe in Christ who is set forth to be the propitiation for sin, that through faith in his blood you may see your sin for ever put away and all your iniquity cancelled. That is neither a hard nor a cruel demand. It is for your good as well as for his glory. O Spirit of God, make the sinner now willing to repent and to believe in Christ.

But, yet again, remember the comfortable fruits which will surely follow if you return. What would you think if I could show you yourself within a week? There he stands; he is singing—

“A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing;  
Nor fear with thy righteousness on,  
My person and offering to bring.  
The terrors of law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Saviour’s obedience and blood,  
Hide all my transgressions from view.”

What man is that? Why, that is the man who came in here last Sunday morning, and said he was utterly lost. He heard the minister exhort him to trust Christ, and he did it, and that is where he is standing now. He has been brought up out of a horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and his feet are set upon a rock. “If I thought that would be the case,” saith one, “I would try it.” My dear sir, you need not *think* it will be the case. God promises—and he cannot lie—“He that believeth and is baptized,” he does not say, “may be,” but “*shall be saved*,” and God’s “*shalls*” and “*wills*” do not play with men; but he speaks them in real earnestness. “Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” Dare you say that this is not true? “No,” say you, “it is undoubtedly true.” Well, then, if you call upon the name of the Lord you shall be saved, or else the promise is

false. Again, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Do you believe that? Is it not a promise made to the penitent who casts himself at the feet of Jesus? Very well, try it personally, and if you cast yourself there, either this book must be withdrawn, and God must change, Christ’s blood must lose its power, and God must un-God himself, or else he must and will save you. Oh! that there were such a heart in you, and such a mind towards God, that you would now say, “I do believe; I will believe; I trust my Saviour with my soul.” This done, you are saved.

Once more, may I not plead with you to return to God, because of the precious love of Christ? Love, I know, has great power to move. You will remember how in that wonderful book, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” there is a singular instance of the power of love. Miss Ophelia had been laboring to train up that wicked girl biopsy, but she would not learn anything, though Miss Ophelia tried to make her say the Assembly’s Catechism, in order that she might know all about it. But one day, Eva, the little five, (the very gospel incarnate, just as Miss Ophelia was the picture of the law,) sits down by her side, and says to her, “Topsy, why will be so naughty; what is it makes you so wicked?” “Miss Eva,” says Topsy, “it aren’t no use any being good nobody loves me.” The little girl puts her arm round her neck and kisses her, saying, “Why I love you, Topsy, and it grieves me very much to see you so naughty.” “Oh!” said Topsy, “I will try to be good if you will but love me.” Love had won the poor child, and had subdued her. Well, now, perhaps you are saying, “If Christ would but say he would love me, I think I could repent that I ever sinned against him; I think I would be willing to give him my heart.” Soul, if that is what you say, he does love you. He loved you and gave himself for you. Behold his cross—is there better proof of love than that? See his flowing wounds; hear how he groans; behold him dying! “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and he saves them because he loves them. Oh! if that love will woo you, it is indeed in plenteous abundance flowing down to you now. “Ah! well,” you say, “I cannot do enough for him.” If that be true, I am glad you have got as far as that, and I have finished when I have told you an anecdote which I trust will do us all good.

A missionary was preaching to the Maori tribe of the New Zealanders. He had been truing them of the suffering love of Christ, how he had poured forth his soul unto death for them; and as he concluded, the hills rung to the thrilling question—“Is it nothing to an who pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his Borrow?” Then stood forth a plumed and painted chief, the scarred warrior of a thousand fights, and as his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, he spoke. “And did the Son of the Highest suffer all this for us men? Then the Indian chief would like to offer him some poor return for his great love. Would the Son of God deign to accept the Indian’s hunting dog? Swift of foot and keen of scent the tribe has not such another, and he has been to the Indian as a friend.” But the missionary told him that the Son of God had need of no such gifts as these. Thinking he had mistaken the gift he resumed—“Yet perchance he would accept the Indian’s rifle? Unerring of aim, the chief cannot replace it.” Again the missionary shook his head. For a moment the chief paused; then as a new thought struck him, suddenly despoiling himself of his striped blanket he cried with childlike earnestness, “Perhaps *he who had not where to lay his head* will yet accept the chieftain’s blanket. The poor Indian will be cold without it, yet it is offered joyfully.” Touched by love’s persistency, the missionary tried to explain to him the real nature of the Son of God; that it was not men’s gifts but men’s hearts that he yearned for. For a moment a cloud of grief darkened the granite features of the old chief; then as the true nature of the Son of God slowly dawned upon him, casting aside his blanket and rifle he clasped his hands, and looking right up

into the blue sky, his face beaming with joy, he exclaimed—"Perhaps the Son of the Blessed One will deign to accept the poor Indian himself!"

Is that what you say this morning? You would give Christ this, and that, and the other. Soul, give him your heart. Say to him now,

“Jesus, I love thy charming name,

’Tis music to my ear;

Fain would I sound it out so loud,

That earth and heaven might hear.”

And then it is done; the compact is concluded; the work is over; thou art in the arms of Christ, thou lovest him and he loves thee. He wounded but he has healed; he killed thee but he has made thee alive. Go in peace; thou art loved much; thy sin which are many are all forgiven thee.”

## Jacob's Waking Exclamation

A Sermon

(No. 401)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July the 21st, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord in this place; and I knew it not.”—Genesis 28:16.

THROUGH his own foolish wisdom Jacob had been compelled to leave his father's house. Perhaps we are scarcely able to judge of the sorrowful feelings which this banishment would beget in his soul. Here we go from one Christian home to another. If we leave the parental roof we may hope still to sojourn where there is an altar to the Most High God, and where we can still unite with worshippers who fear his name. Not so in Jacob's case. The family of which he was a member, was the only household in the land that worshipped God; or if there were some few others, probably they were unknown to one another, and as far as Jacob's knowledge would go, he was fully assured that all the way from the place where he left his father until he arrived at Padan-Aram, he would not meet with a single person who feared the God of heaven. He was passing from one oasis to another across a burning sand. We may compare him to a swallow, which for the first time leaves our shore to find no rest until it has passed with weary wing the long leagues of purple sea. You must know too that the prevalent notion of the heathens among whom Jacob dwelt was that their gods had only local authority; that for instance, the god of Gaza was not the god of Askelon; the god of Beersheba would not be the God of Bethel. Their deities were gods of the hills and not of the valleys, and it may be but just possible that from great connection with the heathen, Jacob may have failed clearly to recognize the fact that his father's God was not like their gods; so in leaving his father's house there may have been this troublous thought rising in his mind, that he was also leaving his father's God; that now his prayers would scarcely be heard; that he should be an alien from Jehovah's land, and cut off from the congregation of the blessed. Jacob was not at this time a full-grown believer, he was but a babe in grace; his ready yielding to his mother's craft proves his want of advanced piety; and it is no trifling thing for a weakling to be taken from the nurture of home and cast alone upon a world unfriendly and ungenial. Happy was it for the fugitive that his Lord's compassion tracked his way even when he knew not that God was there. Blessed was the dream which assured him that Jehovah's wing had covered his stony bed as really as it guarded his softer couch in Isaac's tent. The truth seemed to surprise him, but O how sweetly it must have yielded consolation! “Surely,” said he, and he opened his eyes to new light as though he knew that the night of distress had passed, and that a day of confidence had begun—“Surely God is in this place, and *I knew it not.*”

I would address you this morning upon a topic which may perhaps be as useful to us as to Jacob, if God the Holy Ghost shall but enable me to preach, and you to hear. Oh thou that art everywhere, be speedily now; be thou in this place, and may we know it, and tremble in thy presence. I shall speak on three points; first, *the omnipresence of God*—the doctrine of it; secondly, *a recognition of that omnipresence*, or the spirit which is necessary in order to discover the presence of God; and

thirdly, *the results of a recognition of this omnipresence*, or the practice which is sure to spring out of the conviction that God is everywhere.

I. First, then, THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE. He is everywhere.

In the early Christian Church, there was a wicked heresy, which for a long while caused great disturbance, and exceeding much controversy. There were some who taught that Satan, the representative of evil, was of co-equal power with God, the representative of good. These men found it necessary to impugn the doctrine of God's universal power. Their doctrine denied the all-pervading presence of God in the present world, and they seemed to imagine that we should of necessity have to get out of the world of nature altogether, before we could be in the presence of God. Their preachers seemed to teach that there was a great distance between God and his great universe; they always preached of him as the King who dwelt in the land that was very far off; nay, they almost seemed to go as far as though they had said, "Between us and him there is a great gulf fixed, so that neither can our prayers reach him, nor can the thoughts of his mercy come down to us." Blessed be God that error has long ago been exploded, and we as Christian men, without exception, believe that God is as much in the lowest hell as in the highest heaven, and as truly among the sinful hosts of mortals, as among the blissful choir of immaculate immortals, who day without night praise his name. We believe that he filleth heaven and earth, and hell; that he is in the very space which his creation seems to claim, for creatures do not displease God; and even the space which is occupied by his handiworks is still filled with himself. The rocky bowels of the unsearched-out depths are full of God; where the sea roars, or where the solid granite leaves no interstice or vacuum, even there is God; not only in the open place, and in the chasm, but penetrating all matter, and abounding everywhere in all, and filling all things with himself. "In him we live and move, and have our being, and in him are all things, and by him all things consist." Yet, while we receive the doctrine, it is well sometimes to enlarge upon it, not so much for sake of argument, as to make the truth stand out the more clearly to our minds' eye. Let us remember, then, that in the three kingdoms God is everywhere; in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace, we may say of each spot, "Surely God is in this place."

He is everywhere in the fields of *nature*. Go if you please to secluded parts; walk through the forest-glades where the virgin moss presents a delicate carpet for human foot; where the deer starts up affrighted by the intrusion of an unexpected visitor; where the wild bird scarcely flies from you because as yet it is not familiar with the cruel face of man. As you walk among the intertwined boughs, the natural arches of God's own temple which He Himself hath builded, without toil of hewer of stone or dauber of clay, if you be a true Christian you will be compelled to say—

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,  
With prayer and praise agree;  
And seem by thy sweet bounty made  
For those who follow thee."

You will solemnly exclaim, "Surely God is in this place." Nor will you be alone in your thought, for every waving flower-bell will bear witness to the fact, and the insect humming in the breeze, and the glossy beetle creeping among the sere leaves that lie beneath your feet, relics of many a winter's slaughter among the verdant groves, and the birds that are warbling among the trees will every one of them bear witness that surely God is there. In fact, if there be one spot more than another where the consciousness of God's presence will strike the heart of the awakened man, it will be where other men are not but where he himself is alone the only worshipper of God, save as

a creation joins his strain. But you must remember too that if you go to the haunt of men, where they crowd and congregate together, that God is there. Go to one of the abutments of London Bridge and stand a moment gazing at the throng as it harries by, thousands and tens of thousands in an hour, on, on they sweep—the riches of Nations grinding the roadway, and multitudes of men, women, and children wearing away the granite pavement. God is there, though forgotten by most of them who are thinking only of the world and of its toils, forgetting that there is one above them who looks on all, and one within them who inhabiteth all space. Let not you and I forget, but let us say, “God is there; in every drop of blood that is circulating through the veins of the passengers; in every flush that is on the cheek; in every pulse that throbs or breath that heaves.” The very fact that they are fed and clothed and are in existence will bear you witness that surely God is in that place; and thoughts of awe may soon come crowding o’er your mind, and you may find yourself as much alone with God in crowded Cheapside, or in the thronging Borough or noisy Whitechapel, as though you were far away alone on the wild prairie, or in some desert of Africa where foot-print of man could not be perceived. Verily God is in this place. Then fly with the white sail across the deep, and as you skim the foaming billows, if your soul be right within you, you will say, “Surely God is in this place.” And when the storm comes on and the thunder rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies, and the skies seem to be wounded with the flashing of his glittering spear in the tremendous lightning, you may say in the midst of the storm as your bark reels and rocks, and is tossed like a sea-bird upon the billow—“Surely he holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, and God is here.” And when you have landed, and calm comes on, and the fair white clouds sail slowly through the air, sailing gallantly in the abated breath of the wind, when everything comes out all fresh and green from the last shower, and there is a clear shining after the rain and the storm, and profound peace after the noisy hurricane, you may say then with refreshed enjoyment—“Surely God is in this place.” But I need not continue in such a strain as this. Ye shall go where ye will; ye shall look to the most magnificent of God’s works, and ye shall say—“God is here, upon thine awful summit, O hoary Alp! in thy dark bosom, O tempest-cloud! and in thy angry breath, O devastating hurricane!” “He makes the clouds his chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind.” God is here. And so in the most minute—in the blossom of the apple, in the bloom of the tiny field-flower, in the sea-shell which has been washed up from its mother-deep, in the sparkling of the mineral brought up from darkest mines, in the highest star, or in yon comet that startles the nations and in its fiery chariot soon drives afar from mortal ken,—great God, thou art here, thou art everywhere. From the minute to the magnificent, in the beautiful and in the terrible, in the fleeting and in the lasting, thou art here, though sometimes we know it not.

Let us enter now the kingdom of *Providence*, again to rejoice that God is there. My brethren, let us walk the centuries, and at one stride of thought let us traverse the earliest times when man first came out of Eden, driven from it by the fall. Then this earth had no human population, and the wild tribes of animals roamed it at their will. We know not what this island was then, save that we may suspect it to have been covered with dense forests, and perhaps inhabited by ferocious beasts; but God was here, as much here as he is to-day; as truly was he here then, when no ear heard his foot fall as he walked in the cool of the day in this great garden,—as truly here as when to-day the stings of ten thousand rise up to heaven, blessing and magnifying his name. And then when our history began—turn over its pages and you will read of cruel invasions and wars which stained the soil with blood, and crimsoned it a foot-deep with clotted gore; you will read of civil wars and intestine strifes between brother and brother, and you will say—“How is this? How was this



permitted? “But if you read on and see how by tumult and bloody strife Liberty was served, and the best interest of man, you will say, “Verily, God was here.” History will conduct you to awful battle-fields; she will bid you behold the garment rolled in blood; she will cover you with the thick darkness of her fire and vapor of smoke; and as you hear the clash of arms, and see the bodies of your fellow men, you say, “The devil is here;” but truth will say, “No, though evil be here, yet surely God was in this place though we knew it not; all this was needful after all—these calamities are but revolutions of the mighty wheels of Providence, which are too high to be understood, but are as sure in their action as though we could predict their results.” Turn if you will to what is perhaps a worse feature in history still, and more dreary far—I mean the story of persecutions. Read how the men of God were stoned and were sawn asunder; let your imaginations revive the burnings of Smithfield, and the old dungeons of the Lollards’ Tower; think how with fire and sword, and instruments of torture, the fiends of hell seemed determined to extirpate the chosen seed. But remember as you read the bloodiest tragedy, as your very soul grows sick at some awful picture of poor tortured human flesh, that verily God was in that place, scattering with rough hands, it may be, the eternal seed, bidding persecution be as the blast which carries seed away from some fruit-bearing tree that it may take root in distant islets which it had never reached unless it had been carried on the wings of the storm. Thou art, O God, even where man is most in his sin and blasphemy; thou art reigning over rebels themselves, and over those who seem to defy and to overturn thy will. Remember, always, that in history, however dreadful may seem the circumstances of the narrative, surely God is in that place. You may say that yon nation depended for its welfare upon a woman’s will, or that its destiny hinged upon a child’s life; that this dynasty rose and fell at the will of some far-famed adventurer; that another nation was rocked to its very center by the fanaticism of a foolish pretender. We will grant you all this, for who denies the second cause when he vindicates the first?—but let me say, more present is God than even man himself; more truly is *he* King, than the kings of the earth; more certainly is the Lord a man of war than even warriors themselves. In everything in the page of history, from the moment of its first unrolling till the last of the seven seals shall be loosed, and the book shall be read out before men and angels, you will have to say, “God was in it all.” But you will please to recollect that while this is true of history in the mass, it is also true of it in the detail, and with reference to yourself and your own lot—God is there. You had a fire by which you lost your all, but God was there. By some fortunate circumstances, as you call it, you rose in life—God was there—but by a reverse, as you name it, you soon fell back again—God was there. There has nothing happened to you but what has been under his knowledge, his superintendence, and his ordination. Do not, I pray you, forget yourself while you are thinking of nations and of kingdoms, for it is as true of a gnat that God supports it in life as it is of an angel, and God is as certainly in the creeping of the aphid upon a rosebud as in the tumble of an avalanche from the mountain. He is in all things. He is in you; he is in your circumstances to-day. Take the thought home, and may God grant that it may have its due effect upon your minds. In Providence, then, we may say, “Surely God is in this place.”

But we now come to the third great kingdom of which the truth holds good in a yet more evident manner—the kingdom of *grace*. In yonder province of conviction, where hard-hearted ones are weeping penitential tears, where proud ones who said they would never have this man to reign over them are bowing their knees to kiss the Son lest he be angry; where rocky, adamantine consciences, have at last begun to feel; where obdurate, determined, incorrigible sinners, have at last turned from the error of their ways—God is there, for were he not there, none of these holy feelings would ever

have arisen, and the cry would never have been heard—"I will arise and go unto my Father." And in yonder province which shines under a brighter sun, where penitents with joy look to a bleeding Saviour, where sinners leap to lose their chains, and oppressed ones sing because their burdens have rolled away; where they who were just now sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death have seen the great light—God is in that place, or faith had never come and hope had never arisen. And there in yonder province, brighter still, where Christians lay their bodies upon the altar as living sacrifices, where men with self-denying zeal think themselves to be nothing and Christ to be all in all; where the missionary leaves his kindred that he may die among the swarthy heathen; where the young man renounces brilliant prospects that he may be the humble servant of Jesus; where yonder work-girl toils night and day to earn her bread rather than sell her soul; where yonder toiling laborer stands up for the rights of conscience against the demands of the mighty; where yonder struggling believer still holds to God in all his troubles, saying—"Though he slay me yet will I trust in him"—God is in that place, and he that has eyes to see will soon perceive his presence there. Where the sigh is heaving, where the tear is falling, where the song is rising, where the desire is mounting, where love is burning, hope anticipating, faith abiding, joy o'erflowing, patience suffering, and zeal abounding, God is surely present. In the temple of the human heart, consecrating it unto himself. In all these three kingdoms then, my brethren, let us never forget that "God is in this place."

I shall turn from this point when I have just made the remark that we are still so apt to think that God is not here. You remember that splendid picture which God himself gives—"Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool." You have seen, perhaps, the drawings of those wonderful statues which amid the ruined temples of Egypt, lift their heads into the very clouds. They sit upon their awful thrones continually, men of common stature reach no higher than the pedestals of their feet, while these gigantic ones tower upwards into the very sky. Now consider these to be but a minute representation, and let the colossal figure of Deity rise before your mind. Heaven is his throne, and there he sits; earth is his footstool, and here are his feet; while higher than angels fly is the head of the All-glorious One. We cannot comprehend the Lord at all, but we may think of him as he represents himself to us; he does it, you know, under human representations—let us then get the human representation into our mind. He is greater than the greatest thought—his head higher than heaven; his feet lower than the deepest hell; earth his footstool; heaven his throne. Do not let us think that he is ever absent here, for if his face be seen in heaven, the skirts of his garments are trailing over the whole earth. We are never at a distance from him; he is here, there, and everywhere; with you and with me, very present at every time and in every circumstances. I cannot bring out the truth more clearly than that; I therefore leave it to pass on to the second head.

II. BUT HOW ARE WE TO RECOGNISE THIS PRESENCE OF GOD? "What is the Spirit which shall enable us constantly to feel it? The presence of electricity is very soon discovered by those bodies which are susceptible of its action. The presence, for instance, of iron in a vessel is very soon detected and discovered by the magnetic needle. There is an affinity between them. That carnal men should not discover God here I do not wonder at: that they should even say, "There is no God," is no marvel, because there is nothing in their nature akin to him, and therefore they do not perceive him. They lack all the affinity that can discover his presence.

To commence, then. If you would feel God's presence, you must have an *affinity to his nature*. Your soul must have the spirit of adoption, and it will soon find out its Father. Your spirit must have a desire after holiness, and it will soon discover the presence of Him who is holiness itself.

Your mind must be heavenly, and you will soon detect that the God of Heaven is here. The more nearly we become like God, the more sure shall we be that God is where we are. To a man who has reached the highest stage of sanctification the presence of God becomes a more sure fact than the presence of anything else beside. In fact, he may even get to such a state that he will look upon the fields, streets, inhabitants and events of the world as a dream, a passing background, while the only real thing to him will be the unseen God which his new nature so clearly manifests to him, that his faith becomes the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things which sense cannot perceive. Likeness to God is first necessary for the clear perception of his presence. Next, there must be a *calmness of spirit*. God was in the place when Jacob came there that night, but he did not know it, for he was alarmed about his brother Esau; he was troubled, and vexed, and disturbed. He fell asleep, and his dream calmed him; he awoke refreshed; the noise of his troubled thoughts was gone and heard the voice of God.

“In solemn silence of the mind,

My heaven and there my God I find.”

More quiet we want, more quiet, more calm retirement, before we shall well be able, even with spiritual minds, to discover the sensible presence of God.

But then, next Jacob had in addition to this calm of mind—a *revelation of Christ*. That ladder, as I have said in the exposition, was a picture of Christ, the way of access between man and God. You will never perceive God in nature, until you have learned to see God in grace. We have heard a great deal about going up from nature to nature’s God. Impossible! A man might as well attempt to go from the top of the Alps to heaven. There is still a long gulf between nature and God to the natural mind. You must first of all perceive God incarnate in the flesh of Christ, before you will perceive God in the creation which he has made. We have heard a great deal about men worshipping in the forest glades, who never frequent the sanctuary of the saints. You have heard much, but there was little truth in it. There is often great sound where there is much emptiness, and you will frequently find that those men who talk most of this natural worship are those who do not worship God at all. God’s works are too gross a medium to allow the light, and the road to him is a rugged one if we go the way of the creatures. But when I see Christ, I see God’s new and living way, between my soul and my God, most clear and pleasant. I come to my God at once, and finding him in Christ, I find him everywhere else besides.

More than this, no man will perceive God, wherever he may be, unless he knows that God has made a *promise* to be with him and is able by faith to look to the fulfillment of it. In Jacob’s case God said, “I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest, and I will not leave thee.” Christian, have you heard the same? Is the twenty-third Psalm the song of your faith? “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” Have you consciously perceived that though men forsook you, God stood with you? Could you join the song of one who said,

“When trouble like a gloomy cloud  
Has gathered thick and thunder’d loud,  
He near my side hath always stood,  
His loving-kindness O how good!”

Then to you it will not be difficult to perceive the presence of God. You will in fact look upon it as so real that when you open your eyes in the morning, you will look for him with praise, and when you close them at night, it will only be that you may repose under the shadow of his wings.

I wish we could get back to the spirit of the old Puritans, they believed in a present God always. We speculate about the laws of nature, we are always talking about organic matter and so on, but with them it was God and God alone. We look to the barometer about the rain, and very properly in some sense, they looked to God, and they prayed God either to stay the bottles of heaven, or to pour down the refreshing floods upon the thirsty earth. We are talking about attraction, finding out the laws by which the worlds are governed, the Puritans looked to the Lawgiver rather than to the law, and to the present power of God manifest in his present hand, rather than to any power which some dream may exist in matter itself, or in the laws of matter. Oh to feel God everywhere, in the little as well as in the great, in our risings up and in our sittings down, in our goings forth and in our comings in! I can conceive of no life more blessed, and of no Spirit more akin to the spirit of the glorified, than the mind and heart of the man who lives in God, and knows and feels that God is ever present with him.

III. This brings me, very briefly, to one or two concluding remarks upon the PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A FULL RECOGNITION IN THE SOUL OF THIS DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

One of the first things would be to check our inordinate levity. Cheerfulness is a virtue: levity a vice. How much foolish talking, how much jesting which is not convenient, would at once end if we said, "Surely God is in this place." The next time you have been indulging in mirth—I mean not innocent mirth, but that which is connected with uncleanness, or with any sort of ill—think you see a finger lifted up, and you hear a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place." Let your recreation be free from sin; let your amusements be such that you can enjoy them while God looks on. If, too, we felt that God was in this place, how much oftener should we talk of him and of Christ. This afternoon what will many of you talk of? Sunday afternoon talk is generally a great difficulty to some professors. They do not like to go right down into what they think worldly conversation, so they generally talk about ministers. They consider *that* to be a spiritual subject; and generally, this talk about ministers is more wicked than talk about the devil himself, for I had rather you should speak religiously concerning Satan, than irreligiously concerning even the angels of the Churches. There is one tale retailed about this minister and another tale about the other, and the conversation ministers no edification. If they heard an angel say, "God is in this place," the afternoon of the day of rest would be spent in much more profitable conversation. But suppose that I have some here, to-day, who have been lately exposed to personal danger and peril; brethren, do you not think if in the midst of the storm, or in time of disease, you had heard a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place," you would have been perfectly at rest? The noxious air grows pure if he be there. The lightning cannot scathe, or if they scathe 'tis bliss; the storm cannot devour, nor can the hungry deep engulf; or, if they do, 'tis bliss if God be there: what need have you at any time to fear? What is your nervousness but wickedness, when the Eternal God is your certain refuge? A Christian in alarm at in the hand of his God, surely he distrusts his Father, and doubts the heart of infinite love! "God is in this place though I knew it not." I speak to some, too, who are in great poverty. You will go home to-day, and there are bare walls. Perhaps the seat you sit upon hath many of the rushes torn away and the table will be but very scantily furnished, and very homely at the best. "Well," but you will say, "surely God is in this place." What comfort for you! You may remember the old Christian's exclamation as you sit down for a blessing, "What, all this, and my God present with me!" Better this, and feel his presence, than be possessed of the best of the world's dainties and not know that he is here. Perhaps you have today some sore trouble at home. There is a Christian

wife who has to go home to an ungodly husband, or sons and daughters who have to go home to a household which is anything but what it should be. Do not be afraid to go home, and as you cross the threshold, say, "Surely God is in this place." I think as John Bunyan passed over the threshold of the dungeon of Ledford Jail, if he could have known that he should be twelve years there, but that in those twelve years he would write the "Pilgrim's Progress," he would have said. "Surely God is in this place." And you, if you are called to enter a den such as Bunyan called his dungeon, can say, "Surely God is in this place," and you make it a palace at once. Some of you, too, are in very deep affliction. You are driven to such straits that you do not know where things will end, and you are in great despondency to-day. Surely God is in that place. As certain as there was one like unto the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so surely on the glowing coals of your affliction the heavenly foot-prints may be seen, for surely God is in this place. You are called to-day to some extraordinary duty, and you do not feel strong enough for it. Go to it, for "Surely God is in this place." You have to address an assembly this afternoon for the first time. Surely God is in that place. He will help you. The arm will not be far off on which you have to lean, the divine strength not be remote to which you have to look. "Surely God is in this place."

But were I to multiply pictures, I might not describe the condition of one-tenth of my hearers. Let me rather leave it to you or to the blessed Spirit of God to make an application to your own lot, and you shall find this to be a very well of comfort springing up with clear transparent water of life, "Surely God is in this place."

And lastly, if we always remembered that God was where we are, what reverence would it inspire when we are in his house, in the place particularly and specially set apart for his service! I do not think we always feel in the assembly of the saints as we should do. It is not the place that is holy;—holiness cannot attach itself to anything but moral virtues and to intelligent beings. There cannot be holy bricks and holy stones,—the thing is absolutely impossible; but where two or three are met together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. He is here, and yet how many come out of form and fashion. Some few think rather more of the dress they come in than they do of what they shall hear, or of what Spirit they shall come in. Oh! be dressed, stay not for another pin, but stay for another prayer it thou wilt, that thy soul may be dressed, for often thou comest with thy body decked out, but with thy soul naked before God for want of preparation in coming up to his house. And when we sit here, what thoughts come in! What buyers and sellers transact business here! How have some of you been looking to the cares of housewives, and some of you been busy with your shops! At home you do not take the shutters down on the Sunday, but you keep them up; I wish you would keep them up in your souls. You do not go into the field and look after the crops, but some men bring the crops into the house of God and look at them there. You would not take down the ledger and cast up your accounts to-day, (though some do that) but at the same time you have a ledger in your brains, and are busy with that when you ought to be thinking of your God. And I have noticed this, too, that in so large a house as this, where so many have to be occupied in showing persons to their seats, keeping the pews and arranging the services, there is such a tendency in the minds of such to have their minds dissipated from the solemn occupation in which they are engaged. I think there ought never to be employed in churches and chapels pew-openers who are not converted, for they will not be converted afterwards. I suppose the case of a pew-opener being converted after taking the office was never known. Those persons who have to do with the externals of the House are just those persons who seldom know anything of the

internal. They are occupied with the shell; they can not think of the kernel. As with the grave digger and with undertaker's men, the least thoughtful of all, the most careless of all men, so is it with them who are most in the sanctuary, they are often furthest from God. Oh, may we remember "Surely God is in this place," and it will give us awe when we come into his immediate presence!

But once more, what a restraint from sin would this thought be if it could be painted upon our very soul! A man once took his child with him while he went out to steal from a neighbour's stack, and he said to the boy, "Look about you for fear anybody should see your father." The boy had read the Scriptures, so, having looked all round, his father said, "Have you looked all ways?" He said, "No, father, there is somebody looking." "Who is it?" "Father, you have not looked up, and there is God looking down upon you." The man's conscience was pricked. Sinner, you look round you, there is no one in the chamber, you perpetrate the crime. Look up! The father with murderous thoughts in his mind gets his son into an unfrequented lane, no eye he thinks beholds him, but the divine watcher looks on and finds helpmates on earth to keep watch too. Man, there are eyes in every wall. Nature is God's great photographer, photographing every act you do, nay, every thought that you feel as it prints itself upon your brain and upon your brow. You shall find at the last great day the picture of everything that you have done preserved, for he shall speak to the beam out of the sun and it shall tell what you said, and he shall speak to the sun itself and it shall reveal the picture of the uplifted hand and of the dark deed. You are always seen. Eyes watch you: through the thick darkness he beholdeth. The spirits which he sendeth abroad to and fro are ever at your elbow, and he himself is there. Now go and sin in the presence of God if thou darest. Curse him to the face if thou darest; go home to day to break his Sabbath if thou darest while he looks on. Surely men would not offend in the very presence of the Judge! They would not break the laws with the Lawgiver himself before their very eyes. Let him then abide in your thoughts.

"Nor let your weaker passions dare  
Consent to sin, for God is there."

## The Joint Heirs and Their Divine Portion

A Sermon

(No. 402)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, July the 28th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Joint heirs with Christ.”—Romans 8:17.

THE APOSTLE has proceeded through a simple but exceedingly forcible train of reasoning till he gains this glorious point—“Joint heirs with Christ.” He begins thus—“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” This is a fact which he takes for granted because he has perceived it in the hearts of believers. We do cry, “Abba, Father.” From this he infers that if God has given us the Spirit whereby we call him “Father,” then we are his children, which is plain, fair, and clear reasoning. Then he adds—“If children then heirs”—though this does not hold true in all families, because all children are not heirs, frequently the first-born may take all the estate; but with God so long as they are children they have equal rights. “If children then heirs.” He goes on to say, “Heirs of God;” for if they are heirs they inherit their Father’s property. God is their Father, they are therefore God’s heirs! Well, but God hath another Son, one who is the first-born of every creature. Exactly so, therefore if we be heirs, as Christ Jesus is the heir of all things, we are “joint heirs with Christ.” I think you will see that, like links in a chain, these different truths draw each other on—the spirit of adoption proves the fact of adoption; by the act of adoption we are children; if children then heirs; if heirs, heirs of God; but since there is another heir, we must therefore be joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Blessed is the man to whom this reasoning is not abstract, but experimental. Happy is he who can follow the apostle step by step, and say, “Yes, I have this morning the spirit of a son; I know that my heart loves God, and I look to him as my Father, with trust, with confidence, and with love; then I am surely his son, because I have the Spirit a son; then I am his heir; I am the heir of God; and thus my faith lays hold upon the thrice-precious words of this glorious text—I am joint heir with Christ.”

I would invite you, my brethren in Christ Jesus, this morning, to do three things; first, let us consider *the terms of the will*—“joint heirs with Christ;” secondly, let us go forth and *view the estates*—what it is of which we are joint heirs; and when we have done so, let us proceed at once *to administer*, for God hath made his children administrators as well as heirs.

I. First, then, there is A LEGAL TERM IN THE WILL UPON WHICH THE WHOLE MATTER WILL HINGE. We are called “joint heirs with Christ”—what meaneth this?

1. It means, first of all, that *our right to the divine heritage stands or falls with Christ’s right to the same inheritance*. We are co-heirs; if he be truly an heir, so are we; and if he be not, neither are we. Our two interests are intertwined and made one, we have neither of us any heirship apart from the other; we are joint heirs, Christ jointly with us; ourselves jointly with Christ. So, then, it follows that if there be any *flaw in the will*, so that it be not valid, if it be not rightly signed, sealed, and delivered, then it is no more valid for Christ than it is for us. If there be some points in the covenant of grace where wisdom has been deficient, and therefore by error it may miscarry, or by

lack of legal right may prove null and void, it is as surely null towards Christ as towards ourselves, for he is jointly concerned therein. If according to law *we* are only heirs-presumptive, whose rights may be superseded, then our great joint heir, so far as he is co-heir with us, is superseded also. If it be possible that by some decree in heaven's high court, it should be certified and determined that the inheritance is not rightly ours, because some one part of the covenant was left in a precarious state so that it became void and of no effect, then, thine inheritance, O thou King of kings, has failed thee in the very day when it hath failed us. I trust you will lay hold upon that thought; if Christ as God's heir has a perfect right to what his Father has bestowed upon him, even so have we, for our rights are nonexistent. If our title be true and just, so is his, and if his rights of heritage be true and just, so are ours. Oh! blessed thought for the believer! *Jesus* must lose the reward of his agonies before *we* can lose the fruits of them. Jesus the Mediator must lose the glory which his finished work has procured for him, ere one of his co-heirs can miss of it; he must come down from that glory which he now inhabiteth, and cease to be honored as "the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood," if any one of his people shall be deprived of that glory, and be cast into hell. The will, if valid for one, is valid for all.

But perhaps there may be a *suit in law* made against the will; some antagonist may set up a counter claim; an enemy to the entire family may proceed at once to attack the will with venom and with malice; he may take it into the Heavenly Court of Chancery, and there, before the great Judge, the question may be tried as to whether the inheritance be legally and lawfully ours. Very well, be it so; but then it is Christ's interest that is at stake as well as mine; he will be co-respondent in the suit. When Satan stood forth to accuse Joshua, the high priest, he did in effect accuse Christ as well as that chosen disciple, and the Lord was not slow to put in his rejoinder to the objection: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? "If Satan bring an accusation before God against any of the Lord's redeemed, that accusation is made against the Redeemer himself, for God's people are so one with Christ, that you must first bring the charge against Christ himself ere you dare to lay it against any of his elect. Do not say you: can charge the members with sin; you may do so in the inferior courts of earth, but the bill will be ignored in the supreme court of heaven, since before that bar the accepted substitute appears to answer an demands. You must enter your suit against the Head if you would attack the members, for verily the action at law which can be pleaded against the member of the body must be pleaded against the Head itself, for no court can allow a distinction between the body and the head in an notion at law. If it be possible that the malice and the graft of hell could invent some scheme by which the covenant could be put out of court, and the promise of grace could be made to fail, then Christ fails with his people, and the heir of all things loses his inheritance as soon as one single one of the other heirs shall have his right to the inheritance disproved. Our rights are joint rights, and most be either jointly acknowledged or jointly denied. "We are joint heirs with Christ."

Yet, further, to illustrate the full meaning of the joint heirship—suppose, after the *via* had been proved and acknowledged to be right, it shall be found in winding up the affairs of the testator, that *nothing is left to distribute*—suppose, after all this boast and talk about being heirs, the property should be nil, or there should even be found a debt against the estate—what then? Why, my brethren, if *we* get nothing, *Christ* gets nothing; if there should for us, there is no heaven for Christ. If there should be no thrones for us, there would be no throne for him; if the promise should utterly fail of fulfillment to the least of the joint heritors, it must also fail of accomplishment to our Lord Jesus



Christ himself. Be the property much or little, we are co-heirs; if there be infinite treasures, Christ hath them, and we have them; but if there be no treasure whatever, and faith should end in disappointment, and hope in despair, the calamity which impoverishes us must also impoverish our great co-heir. When we are poor, and in eternity have no shelter; when we in the next world shall find no heaven and no bliss,—then, wandering as outcast orphans, we shall see our Elder Brother an outcast orphan too; if we be portionless and penniless, the Firstborn among many brethren must be portionless and penniless also, for with him we stand or we fall.

And then suppose that, in winding up the estates, it should be found that, though there be something left, yet it be a *mere trifle*, scarcely worth an acknowledgment: enough to excite appetite but not sufficient to satisfy it—what if it should come out at last, that heaven is not the infinite joy we have been taught to expect; suppose its bliss should be but inferior joy, such as might be found even in this world below—suppose that the harps have no melody, the crowns but little glory, and heaven's streets but slight magnificence—what then? What they are to us they are to our co-heir. Saints with little glory, then Christ with little glory; believers with a narrow heaven, then Christ with a narrow heaven. If they drink but little from the river of pleasure, his draughts must be shallow too, for their joy is his joy, and his glory he has given them. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, and ye who long for his appearing shall be satisfied also when ye wake up in his likeness.

I have been dwelling upon the black side in order to bring the bright one out by contrast. We are joint heirs. So you see if there be any flaw, if there be any action to set aside the will, or if there be found no effects, or if the effects be slender, the loss falleth upon the co-heirs; not on one alone, nor on the other alone, but on the two, since they are jointly designated heirs in the will, and they are only heirs as they stand in relationship with one another. But oh! my brethren, let us revel with delight for a moment in the contrast which I might present to you. There is no flaw in God's will with regard to Christ. The heathen may rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, but God saith, "I will declare the decree, yet have I set my Son upon any holy hill of Zion." There is no fear whatever that, by any accident or by mistake, Christ should miss the honor to which his Father hath ordained him, he must be with his Father where he is. Just as little fear is there for you and for me if we be heirs of God. Thus runs the decree, and thus shall the fulfillment follow—"I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." No suit in law can stand against Christ; it were idle to dream it for a moment He has satisfied God's law, magnified it and made it honorable; he has discharged all the debts which as surety he took upon himself. Who shall accuse the Redeemer? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of him who rose again from the dead? Nor can any creature accuse his saints, nor can heaven, or earth, or hell disprove our rights or infringe upon our title so long as *his* title stands undisputed and indisputable. We *shall* see his face; the devils in hell cannot hinder it; we shall possess the promised rest, still the fiends that are beneath shall not rob us of the heirloom. And, believer, there is no fear that Christ shall be the possessor of nothing or heir of little things. He is the Son of God the infinitely rich, and God will not give to his Son a petty dowry or a trifling portion. "Ask of me," saith he, and he gives him unlimited permission to ask, not as Herod who would give only the half of his kingdom, but as one who would give everything to his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom he make the worlds. And O my soul, thy portion cannot be slender nor thy dowry narrow, since it is the same inheritance which Christ has from his Father's hands. Weigh the riches of Christ in scales and his treasures in balances and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of

Christ's sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. Overleap the boundaries of Christ's possession if you can, and then dream of ending a limit to the possessions of the elect of God. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

2. There is another point under the first head which I must not omit. Then it appears if we are called joint heirs with Christ, *we legally and strictly have no inheritance apart from him*. Soul, this suggests to thee a solemn enquiry, "Art thou in Christ or not?" Think not that thou canst ever be a partaker of the fullness of God Unless thou art in Christ—with him vitally and personally, one. One of two joint heirs has no right apart from the other. The signature of the one will not avail to alienate the estate, nor can he sell it by his own right, nor have it all at his own separate disposal, or in his own sole possession or holding. He has, in fact, no right at all, except as he is taken in connection with his co-heir. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself; your right lieth in Christ. If you be pardoned, it is through *his* blood; if you be justified, it is through *his* righteousness; if you be sanctified, it is because *he* is made of God unto you sanctification; if you be taught in the ways of God, it is because *he* becomes your wisdom; if you shall be kept from falling it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are perfected, it is because you are complete in *him*, and if you be glorified at the last, it will be because God the Father hath glorified his Son Jesus. The promises are yea and amen to thee, but only in Christ Jesus, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh at things after the counsel of his own will. Make thou thyself assured, then, that thou art in union with Christ, for out of him thou hast no rights whatever.

3. The title of joint heir contains another mystery which I cannot withhold, although it must be judiciously handled—*Christ, as coheir, has (of his own free grace) so identified himself with what his rights as co-heir are not to be separated or viewed apart from ours*. As God, by his own right, the Lord Jesus is possessor of all things, since he made and supports all things; but as Jesus, the mediator, the federal head of the covenant of grace, he hath no rights apart from his people. See, brethren, he enters into glory, but not for himself alone, for it is written, "Whither the forerunner is *for us* entered." Hebrews 6:20. Does he stand in the presence of God—he appears in the presence of God *for us*; Hebrews 9:24. Adam's death was not simply his own private loss, for in Adam all died, and Christ's life and all the consequences of his obedience are not merely his own, but the joint riches of all who are in him, of whom he is the federal head, and on whose behalf he accomplished the divine will. When Christ gave himself for us, he gave us all the rights and privileges which went with himself, so that now he has, *as our Brother*, no heritage apart from us, although, as Eternal God, he hath essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend.

Yet one more remark before we leave this point. While dwelling upon this joint heirship, let us remark *what an honor is conferred upon us*. To have anything to do with a great man is thought by some persons to be a distinguished mark of honor; to be set down in a will as co-heir with some great prince or noble would be considered indeed a great thing; but what honor is conferred on thee, believer, to be joint heir with the King of kings, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace! Thou camest here to-day from thy toil, and thy bones have scarce forgotten yesterday's weariness; but thou art coheir with him who rules all heaven; thou art come here in poverty and thou wilt go home to a scant meal in a narrow room, but thou art co-heir with him who made the worlds, by whom: all things consist; you have come here weak and feeble, doubting, distrustful, and cast down, but I tell thee, weak though thou be, and in

thine own judgment less than the least of all yet the same hand that wrote Christ heir of all things wrote thy name with his, and till a hand can be found that can blot out thy Redeemer's name thine shall stand and abide fair ever and ever. Come, lift up thine head; envy no man his dukedom; think no man's princship worth thy coveting; thou art greater than the greatest, for thou art joint heir with Christ; in dignified relationship thou hast no superior upon earth; and except those who are joint heirs with thee, thou hast not an equal, since thou art joint heir with Christ. And wilt thou think, yet again, *what cause there is that thou shouldst realize to-day thy union with Christ*, since thou art joint heir with him. Soul, thou art linked with Christ in the Eternal business of the Eternal Father. When he decreed Christ to be blessed above all the blessed, he decreed thee to be a partaker with him. Christ was always considered as having you in him, and you were always considered by God as being in Christ. I pray you consider *yourself* as being in Christ. Look to-day upon thine own being, not as a stray spark, but as a portion of Christ's fire, not as a solitary drop, but as a part of that deep sea of love which we can Christ Jesus. Think of thyself now, not as a man or separate individual, but as a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. These are blessed subjects, though I cannot speak upon them as I would. I always find when I have to deal with these "fat things full of marrow," that words fail us; and perhaps it is well, for then the excellency of the power is proved to be not by words of man but in the weight, and fullness, and richness of gospel matter. Joint heirs with Christ Jesus! I defy you to exhaust that topic, though you should think about it all the days of the next week, nay, though you should muse upon it till eternity commences with your soul.

II. IN VIEWING THE ESTATES we must remark that to our present apprehension they are divided into two parts, the first part of the inheritance is one which flesh and blood would fain do without—it is the *inheritance of suffering*. When Christ was God's heir, and was here on earth, he was heir of the cross, heir of shame, and spitting, and cruel mockings, and scourgings. If we are joint heirs with him, we, too, must partake of the same. Come with me, believer, to your estates, and behold, just on the edge of your Father's great inheritance, lies the swamp and morass of *affliction*. Now this is yours. If this be not yours, neither are the rest, for they are in the same indenture, and they are beg seethed to you in the same will. The same legacy that left peace with you, also left tribulation with you, while you are in this world. Come now, though this be an exceedingly noisome spot, though it be a piece of ground which thou wouldst fain leave out and give to thine enemies, yet there is a possibility of getting great treasure and great riches out of it; therefore do not scorn it. But if thou scorn it, remember, thou scornest the rest of the inheritance, for they are all one and indivisible in your Father's will. Christ's cross is entailed on all heirs of God. Will you take the cross? What! do thy shoulders forbid, and refuse themselves the pain of bearing it? Then, remember, thy head must deny itself the pleasure of wearing the crown. No cross no crown. If you are joint heir and would claim one part of the estate, you must take the rest. Are you ready to throw up your own claim, and say, "I will not be heir of anything?" Be it so, then; but until you are, you must be ready to suffer in this world the afflictions of the chosen eons, for they are a part of the inheritance. But, remember, Christ is coheir with you in this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." Added to this you must also be the heir of *persecution*. Christ had to be persecuted and so must you. If you, for fear of shame, and out of the love of the flesh, will not follow Christ through an evil generation, neither shall you follow him when he marches through the streets of heaven in triumph, amidst the acclamations of angels. You must endure persecution; but then, remember, he will be joint heir with you. "Saul, Saul, why

persecutest thou *me*?" "He had not persecuted Christ," you say, "it was only some poor men and women that he had haled to prison, or scourged in the synagogue, to compel them to blaspheme." Ay, but Christ was co-heir with theirs, and when Saul persecuted the poor servants of Jesus, he pet the Master too. Will you be sharers with *him*? Will you be scoffed at for his sake? Will you be willing to endure the revilings of slanderous tongues?—for if not, inasmuch as you reject one part of the inheritance you reject the rest. There is a third black portion, too, namely, *temptation*. You must be tempted of Satan, you must be tried by the world, the flesh, of the devil. Do you shrink from it? Do you say, "I would not be a Christian, if I must always be on my guard, and always fighting against temptation from without and from within?" Remember, in this, too, Christ is your co-heir. "He was tempted in all points like as we are." "We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Do you shrink from being tempted? Would you take Job's jewels, but not his dung-hill? Would you have David's crown, but not his caves of Adullam, and rocks of the wild goats? Would you have your Master's throne, but not his temptation in the wilderness? Then, remember, it cannot be; when you refuse the one, you relinquish all claim to the other. The co-heir is heir to the entire estate; and if he says, "No, not to that portion," then he is not heir to any; and if he makes exemption anywhere, he makes exemption to the whole. The joint heirship reaches from the gloomy patina of deep affliction up to the bright ineffable splendor of the throne of bliss, nor can any man reverse the record. "If so be that we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together."

Now, let us march with joyful footsteps onward to the other part of the inheritance. As this is a legal question, and as in matters of wills everything should be proven and sworn to, let us have, concerning our inheritance, the evidence of God: that cannot lie. Now, first, brethren, as co-heirs with Christ, we are *heirs of God*—so the text tells us. Oh! who can tell what God is? The finite cannot grasp the infinite. We who are but babes cannot hold the great ocean of Godhead in our infantile palms. We know not what God is, nor the measure of his attributes. But, remember, the text tells us that all God is, is ours. Is he omnipotent? Thine omnipotence is ours, O God, to be our defense. Is he omniscient? Thine infinite wisdom, O God, is mine to guide me. Is he eternal? Thine eternity, O God, is mine to keep me in existence, that I may ever be preserved. Is he full of love and grace? Then all thy love, as though there were not another to be loved, is mine, O God, and all thy grace, as though there were never another sinner to partake of it, is mine. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."—Psalm 16:5. "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—Psalm 63:26. Take another passage. Turn to Romans, the 4:chapter, 13th verse and you will find that there the promise that was made to the seed was that he should be *heir of the world*. "Ask of me," said his rather, "and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." "This world is ours," says the apostle in another place, and ours because it is Christ's by right of inheritance. There is nothing here below which does not belong to a believer. If he hath wealth, let him use it in his Master's service, for it is *his*. If he hath poverty, it is better for him, for poverty is his to help him, to be sanctified, and to long for heaven. Whatever happens to him—sickness or health, adversity or prosperity, everything is his here below. You may walk the broad acres of this round globe, and never look upon a single spot that is not yours. You may cast your eye to the remotest star, or send your thoughts beyond into the untraversed leagues of space, but look where you will, as all is Christ's, so all is yours. You have not come of age, so you do not possess it yet, but the day shall come when Christ shall come to this earth, and take possession of it, and then his saints shall reign with him. "The meek

shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves with the abundance of peace.” In Hebrews 1:2., we are told that God has appointed Christ *heir of all things*. Then *we* are heirs of all things—heaven and earth, time and eternity, anything that you can conceive of the things that can be named and cannot be named, things conceivable and inconceivable, finite and infinite, human and divine. Christ’s property extends to all, and we are co-heirs. Therefore, our rights and our property extend to all things whatsoever they may be. “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Then in James 2:5., we are spoken of as being *heirs of the kingdom*. Christ hath a kingdom that shall never be moved. He ruleth over all. Doth he call himself a King? he hath made us kings. Is Christ a priest? We are priests unto our God. Dries he sit upon a throne? We shall overcome and sit down with him upon his throne. Will he judge the nations? Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world! Will he be received with triumph by his Father? So shall we when his Father shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Will he be ruler over many things? So shall we be when he shall say unto us, “Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” Hath he joy? We shall have joy too, for we shall have *his* joy. Is he glorious? So must we be, for we shall be made like him. Is he everlasting? So shall we be, for because he lives, we shall live also. Brethren, I pray you, if your thoughts now can bring themselves to the matter, gather up all the honors, glories, treasures, riches, that your thought have ever conceived as belonging to Christ, and while the hymn is ringing in your ear—“Crown him, crown him, crown him, Lord of all;” remember that you are co-heirs with him. Oh! it is a glorious truth. Oratory may stand back, and eloquence may hold her tongue. The doctrine must be stated in its naked truth. She is, “when unadorned, adorned the most.” This glorious truth is most sweet when earth’s honeyed words are taken away, and most lustrous when we no longer attempt to illuminate her with human language. We are heirs with Christ. All that he has, all that he is, therefore, belongeth to us.

III. Now, thirdly, and this is the practical part of the discourse, let us proceed to ADMINISTER TO THE EFFECTS. How can we do that, say you? Well, in the first place, there is one part of the property which we may enjoy at once. Behold, I present to you the fair cross of your once crucified Elder Brother. When you came here this morning you were troubled, and as you came in you were envying your neighbor. You were saying of such-and-such an ungodly person, “Everything seems to go well with him, but as for me, all the day long am I plagued, and chastened every morning.” You were murmuring at the dispensations of God. Now, you have heard your Father’s will read, and you find that you are joint heirs with Christ. You discover that Christ had his cross, and you are asked to administer to the will. Come, take your cross up and bear it with joy. You will have to carry it. Whether you take it up or not, your murmuring will not lighten your afflictions. You can make your wooden cross into an iron one, if you choose, by being of a fretful disposition. Resignation to God’s will takes the weight out of the cross, but a proud spirit that will not bow to God’s will change a wooden cross into an iron one. Now which shall it be! You must be chastened, you must feel the goad; will you kick against the pricks and so wound yourself more than you would have been by the goad itself? Why will you inflict more sorrow on yourself than God indicts? Be patient, and you only feel the rod as it is in God’s hands, but when you are impatient and clutch at the rod, you briny it down with the weight of God’s hand and your own hand too. Now be quiet. Not only be quiet, but be glad. Say, “I count it to be my joy to be permitted to be a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. I will count it to be my highest glory if I may be made a knight of the cross, and may carry that cross upon my shoulder: to the world a badge of dishonor, but to me the ensign

of glory, the escutcheon of honor. I cannot of course picture what your precise trouble is. Some of you have a trouble perhaps, in her who is dearest to you. Others of you have affliction in your children, many of you are tried in your business, and some of you in your bodies with chronic or acute diseases. I know you have an a cross, or if you have not, I hope you will soon have one, for where there is no cross there is no Christ. The cross and Christ are nailed together by four nails, and they will never be disassociated in the experience of any Christian. All the sheep of the Great Shepherd are marked with the cross, and this not only in the fleece, but in the flesh. "If ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." "Now, I say begin at once to administer, by shouldering the cross and bearing your troubles and your persecutions with patience and with joy.

But next: why cannot we administer also to the blessed part of the glorious testament! Brethren, faith can do wonders. While sense is grovelling down below, faith with eagle wing cuts through the cloud and mounts to heaven. If you have faith enough brethren, you may this mourning be raised up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. Come, faith, and help me now to lay my fingers among the strings of the golden harp. Yea, that harp is mine, and my soul by faith would make every string resound with melody. Glory be unto thee, O God, glory be unto thee; my soul is in heaven, I with the cherubim and seraphim would bow, and sing, and rejoice with them I veil my face in this most joyful moment wiping every tear from my poor eyes, I bid them look upon thy glory in Christ. My soul would even now take her seat upon the throne; where my treasure is, there shall my heart be also.

"Even now I will adore him,  
 With the glorious hosts above,  
 Who for ever bow before him,  
 And unceasing sing his love.  
 I will begin the music here.  
 And so my soul shall rise;  
 Oh! for some heavenly note to, bear  
 My passions to the skies.  
 E'en now by faith I join my hands  
 With those that went before.  
 All hail! ye blood-besprinkled bands  
 Upon the eternal shore."

Oh! holy Immanuel, exalted as thou art, thy co-heirs here below begin by faith to partake of thy glory. Methinks my head wears the crown; the white robe is girt about me, and my feet tread no more the battle fields, but the streets of peaceful bliss. Jerusalem, my spirit is come to thee, and unto thy glorious assembly. O ye first-born whose names are written in heaven, I take my seat with you and join your rapturous adoration. O God, thou Judge of all, my spirit meets thee robed in my Saviour's righteousness, and salutes thee as my Father and my all. O eternity, eternity eternity!—time is gone, and change is over, and I am floating on thy pacific waves where winds can never howl and tempests never lower. My soul hath made me like the chariots of Aminadib, and I have gotten me away to the hills of myrrh and the mountains of frankincense.

Last of all, I have another practical point. God has given Christ the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, and we are co-heirs with him. Brethren, let us advance to take the property. But how! Why some of you can do so by preaching the gospel to

poor sinners in the streets. Others, this afternoon, by teaching your children in the class. You can say, "God has given these souls to Christ, I am going to take them in Christ's name." Others of you who can do little yourselves, can this day assist by sending forth men of God to preach the gospel of Christ. Germany belongs not to the cloudy philosopher, but to Christ. Holland, Belgium, Russia, and Poland, belong not to their kings and czars, Christ is the King of kings, these lands belong to us. Go up; take them. Say not, "There are giants in the land," ye are strong enough to smite them. Say not, "Lutheranism and Popery are mighty." So they are, but he that is with you is mightier far. As Jonathan of old, with his armor, climbed up the steep place in the cleft of the rock and began to mow down his enemies, so, believer, alone or with your friend, as God has called you, climb up, for verily the possession is yours, and you may take it. All that the Church wants to-day is courage and devotion. Let but the Church know her rights and claim them, let her cease to assimilate herself to the sons of earth, let her cease from her accursed fornication with the state, and she shall become the pure, chaste bride of Christ. Let her, then, as Christ's queen, claim the earth as hers, and send her heralds forth from sea to sea to bid all men bow before him, and confess him to be their King. God's power will be with her heralds, God's might shall be with her armies, and the earth shall soon submit, and Christ shall reign for ever and ever. "Say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Say it, Christians, say it this morning; say it by your prayer, your deeds, your constant energy, say it by your benefactions, demand the earth for Christ, demand it for yourselves, for ye are "joint heirs with Christ." I pray you take the possession now.

Poor prodigal sinner, may our Father bring thee home, for there is an inheritance even for thee. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved."

## The Broken Column

A Sermon

(No. 403)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August the 4th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee: but”—Luke 9:61.

WHEN YOU have walked through a cemetery, you have frequently seen over a grave a broken column, intended to memorialize the death of some one who was taken away in the prime of manhood, before as yet his life had come to its climax. I shall take that picture of the broken column to represent my text. It is a broken text. You expected me to go on and to conclude the sentence: I have broken it off abruptly. That broken column shall also represent the broken resolutions of full many who were once in a hopeful state. As if prepared to witness a good profession, they said, “Lord, I will follow thee,” when there came a heavy blow from the withering hand of sin; and the column was broken short with a “but.” So let my text stand. I will not finish it. But so let not your determination stand. The Lord grant by his effectual grace that while you mourn with sincere grief the grave of many a fair resolve which never attained the maturity of true discipleship—cut off with the fatal “*but*” of indecision, you may now be quickened to newness of life. Thus you shall come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ. Thus, as a building fitly framed together and growing to completeness, you shall be made meet for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

“Lord, I will follow thee: but—.” How remarkably does Scripture prove to us that the mental characteristics of mankind are the same now as in the Saviour’s day! We occasionally hear stories of old skeletons being dug up which are greater in stature than men of these times. Some credit the story, some do not, for there be many who maintain that the physical conformation of man is at this day just what it always was. Certainly, however, there can be no dispute whatever among observant men as to the identity of the inner nature of man. The gospel of Christ may well be an unchanging gospel, for it is a remedy which has to deal with an unaltering disease. The very same objections which were made to Christ in the days of his flesh are made to his gospel now. The same effects are produced under the ministry of Christ’s servants in these modern times as were produced by his own ministry. Still are the promised hopes which make glad the preacher’s heart, blasted and withered by the same blights and the same mildews which of old withered and blasted the prospects of the ministry during our Lord’s own personal sojourn in the world. Oh! what hundreds, nay, what myriads of persons have we whose consciences are aroused, whose judgments are a little enlightened, and yet they vacillate—they live and die unchanged. Like Reuben, “unstable as water, they do not excel.” They would follow Christ, *but* something lies in the way: they would join with him in this generation, *but* some difficulty suggests itself: they would enter the kingdom of heaven, *but* there is a lion in the street. They lie in the bed of the sluggard instead of rising up with vigor and striving to enter in at the strait gate. May the Holy Ghost in all the plenitude of his power be with us this morning, so that while I shall deal with the character indicated by the text, He may deal with the conscience of those assembled. I can merely attempt what He can effectually perform. I can but speak the words; it is for Him to draw the bow, fit the arrow to the string, and send it



home between the joints of the harness. May some who have been in the state of those described by the text be brought to-day to solemn consideration, and to a serious decision through the Holy Spirit of God.

Three things we would labor to do. First of all, let us endeavor to *expose your excuses*, “Lord, I will follow thee, but—.” Secondly, I will try to *expose the ignorance which lies at the bottom of the objection which you offer*. Then, thirdly, in the most solemn manner, would I endeavor to bring before your mind’s eye, O ye who vacillate like Felix, *your sin and your danger*, that your “*buts*” may now be put away—that your profession may be made with unfaltering tongue—that you may henceforth, in very deed, follow Christ whithersoever he goeth.

#### I. First, then, TO EXPOSE YOUR OBJECTIONS.

I cannot tell man by man, what may be the precise let that causes you to draw back, but perhaps, by giving a list, I may be directed to describe full many a case exactly, and with precision. Some there be who say, and seem very sincere in the utterance, “Lord, I would be a Christian, I would believe in thee, and take up thy cross and follow thee, but *my calling prevents it*. Such is my state of life that piety would be to me an impossibility. I must live, and I cannot live by godliness, therefore I am to be excused for the present from following Christ. My position is such in trade, that I am compelled by its practices to do many things which would be utterly inconsistent with the life of Christ in my soul. I know that I have been called to be where I am, but it is a position which renders my salvation hopeless; if I were anything but what I am, or anywhere but where I am, I might follow Christ, but under existing circumstances, it is far beyond my power.” Let me answer that excuse of yours, and show how idle it is. Man! would you make God the author of sin? And yet if you are prepared to say that God has put you in the calling where you are, and that that calling absolutely necessitates sin, do you not perceive that you make the sin to be rather God’s than yours? Are you prepared to be so blasphemous as that? Will you bring the tricks of your trade, your dishonesties, and your sins, and say, “Great God, thou hast compelled me to do this?” “Oh! methinks you cannot have so hardened your brow until it has become like flint. Surely you have some conscience of rectitude left, and if you have, your conscience will respond to me when I say you know you are speaking that which is false. God has not put you where you are compelled to sin, and if you have put yourself there, what ought you to do but to leave that place at once. Surely the necessity to sin, if it arise from your own choice, doth but render your sin the more exceeding sinful. “But,” you reply, “I will confess, then, that I have put myself there by choice.” Then I say again, if you have chosen so ill a trade that you cannot live by it honestly, in the fear of God, and in obedience to his precepts, you have made an ill and wicked choice; at all hazards—for the salvation of your soul rests on it—give it up, though it be the renouncing of every worldly prospect. Though wealth be all but in your grasp, unless you would grasp damnation and inherit everlasting wrath, you must renounce it, and renounce it now. Scarcely, however, can I credit that such is the fact, for in all callings, except they be in themselves positively unlawful, a man may serve God. Perhaps the most difficult post for a Christian to occupy is the army, and yet have we not seen,—and do we not see at this day—men of high and exemplary piety, men of undoubted and pre-eminent godliness, who are still in the ranks and are soldiers of Christ? With the example of Colonel Gardner in years gone by, of Hedley Vicars, and Havelock in these modern times, I will not, I dare not take your excuse, nor do I think your conscience would permit it, but if, while the temptations are strong, and your strength is small, you really think that there you cannot serve God, then resign your commission, give it up; it were better for you to enter into life poor and penniless, and without fame

or honor, than having glory, and pomp, and wealth, to enter into hell fire. After all, to come nearer to the point, is it your occupation at all? Is it true? Is it not your sin that has made your “but,” and not your calling? Be honest with yourself, sir, I pray you. You say that your calling throws temptations in your way: be it so? Do not other men avoid the temptations, and because they hate sin, being taught of God the Holy Spirit, are they not able, even in the midst of temptation, to keep themselves unspotted from the world? It is, then, in your case not necessity, but wilfulness, that makes you continue impious and impenitent. Put the saddle on the right horse; put it not where it should not be, take it home to yourself. There is no objection in the calling, unless, again I repeat it, it be an objectionable calling; the root and real cause of your hardness of heart against Christ is in yourself and yourself alone. You are willingly in love with sin, it is not in your calling in providence.

“Yes, but,” saith another, “if it be not in our calling, yet in my case it is my peculiar position in providence. It is all very well for the minister, who has not to mingle with daily life, but can come up into his pulpit and pray and preach, to make little excuse for men; but I tell you, sir, if you knew how I was situated, you would say that I am quite excusable in postponing the thoughts of God and of eternity. You do not know what it is to have an ungodly husband, or to live in a family where you cannot carry out your convictions without meeting with persecution so ferocious and so incessant, that flesh; and blood cannot endure it.” “Besides,” says another, “I am just now in such a peculiar crisis, it may be I have got into it by my sin, but I feel I cannot get out of it without sin. If I were once out of it, and could start again, and stand upon a new footing, then I might follow Christ, but at the present time there are such things in the house where I live, such circumstances in my business, there are such peculiar trials in my family, that I think I am justified in saying, ‘Go thy way this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee.’” Ah! but, my friend, is this the truth? Let me put it to you in other words than you have stated it. You say, if you follow Christ you will be persecuted. And does not the Word of God tell you the same? And is it not expressly said, “He that taketh not up his cross and followeth not after me cannot be my disciple?” Did not the apostle say, “He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution?” What! is nature to be changed for you? Must the apostles and the martyrs endure and suffer great things, and are the little trials that you have to bear to be valid excuses for you? No, by that host who waded through slaughter to a throne—the slaughter of themselves,—no, by the men who wear the crowns which they have won on racks and stakes I pray you do not think that this shall be any excuse for you at God’s great day. Or if you think that it be an excuse that is valid for you now, remember, if you reject Christ you reject the crown. If you cannot bear the reproach of Christ, neither shall you have Christ’s riches. If you will not suffer with him, neither shall you reign with him. You say that your circumstances compel you to sin, or else you would get into a world of trouble. And what do you mean by this, but that you prefer your own case to the Master’s service? You have made this your God. Your own emoluments, your own aggrandizement, your own rest and luxury, you have set these up in preference to the command of the God that made you. O sir, do but see the thing in its true light! You have put yourself where the Israelites put the golden calf, and you have bowed down and you have said, “These be thy gods, O Israel!” To these you have offered your peace offerings. Oh, be not deceived! “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “He that would save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for Christ’s sake shall save it.” Away, then, with these excuses about your circumstances; it is an idle one, and will not endure the light of the day of judgment.

“Yes,” says another, “I would follow Christ; I have often felt inclinations to do so; and I have had some longings after better things: but the way of Christ is too rough for me. It demands that I should give up pleasures which I really love. I know if I should promise to give them up, I should go back to them very soon. I have tried, but they are too much for me. I did not think at one time that I was so thoroughly chained to them. But, when I tried to break away, I found the chains were not as I thought they were—of silk, but of iron, of triple steel. I cannot, sir, I tell you plainly, I cannot. If to be saved requires me to give up my worldly amusements, I cannot do it.” Well, sir, I reply, you have spoken with the candour of an honest man. But, will you please to understand the bargain a little more clearly. Remember, soul, when you say, “I cannot give up the world” you have said, “I cannot be saved, I cannot escape from hell, I cannot be a partaker of the glories of heaven.” You have preferred the dance to the entertainment of glory; you have preferred the revelling merriments at midnight to the eternal splendours of the throne of God. You have in cool blood—now mark it, you have in cool blood, determined to sell your soul for a few hours of giddiness, a little season of mirth. Look it in the face, and God help you to understand what you have done. If Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, what have you done? Lift up your eyes to heaven, behold the golden harps, and listen to the harmony of the glorious song, and then say, “But I prefer thy music, O earth, to this.” Look yonder to the golden streets, and the joy and the bliss which await the true believer, and then coolly write it down, and say, “I have chosen the casino, I have preferred the house of sin to this.” Look up and behold the draughts of joy that await believers, and then go to the tavern and sit down in the tap room, and say, “I have preferred the enjoyments of intoxication to the mirth of eternity.” Come, I say sir, do look it in the face, for this is what you have done, and if, after weighing the two things in the scales together, you find that the momentary enjoyments of the flesh are to be preferred to the eternal weight of glory which God hath reserved for them that love him, then choose them. But if it be nothing in comparison with eternity; if the flesh be but dross in comparison with the spirit, if this world be emptiness when compared with the world to come, then reverse your foolish decision. May God the Holy Ghost make you wise. The only wise God choose your inheritance for you.

“Oh,” says another, “but it is not exactly my pleasures; for I have found no pleasure in sin. It is some time since iniquity ministered pleasure to me; I have drunk the top of the cup. The froth I have already daintily sipped, but now I have come to the dregs.”—I know I am speaking to some men to-day, in this very state.—“I have jaded myself,” says such-an-one “in the race of pleasure; I have exhausted my powers of enjoyment, and yet though the wine yields no lusciousness to my taste, I drink, for I cannot help it; and though lust affords me no longer any exquisite delight, still impelled as by some secret force, I am driven to it. From old habit it has become a second nature with me, and I cannot, I have tried, I have tried awfully and solemnly, I cannot—I cannot break it off. I am like a man whose boat is taken up by the rapids. I have pulled against the stream with both my arms, till the veins start like whip-cords to my brow, and the blood starts from my nose in agony of vigor, and yet I cannot reverse the stream; nor can I set my boat’s head against it. I can see the precipice; I can hear the roaring of the dashing water as it leaps the cascade, and I am speeding on swifter, and swifter, and swifter, till my very blood boils with the tremendous vehemence of my crimes; I am speeding onward to my merited damnation.”

Ah, man! yours is a solemn “BUT” indeed. If I thought you meant it all, I would rather speak to you words of encouragement than of warning. For remember this, when you are ready to perish God is ready to save. And when our power is gone, then the plaintive cry, “Lord, save, or I perish,”

wrung from a despairing heart, shall reach the ears of the Most High, and he that delighteth in mercy shall stretch out his arm to save. There is hope, there in hope for thee yet. What! is the boat's bow already out of the water, and does she seem to leap like a live thing into the midst of the spray? O Eternal God, thou canst save him yet. Thou canst come from above, and take him out of the deep waters, and pluck him out of the billows that are stronger than he. Yet say now, is this just as you have described it? I fear lest perhaps you make "cannot" only a substitute for "will not." Do you not love those ways of the transgressor? Can you honestly say you loathe them? I do not believe you can. Remember the dreadful alternative. When you say I cannot renounce these things, and will not look to God to enable you to do it; you have said, "I cannot escape from the flames of hell; I cannot be rescued from the wrath to come; I am damned." You have, in fact, forestalled your own doom. That awful sentence you have pronounced upon yourself. You have sat in judgment on your own soul, put on the black cap, and read out your own sentence; you have put yourself upon the death-cart; you have adjusted the rope about your own neck, and you are about to draw the bolt and be your own executioner. Oh! weigh your words, and measure your acts, and wake up to a consciousness of what you are about. Do not take the leap in the dark. Look down the chasm first, and gaze a moment at the jagged rocks beneath which soon you must lie a mangled corpse. Now, ere you drink the cup, know the poison that is in the button of it; make sure of what you are doing, and if you are determined that you will clasp your sins with the spasmodic and terrific grasp of a dying, drowning man. Then grasp thy sins and lose thy soul; then keep thy sins, and be thou damned! Hold fast to thine iniquities, and be dashed for ever from the presence of the Eternal One. If it be horrible to hear, how much more horrible to do. If it be dreadful to speak, how much more solemn to perform in cold blood that which our lips have spoken. "But," saith another, "that is not my case. I can say I will follow Christ, but I am of such a volatile, changeable disposition that I do not think I ever shall fulfill my purpose. When I heard you preach a few sabbaths ago, sir, I went home to my chamber, and I shut the door and I prayed. But, you know, some acquaintance called in; he took me away, and soon every good thought was gone. Often have I sat shivering in the pew while the Word of God has been quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of my joints and marrow, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heart, but the world comes in again; so that I seem sometimes as if I were almost a saint, and then again, the next day I am almost a fiend. Sometimes I think I could do anything for Christ, and the next day I do everything for the world. I promise but I do not perform; I vow and break my vows; I am like the smoke from the chimney—soon blown away and my good resolutions are like a morning cloud, they are there but for the morning, and soon they are gone." Well, certainly you have described a case which is too frequent. But will you allow me to put that also in a true and scriptural light? Soul, dost thou know thou hast played with heaven? Thou hast made game of eternity, thou art like those men in the parable of whom it is said "they made light of it." Thou hast thought that the things of this world are more engrossing, to thee than the things of the world to come. Thou art perhaps less excusable than any other, for thou knowest the right and doest it not, thou seest thy sin, and yet thou clingest to it; thou perceivest thy ruin, and yet thou goest onwards towards it; thou hast had woings of love, thou hast had warnings of mercy, and yet thou hast shaken all these off. Oh remember that text, "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." "Because I have called," saith God, "and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." You may

perhaps soon be given up to a seared conscience. The Word may be powerless upon you. You may become hardened and desperate, and then, ah! then, not the devils in hell are in a more hopeless condition than thou shalt be.

I have thus gone through the most prominent excuses which men make for scattering from themselves those good thoughts which sometimes seek to get possession of their hearts. "I will follow thee Lord, but—" I cannot of course point out the distinct persons in this large assembly who are in this condition. That there are such is certain. I pray God the Holy Spirit to find them out, and make them judge themselves that they be not judged.

II. I shall now come to the second part of my discourse. May the Lord be our helper. Soul, thou who sayest, "I will follow Christ, but—" I now come to EXPOSE THINE IGNORANCE AND THE ILL STATE OF THY HEART.

Soul! thou hast as yet no true idea of what sin is. God the Holy Spirit has never opened thine eyes to see what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, or else there would be no "buts." Picture a man who has lost his way, who has sunk into a slough; the waters and the mire are come up to his very throat. He is about to sink in it, when some bright spirit comes, stepping over the treacherous bog, and puts forth to him his hand. That man, if he knows where he is, if he knows his uncomfortable and desperate state, will put out his hand at once. You will not find him hesitating with "buts," and "of," and "peradventures." He feels that he is plunged into the ditch, and would come out of it. And *you* apparently are still in the wilderness of your natural state. You have not yet discovered what a fool might see, though a wayfaring man, that sin is a tremendous evil, that thy sin is all destructive, and will yet swallow thee up quick and utterly destroy thy soul. I know that when God the Holy Spirit tell me to see the blackness of sin, I did not need any very great pressing to be willing to be washed. My only question was, "Would Christ wash me?" Ask any poor penitent sinner that knows what the burden of sin is, whether he will have it taken off his shoulders, and he will not say, "I would have it taken off; but—" No, he will need but the very mention of the removal of his load; "Lord," saith he, "do but take it away from me: do but take it away, and I am well content."

Again: soul, it seems plain to me that thou hast never yet been taught by the Holy Spirit what is thy state of condemnation. Thou hast never yet learnt that the wrath of God abideth on thee. So long as thou art out of Christ, thou art under a curse. If that word "*condemnation*" had once been rung in thine ears, thou wouldst have no *ifs* and *buts*. When a man's house is on fire, and he stands at the window, and the fire escape is there and his hair begins to be crisp with the hot tongues of fire that scorch his cheeks, he has no "buts" about it, but down the escape he goes at once. When Lot began to see the fiery shower coming down from heaven, he had no "buts" about making the best of his way out of the city and escaping to the mountains. And you, O may God the Holy Ghost show to you, sinner, where you are to-day! Oh that he would make you know that your sentence is pronounced, that God's messengers are out after you to take you to prison. Then you will leave off your "buts," your presences, and excuses, and you will say, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? "And be it what it may, your soul will make no demurs about it.

Surely, methinks you cannot have felt the danger you are in of daily destruction. If you have not felt that, I do not think the Spirit of God has ever come into your soul after a real and saving fashion. You have no proof that you are one of Christ unless you have felt the danger of your natural state. Do you see there?—there is a scaffold raised; a man is brought out to execution,—there is the block and here stands the headsman with his sharp gleaming axe, gleaming in the morning sun.

The man has just laid his neck upon the block in the little hollow place shaped out for it; there he lies, and the headsman has just lifted up the axe to cleave his head from his body. As that man lies there, if a messenger should come from the king and say, "Here is a pardon, will you accept it?" do you believe he would say, "I will accept it, *but*—? No, springing up from what he thought would be his last resting place, he would say, "I thank his majesty for his abundant grace, and cheerfully do I rejoice in accepting it." You cannot have known where you are, or else "but" would be impossible to you. Such is your state, remember, whether you know it or not: you put your neck upon the block of insensibility, but the axe of justice is ready to smite you down to hell. The Lord help you to see your state and put the "buts" away from you.

It seems to me, too, that you are ignorant altogether of what the wrath of God must be in the world to come. Oh! could I take you to that place where hope has ever been a stranger: if you could put your ear a moment to the gratings of those gloomy dungeons of which despair is the horrid warder—if I could make you listen to the sighs, the useless regrets, and the vain prayers of those who are cast away, you would come back affrighted and alarmed, and sure I am your "buts" would have been driven out of you. You would say, "Great God, if thou wilt but save me from thy wrath, do what thou wilt with me, I will make no conditions, I will offer thee no objections; if I must cut off my right arm, or pluck out my right eye, he it so, if from this place of woe thou wilt but save me. Oh! from this fire that never can be quenched, from this worm of endless folds which can never die, great God deliver me. If rough be the means, and unpleasant to the flesh, yet grant me but this one request,—save me, O God, save me from going down into the pit. "If a soul were just sinking to hell, and God could send some bright angel to pluck it from the flames just as it entered there, can you imagine its being so mad as to say, "I would be plucked as a brand from the burning, but—?" No, no. Glad to embrace the messenger of mercy, it would rejoice to fly from hell to heaven.

Again, sinner, it seems clear to me, inasmuch as you say, "but," that you can have no idea of the glory of the person of Christ. I see you sitting down in your misery, in the bare uncomfortable cottage of your natural estate: yourself naked and filthy, with your hair matted over your eyes. Behold a bright chariot stays at your door, the sound of music is heard, and the King himself, stepping down from the chariot of his glory comes in, and he says, "Sinner, poor, hopeless, weak, miserable, look unto me and be thou saved. The chariot of my mercy awaits thee, come thou with me, my chariot is paved with love for such as thou art. Come with me, and I will bear thee to my splendours away from thy degradation and thy woe." You sit there and you will not look at him, for if you did look, you must love him. You could not behold his face, you could not see the mercy that is written there, the pity that trembles in his eye, the power that is in his arm, but you would say at once, "Jesu, thou hast overcome my heart, thy gracious beauty is more than a match for me.

"Dissolv'd by thy goodness I fall to the ground,  
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

What shall I say more? Yet this once again I will admonish thee. O thou procrastinating, objecting sinner, thou hast never known what heaven is, or else thou wouldst never have a "but." If you and I could peep but for an instant within the pearly gates; could you listen to that seraphic song; could you behold the joy which flows and overflows the bosoms of the blessed; could you but spell heaven, not in letters but in feelings; could you wear its crown a moment, or be girt about with its pure white garments, you would say, "If I must go through hell to reach heaven, I would cheerfully do it. What are ye, riches? ye are bubbles. What are ye, pomps? ye are drivelling emptinesses. What are ye, pleasures? ye are mocking, painted witcheries. What are ye, pains? ye are joys. What all be

ye, sorrows? ye are but bliss. What are ye, tribulations? ye are lighter than feathers when I compare ye with this exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If we could have but a glimpse of heaven, but a shadow of an idea of what is the eternal rest of God's people, we should be prepared to endure all things, to give up all things, to bear all things, if we might but be partakers of the promised reward. Your "buts" betray your ignorance; your ignorance of self, ignorance of sin, ignorance of condemnation, ignorance of the punishment, ignorance of the Saviour's person, and ignorance of the heaven to which he promises to bring his people.

III. Now, I have my last work to do, and that would I do briefly. Oh, may strength superior to mine come now, and tug, and strive, and wrestle with your hearts! May the Spirit of God apply the words which I shall now use! "Lord, I will follow thee: but—" Sinner, sinner, let me SHOW THEE THY SIN. When thou saidst, "But," thou didst contradict thyself. The meaning of that rightly read is this, "Lord, I will *not* follow thee." That "but" of thine puts the negative on all the profession that went before it. I wish, my hearers, that this morning you would either be led by grace to say, "I will believe," or else were permitted honestly to see the depravity and desperate hardness of your own hearts so as to say, "I will not believe in Christ." "It is because so many of you are neither this nor that, but halting between two opinions, that you are the hardest characters to deal with. Sinners who reject Christ altogether wilfully are like flints. When the hammer of the Word comes against them, the flint gives forth the precious spark, and flies to atoms. But you are like a mass of wax moulded one day into one shape, and moulded the next day into another. I know a gentleman of considerable position in the world, who, after having been with me some little time, said, "Now that man is going away, and I shall be just what I was before;" for he had wept under the Word. He compared himself, he said, to a gutta-percha doll; he had got out of his old shape for a little while, but he would go back to what he was before. And how many there are of you of this kind. You will not say, "I will not have Christ," you will not say, "I will not think of these things." You dare not say, "I disbelieve the Bible," or, "I think there is no God, and no hereafter," but you say, "No doubt it is true, I'll think of it by-and-bye." You never will, sinner, you never will, you will go on from day to day, harping that till your last day shall come, and you will be found then where you are now, unless sovereign grace prevent. I could have more hope for you if you would say at once, "I love not God, I love not Christ, I fear him not, I desire not his salvation," for then methinks you would get an idea of what you are, and God the Spirit might bless it to you. Let me show you again your sin in another respect. How great has been your pride! When Christ bids you believe on him, take up his cross and follow him, he tells you to do the best thing you can do, and then you set up your judgment in contradiction to him. You say, "But." What! is Christ to mend his gospel by your whims? What! is the plan of salvation to be cut and shaped to suit you? Does not Christ know what is best for you, better than you do yourself? "Will you snatch from his hand the balance and the rod, rejudge his judgement, dictate to God, the Judge of all the earth? And yet this is what you attempt to do. You set up your throne in rivalry to the throne of grace, and insist upon it that there is more wisdom in being a sinner than in being a believer, that there is more happiness to be found apart from God than there is with him, which is to make God a hard Master, if not indeed to call him a liar to his face. Oh! you know not what is the quintessence of iniquity which lies within those words so easily spoken, but which will be so hard to get rid of on a dying bed—"I will follow thee, but—"

I close when I have just, in a moment or so only, described your danger. Soul, thou art quieting thyself and saying, "Ah! it will be well with me at the last; for I intend to be better by-and-bye."

Soul, soul, bethink thee how many have died while they have been speaking like that. There were put into the grave, during the past week, hundreds of persons, no doubt, who were utterly careless, but there were also scores who were not careless, and who had often been impressed, and yet they said "But, but, but," and promised better things, but death came in and their better things came not. And then, remember how many have been damned while they have been saying "But." They said they would repent, meanwhile they died. They said they would believe, meanwhile in hell they lifted up their eyes being in torments. They meant they said, but inasmuch as they did it not they came where their resolutions would be changed into remorse, and their fancied hopes turned into real despair. On such a subject as this I could wish Baxter were the preacher, and that I were the hearer. As I look around you, though there be full many who can read their title clear to mansions in the skies, yet along these pews what a considerable proportion there is of my hearers who are only deceiving their own selves! Well, sinners, I will make the road to hell as hard for you as I can. If you will be lost, I will put up many a chain and many a bar, and shut many a gate across your way. If you will listen to my voice, God helping me, you shall find it a hard way—that way of transgressors; you shall find it a hard thing to run counter to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. But why will ye die, O house of Israel, why will ye die? Where is your reason fled? Have beasts become men and men become beasts? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but ye know not. What! are you become like the silly sheep that goes willingly to his slaughter? Are the swallows and cranes more wise than you? for they know the senses and they judge the times, but you know not that your summer is almost over, that your leaves are falling in the autumn of your life, and that your dreary winter of despair and of hopelessness is drawing nigh. Souls, are these things fancies? If so, sleep while I preach of them. Are they dreams? Do I bring out these doctrines but as bugbears to alarm you as if you were some children in a nursery? No, but as God is true, are not these the most solemn realities that ever rested on the lip of man or moved the heart of hearer? Then why is it, why is it, why is it that you make light of these things still? Why is it that you will go your way to-day as you did before? Why will ye say, "Well, the preacher has warned me faithfully, and I will think of it, but—; I was invited and I will consider, but—; I did hear the warning, but—?" Ah, souls, while you shall be saying "But," there shall be another "But" go forth, and that shall be "But cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" Wake, vengeance, wake! The sinner sleeps. Pluck out thy sword, O Justice! let it not rest in its scabbard, come forth! Nay, nay, oh! come not forth devouring sword! oh, come not forth! O Justice, be thou still! O Vengeance, put away thy sword, and Mercy, reign thou still! "Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation," but if ye harden your hearts, remember he will swear in his wrath that ye shall not enter into his rest. Oh! Spirit of God, do thou the sinner turn, for without thee he will not turn; our voice shall miss its end, and he will not come to Christ.



## Intercessory Prayer

A Sermon

(No. 404)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August the 11th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.”—Job 42:10.

THE LORD turned the captivity of Job.” So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the profoundest depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown for ever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness for ever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath his wings,—“The Lord turned again the captivity of Job.” Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten his end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan’s challenge, had stretched forth his hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh, and yet the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease. The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job’s faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew uprightly. The fire had been fierce enough, the gold was undiminished, and only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was his own glory. And God was glorified abundantly. Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had gotten unto himself eternal renown through that grace by which he supported his poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others, which may have been in Job’s temper had been at last removed, and any self-justification which once had lurked within, was fairly driven out. Now God’s gracious designs are answered, he removed the rod from his servant’s back, and takes the melted silver from the midst of the glowing coals. God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nought, and he shows this by the fact that he never afflicts them longer than there is a need for it, and never suffers them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the purposes of his wisdom and of his love. “The Lord turned again the captivity of Job.” Beloved brother in Christ, thou hast had a long captivity in affliction. God hath sold thee into the hand of thine adversaries, and thou hast wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging thy harp upon the willows. Despair not! He that turned the captivity of Job can turn thine as the streams in the south. He shall make again thy vineyard to blossom, and thy field to yield her fruit. Thou shalt again come forth with those that make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on thy lip. Let not Despair rivet his cruel fetters about thy soul. Hope yet, for there is hope. Trust thou still, for there is ground of confidence. He shall bring thee up again rejoicing from the land of thy captivity, and thou shalt say of him, “He hath turned my mourning into dancing.”

The circumstance which attended Job’s restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. “The Lord turned again the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.” Intercessory

prayer was the omen of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within. Brethren, it is not fetching a laborious compass, when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job, and pray for our friends, and peradventure if we have been in trouble, our captivity shall be turned.

Four things I would speak of this morning, and yet but one thing; I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus—first, *by way of commending the exercise*; secondly, *by way of encouraging you to enlist in it*; thirdly, *by way of suggestion, as to the persons for whom you should especially pray*; and fourthly, *by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercession for others*.

I. First, then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you that intercessory prayer has been *practiced by all the best of God's saints*. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint's name, but beyond a doubt, there has never been a man eminent for piety personally, who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others, and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" With what importunity did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with him again and again for Sodom; how frequently did he reduce the number, as though, to use the expression of the Puritan, "He were bidding and beating down the price at the market." "Peradventure there be fifty; peradventure there lack five of the fifty; peradventure there be twenty found there; peradventure there be ten righteous found there: wilt thou not spare the city for the sake of ten?" Well did he wrestle, and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city. Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned; how often did he intercede! How frequently do you meet with such a record as this—"Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God!" Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal disadvantage to intercede, and yet when God had said, "Let me alone, I will make of thee a great nation," yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of justice, and cried, "Spare them, Lord, and if not," (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) "blot my name out of the Book of Life." Never was there a mightier prophet than Moses, and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer. Or pass on, if you will, to the days of Samuel. Remember his words, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you." Or bethink you of Solomon, and of his earnest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands he prayed for the assembled people; or if you want another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib's letter spread out before the Lord, when he prayed not only for himself, but for God's people of Israel in those times of straits. Think ye, too, of Elias, who for Israel's sake would bring down the rain that the land perish not; as for himself, miracles gave him his bread and his water, it was for others that he prayed, and said to his servant, "Go again seven times." Forget not Jeremy, whose tears were prayers—prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lip. He wept himself away, his life was one long shower, each drop a prayer, and the whole deluge a flood of intercession. And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and his apostles, remember how Peter prays on the top of the house, and Stephen amidst the falling stones.

Or think you, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said, that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, “making mention of you daily in my prayers,” stopping in the very midst of the epistle and saying, “For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion that there is not a single child of God who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the church at large, and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others.

But further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that *Christ in His holy gospel has made it your duty and your privilege* to intercede for others. When he taught us to pray, he said, “Our Father,” and the expressions which follow are not in the singular but in the plural—“Give *us* this day *our* daily bread.” “Forgive *us our* debts”; “Lead *us* not into temptation”; evidently intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone, that while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Saviour’s own—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”; yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers, though offered in private; and even in secret we should not forget the church of the living God. By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Ghost exhort us to pray for ministers! “Brethren,” says Paul, “pray for us”; and then after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, “And for us also that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak.” While James, who is ever a practical apostle, bids us pray for one another; in that same verse, where he says, “Confess your sins the one to the other,” he says, “and pray one for another,” and adds the privilege “that ye may be healed,” as if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer; we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.

But, brethren, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of *the high example of your Master*; he is your pattern; follow ye his leadership. Was there even one who interceded as he did? Remember that golden prayer of his, where he cried for his own people, “Father, keep them, keep them from the evil!” Oh what a prayer was that! He seems to have thought of all their wants, of all their needs, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, he pours out his heart before his Father’s throne. Bethink you how, even in the agonies of his crucifixion, he did not forget that he was still an intercessor for man. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Oh, remember, brethren, it is your Saviour’s example to you today, for there before the throne, with outstretched hands, he prays not for himself, for he has attained his glory; not for himself, for he rests from his labours, and has received his everlasting recompense; but for you, for the purchase of his blood, for as many as are called by his grace, yea, and for those who shall believe on him through our word—

“For all that come to God by him,  
Salvation he demands;  
Points to the wounds upon his heart,  
And spreads his bleeding hands.”

Come, brethren, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others.

But I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was his will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ's practice to intercede, yet *the very spirit of our holy religion* would constrain us to plead for others. Dost thou go up into thy closet, and in the face and presence of God think of none but thyself? Surely the love of Christ cannot be in thee, for the spirit of Christ is not selfish. No man liveth unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if *they* hear the Word, if *they* be saved, if *they* get to heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, thou shalt not get there! It would need another heaven for thee, for the heaven of Christ is the heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the large-hearted, the bliss of living spirits, the heaven of those who, like Christ, are willing to become poor that others may be rich. I cannot believe—it were a libel upon the cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which he taught—if I could ever believe that the man whose prayers are selfish has anything of the spirit of Christ within him. Brethren, I commend intercessory prayer, because it opens man's soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, constrains him to feel that he is not everybody, and that this wide world and this great universe were not after all made that he might be its petty lord, that everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet. It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not uplifted alone for him, for its far-reaching arms were meant to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race. Thou lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make another man of thee, a man more like the Son of Man, and less like Nabal the churl. But again; I commend the blessed privilege of intercession, because of its sweet brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard, and harsh, and unlovely of spirit, but praying much for others will remind us we have, indeed, a relationship to the saints, that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us the one to the other than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbour enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him. If he hath done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy seat, and prayed over it, you must forgive. Surely you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God and then come forth to curse him in your own soul. When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother, it is generally the best way to say, "Let us pray before we enter into the matter." Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the brethren who contend, "Let us pray first," and it will often happen that through prayer the differences will soon be forgotten. They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the brethren rise from their knees they will say, "They are gone; we cannot contend now after having been one in heart before the throne of God." I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister, and his minister wisely said to him, "Well, don't talk to me in the street; come to my house, and let us hear it all." He went, and the minister said, "My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me; no doubt I have my imperfections as well as any other man, and I hope I shall never be above being told of them, but in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me let us kneel down and pray together." So our quarrelsome friend prayed first and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, "Now, my brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind; tell me what it is that you have to find fault with." The man blushed, and stammered, and stuttered, and said, he did not think there was anything at all, except in himself. "I have forgotten to pray for you, sir," said he, "and of course I cannot expect that God will feed

my soul through you when I neglect to mention you at the throne of grace." Ah, well, brethren, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren you will forgive their tempers, you will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words; but knowing that you also may be tempted, and are men of like passions with them, you will cover their faults, and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except it be this, that it seems to me that when God gives any man much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family. I would compare you who have near communion with God to courtiers in the king's palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage which you ought to use right diligently. I ask you to use it on my behalf. When it is well with you, then think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing; when thou hast the King's ear, speak to him for us. When thou art permitted to come very near to his throne, and he saith to thee, "Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt"; when thy faith is strong, thine eye clear, thine access near, thine interest sure, and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in thy heart—then take the petitions of thy poor brethren who stand outside at the gate and say, "My Lord, I have a poor brother, a poor child of thine, who has desired me to ask of thee this favour. Grant it unto me; it shall be a favour shown unto myself; grant it unto him, for he is one of thine. Do it for Jesus' sake!" Nay, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace, unless it prompts you to use your influence for others. Soul, if thou hast grace at all, and art not a mighty intercessor, that grace must be but as a grain of mustard-seed—a shrivelled, uncomely, puny thing. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a rich cargo of the wants of others up to the throne of God, and thou wouldst bring back for them rich blessings which but for thee they might not have obtained. If thou be like an angel with thy foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to heaven, if thou art ascending and descending, know that thou wilt ascend with others' prayers and descend with others' blessings, for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone. Thus much on commendation.

II. We turn to our second point, and endeavour to say something BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.

First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censer, there is not a single grain that is for himself. His work is done; his reward obtained. Now you do not doubt but that Christ's prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications. Very well, my brethren, the more like your prayer is to Christ's, the more sweet it will be; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness, they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of thy sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! Intercessory prayer has stayed plagues. It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt; it drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land; it scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoar; it removed the murrain, and the thunder, and the lightning; it stayed all the ravages which

God's avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases;—we know it did in the early church. We have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king's arm was withered, he said to the prophet, "Pray for me," and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead, for Elias stretched himself upon the child seven times, and the child sneezed, and the child's soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, recording angel, thou canst tell! Eternity, thou shalt reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do. Oh! believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it now with faith, and thou shalt surely prevail. But perhaps you have a doubt about interceding for some one who has fallen far into sin. Brethren, did ye ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have ye never heard by the farmer's fire some old-fashioned story of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet he was but in a trance and not dead? And have ye not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive? I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you that spiritually there has been many a man given up for dead that was still within reach of grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet even by Christian people, given up to damnation even by the ministers of Christ, consigned to perdition even by their own kinsfolk. But yet into perdition they did not come, but God found them, and took them out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon his living rock. Oh! give up nobody; still pray, lay none out for spiritually dead until they are lain out for dead naturally. But perhaps you say, "I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless." You will get strength, my brethren, by the exertion. But besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses. Now, brethren, if you sow seed you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest,—it is the vitality in the seed. And so in the prayer of faith. When you can plead a promise and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God and bring down blessings from on high. Job! thou comest from thy dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness;—thou comest from thy poverty and thy desertion to intercede for others, and so may we. Elias was a man of like passions—sweet word!—of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed, and so shalt thou; only do thou see to it that thou be not negligent in these exercises, but that thou pray much for others even as Job prayed for his friends.

Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen, more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach. Now, that I may have your attention yet once again—and a change of posture may do you all good—will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer and then I will go on again. It shall be this one:

"Pity the nations, O our God,  
 Constrain the earth to come;  
 Send thy victorious word abroad,  
 And bring the strangers home!"

*(The congregation here rose, and sung the verse.)*

III. The third head is A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY. It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. In the case of Job, he prayed for his *offending* friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of

him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and though there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure—for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps, there is no greater offence which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face, to suspect his motives, and to accuse him of self-seeking. And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun forgets the darkness that has hidden its glory, and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy seat, and pleads. He is accepted himself, and he begs that his friends may be accepted too. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God; it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness. Do not do that, however, in a threatening way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threatening, he should pray for me. It was a horrid threat, for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord. Do not do it in that sense, as though like a supercilious hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain glory; but do it when you are alone before God, and in secret; not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story out again, for that were abominable indeed; but that you may remove from your erring brother any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.

Again: be sure you take there your *controverting* friends. These brethren had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to controvert. Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, "Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out." I say, "No! let the two good men meet and pray the matter out." He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy seat, I should suspect is wrong. I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my brethren who do not see "Believers' baptism" may be made to see it. If they think it is wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right; but I have never heard them do that; I have never heard them pray to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling—I wish they would, if they believe it to be scriptural, and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test, the God that answereth by fire, let him be God, and whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand. Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion-room, or to the debating-club, but carry them before God, and let this be your cry, "Oh! Thou that teachest us to our profit, teach me if I be wrong, and teach my friend wherein *he* errs, and make him right."

This is the thing we ought also to do with *haughty* friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty—Oh! how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless they thought it very great condescension. Now, you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It will not make them humble for you to grumble about that. What if there be a Mrs. So-and-so who wears a very rustling dress, and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too! What if there be a brother who can afford to wear creaking boots, and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor! Tell your Father about it; that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a torpid liver, or a cataract in the eye; you would pity him. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride; go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it; it may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right. Pray him down, brother, pray him down; have duel with him, and have the choice of weapons

yourself, and let that be the weapon of all—prayer; and if he be proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of his own child and make him humble as he should be. But particularly let me ask you to pray most for those who are *disabled from praying* for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said he would not accept them if they did. He said he was angry with them, but as for Job, said he, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even of God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer; he must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And there are many poor Christians that cannot pray; doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence, and they are standing outside the gate with their petitions; they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, that are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith, and therefore they cannot prevail. Now, my dear brethren, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you, and when you have had your own hearing, then say, "But, my Lord, inasmuch as thou hast honoured me, and made me to eat of thy bread, and drink from thy cup, hear me for thy poor people who are just now denied the light of thy countenance." Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin and they cannot pray, pray for *them*; it is a blessed thing—that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith; which a saint may exert towards a sinner. "Lord, that sinner does not feel; help me to feel for him because he will not feel; Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ, he does not think that Christ can save him, but I know he can, and I will pray believingly for that sinner, and I will repent for him, and though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet it may come to pass that through me he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer."

IV. Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us thy strength now, that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience, and we may at once engage in this exercise! Brethren, I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case of your children, your church, your neighbourhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If *you* have, *I* have not. For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin; and while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.

I begin thus, by saying, Brethren, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you. I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God's Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you that were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants. Your mothers' liquid prayers fell hot upon your infant brows, and gave you what was a true *christening* while you were still but little ones. There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives' prayers; brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister's pleading; children who must confess that their sabbath-school teachers were wont to pray for them. Now, if by others' prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness, but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him may write himself down a hopeless character. During one of the revivals in America, a young man was going to see the minister, but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness.



A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done, and he said, "Well, I did not want to see him; I knew he had only come to mock and scoff; what should I see him for; you do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done the same." A day or two after there was a public meeting, where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued. A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse, and as he was riding along he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, "Where are you going today, William?" "Well, I am going to the meeting, and I hear that you have been converted." "I thank God I have been brought to a knowledge of the truth," he answered. "Oh!" said the other, "I shall never be; I wish I might." His friend was surprised to hear him whom the minister thought to be so hard say that, and he said, "But why cannot you be converted?" "Why?" said the other, "you know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K—." "Yes, so I was." "Ah," said the other, "there is nobody to pray for me; they have all given me up long ago." "Why," said his friend, "it is very singular, but Mr. K—, who prayed for me, has been praying for you too; we were together last night, and I heard him." The other threw himself back in his saddle, and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise. "Is that true?" said he. "Yes, it is." "Then blessed be God, there is hope for me now, and if he has prayed for me, that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself." And he did so, and that meeting witnessed him confessing his faith in Christ. Now, let no man of your acquaintance say that there is nobody to pray for him; but as you had somebody to plead for you, let poor souls of your acquaintance find in you a person to plead for them.

Then, again, permit me to say, how are you to prove your love to Christ or to his church if you refuse to pray for men? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If we do not love the brethren, we are still dead. I will aver no man loves the brethren who does not pray for them. What! It is the very least thing you can do, and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater. You do not love the brethren unless you pray for them, and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins. Let me ask you again how is it that you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, "Selfish wretch, thou art always knocking at my door, but it is always to cry for thine own welfare and never for another's; inasmuch as thou hast never asked for a blessing for one of the least of these my brethren, neither will I give a blessing to thee. Thou lovest not the saints, thou lovest not thy fellow men, how canst thou love me whom thou hast not seen, and how shall I love thee and give thee the blessing which thou askest at my hands?" Brethren, again I say I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests, but how priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world, even as Christ was sent into the world, but how sent unless they are sent to pray? Christians are meant not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, but how if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession, cast down, I pray you, the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense, renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out, make not a mock and sport of solemn things. And you must do so if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplications before the throne. O brethren, let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighbourhood! Let us carry "London" written on our breasts just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons

and your daughters! Men and brethren, let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty! Let us cry aloud and keep no silence, and give to the Lord no rest till he establish and make his Church a praise in the earth. Wake, ye watchmen upon Zion's walls, and renew your shouts! Wake, ye favourites of heaven, and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you, it is yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers. God hath put high up in the mountains of his promise springs of love, it is yours to bring them down by the divine channel of your intense supplications. Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your bowels of compassion and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, he should say in his wrath, "These are not my children. They have not my spirit. They are not partakers of my love, neither shall they enter into my rest." Why, there are some of you that have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it be at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayers are. It is, "Lord, take care of my family." You know how some farmers pray. "Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country. Lord, preserve the precious fruits of the field all round this neighbourhood. Never mind about their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up." And so there are some who make themselves special objects of supplication; and what care they for the perishing crowd. This is the drift of some men's wishes, "Lord, bless the Church, but don't send another minister into our neighbourhood lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send labourers into the vineyard, but do not send them into our corner lest they should take any of our glory from us." That is the kind of supplication. Let us have done with such. Let us be Christians; let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others. Let us weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice; and as a Church and as private persons, we shall find the Lord will turn our captivity when we pray for our friends. God help us to plead for others! And as for you that have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

## The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem

A Sermon

(No. 405)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August the 18th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”—Matthew. 21:5.

WE HAVE READ the chapter from which our text is taken; let me now rehearse the incident in your hearing. There was an expectation upon the popular mind of the Jewish people, that Messiah was about to come. They expected him to be a temporal prince, one who would make war upon the Romans and restore to the Jews their lost nationality. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ with a spiritual faith, nevertheless hoped that perhaps he might be to them a great temporal deliverer, and we read that on one or two occasions they would have taken him and made him a king, but that he hid himself. There was an anxious desire that somebody or other should lift the standard of rebellion and lead the people against their oppressors. Seeing the mighty things which Christ did, the wish was father to the thought, and they imagined that He might probably restore to Israel the kingdom and set them free. The Saviour at length saw that it was coming to a crisis. For him it must either be death for having disappointed popular expectation, or else he must yield to the wishes of the people, and be made a king. You know which he chose. He came to Save others, and not to be made a king himself in the sense in which they understood him. The Lord had worked a most remarkable miracle, he had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so novel and so astounding, that it became town talk. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany, it was only about two miles distant, to see Lazarus. The miracle was well authenticated, there were multitudes of witnesses, it was generally accepted as being one of the greatest marvels of the age, and they drew the inference from it that Christ must be the Messiah. The people determined that now they would make him a king, and that now he should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless overruled their enthusiasm that by it he might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of him in the prophets. You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried “Hosanna” cared about Christ as a spiritual prince. No, they thought that he was to be a temporal deliverer, and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken they hated him just as much as they had loved him, and “Crucify him, crucify him,” was as loud and vehement a cry as “Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Our Saviour thus availed himself of their mistaken enthusiasm for divers wise ends and purposes. It was needful that the prophecy should be fulfilled—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh unto thee, he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” It was needful again, that he should make a public claim to be the Son of David, and that he should claim to be the rightful inheritor of David’s throne,—this he did on this occasion. It was needful too, that he should leave his enemies without excuse. In order that they might not say, “If thou be the Messias, tell us plainly,” he did tell them plainly. This riding

through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of his royal rights as could possibly have been issued. I think, moreover,—and upon this I build the discourse of this morning,—I think that Christ used the popular fanaticism as an opportunity of preaching to us a living sermon, embodying great truths which are too apt to be forgotten because of their spiritual character, embodying them in the outward form and symbol of himself riding as a king, attended by hosts of followers. We come to this as the subject of our sermon. Let us what we can learn from it.

I. One of the first things we learn is this. *By thus through the streets in state, Jesus Christ claimed to be a king.* That claim had been to a great extent kept in the background until now, but ere he goes to his Father, when his enemies' rage has reached its utmost fury, and when his own hour of deepest humiliation has just arrived, he makes an open claim before the eyes of all men to be called and acknowledged a king. He summonses first his heralds. Two disciples come. He sends forth his mandate—"Go ye into the village over against you, and ye shall find an ass and a colt." He gathers together his courtiers. His twelve disciples, those who usually attended him, come around him. He mounts the ass which of old had been ridden by the Jewish lawgivers, the rulers of the people. He begins to ride through the streets and the multitudes clap their hands. It is reckoned by some that no fewer than three thousand people must have been present on the occasion, some going before some following after, and others standing on either side to see the show. He rides to his capital; the streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to him, like a king, he ascends to his palace. He was a spiritual king, and therefore he went not to the palace temporal but to the palace spiritual. He rides to the temple, and then, taking possession of it, he begins to teach in it as he had not done before. He had been sometimes in Solomon's porch, but he was oftener on the mountain's side than in the temple; but now, like a king, he takes possession of his palace, and there, sitting down on his prophetic throne, he teaches the people in his royal courts. Ye princes of the earth, give ear, there is one who claims to be numbered with you. It is Jesus, the Son of David, the King of the Jews. Room for him, ye emperors, room for him! Room for the man who was born in a manger! Room for the man whose disciples were fishermen! Room for him whose garment was that of a peasant, without seam, woven from the top throughout! He wears no crown except the crown of thorns, yet he is more royal than you. About his loins he wears no purple, yet he is more imperial far than you. Upon his feet there are no silver sandals bedight with pearls, yet he is more glorious than you. Room for him: room for him! Hosanna! Hosanna! Let him be proclaimed again a King! a King! a King! Let him value his place upon his throne, high above the kings of the earth. This is what he then did, he proclaimed himself a King.

II. Moreover, Christ by this act showed *what sort of a king he might have been if he had pleased, and what sort of a king he might be now, if he willed it.* Had it been our Lord's will, those multitudes who followed him in the streets would actually have crowned him there and then, and bowing the knee, they would have accepted him as the branch that sprung out of the dried root of Jesse—him that was to come—the ruler, the Shiloh among God's people. He had only to have said a word, and they would have rushed with him at their head to Pilate's palace, and taking him by surprise, with but few soldiers in the land, Pilate might soon have been his prisoner, and have been tried for his life. Before the indomitable valor and the tremendous fury of a Jewish army, Palestine might soon have been cleared of all the Roman legions, and have become again a royal land. Nay, we aver it, with his power of working miracles, with his might by which he drove the soldiers back, when he said, "I am he;" he might have cleared not only that land but every other, he might have marched

from country to country, and from kingdom to kingdom, till every royal city and every regal state would have yielded to his supremacy. He could have made those that dwelt in the isles of the sea to bow before him, and they that inhabit the wilderness could have been bidden to lick the dust. There was no reason, O ye kings of the earth, why Christ should not have been mightier than you. If his kingdom had been of this world, he might have founded a dynasty more lasting than yours, he might have gathered troops before whose might your legions would be melted like snow before the summer's sun, he might have dashed to pieces the Roman image, till, a broken mass, like a potter's vessel shivered by a rod of iron, it might have been dashed to shivers.

It is even so, my brethren. If it were Christ's will, he might make his saints, everyone of them, a prince, he might make his Church rich and powerful, he might lift up his religion if he chose, and make it the most magnificent and sumptuous. If it were his will, there is no reason why all the glory we read of in the Old Testament under Solomon, might not be given to the Church under David's greater Son. But he does not come to do it, and hence the impertinence of those who think that Christ is to be worshipped with a gorgeous architecture, with magnificent vestments, with proud processions, with the alliance of states with churches, with making the bishops of God magnificent lords and rulers, with lifting up the Church herself, and attempting to put upon her shoulders those garments that will never fit her, vestments that were never meant for her. If Christ cared for this world's glory, it might soon be at his feet. If he willed to take it, who should raise a tongue against his claim, or who should lift a finger against his might! But he cares not for it. Take your gewgaws elsewhere, take your tinsel hence, he wants it not. Remove your glory, and your pomp, and your splendor, he needs it not at your hands. His kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants fight, else were his ministers clothed in robes of scarlet, and his servants would sit among princes, he cares not for it. People of God, seek not after it. What your Master would not have, do not court yourselves. Oh! Church of Christ what thine husband disdained, do thou disdain also. He might have had it, but he would not. And he read to us the lesson, that if all these things might be the Church's, it were well for he to pass by and say, "These are not for me—I was not meant to shine in these borrowed plumes."

III. But thirdly, and here lies the pith of the matter, you have seen that Christ claimed to be a king; you have seen what kind of a king he might have been and would not be, but now *you see what kind of a king he is, and what kind of a king claimed to be*. What was his kingdom? What its nature? What was his royal authority? Who were to be his subjects? What his laws? What his government? Now you perceive at once from the passage taken as a whole, that Christ's kingdom is a very strange one, totally different from anything that ever has been seen or ever will be seen besides.

It is a kingdom, in the first place, *in which the disciples are the courtiers*. Our blessed Lord had no prince in waiting, no usher of the black rod, no gentlemen-at-arms who supplied the place of those grand officers? Why a few poor humble fishermen, who were his disciples. Learn, then, that if in Christ's kingdom you would be a peer you must be a disciple; to sit at his feet is the honor which he will give you. Hearing his words obeying his commands, receiving of his grace—this is true dignity, this is true magnificence. The poorest man that loves Christ, or the humblest woman who is willing to accept him as her teacher, becomes at once one of the nobility that wait upon Christ Jesus. What a kingdom is this which makes fishermen nobles, and peasants princes while they remain but fishermen and peasants still! This is the kingdom of which we speak, in which discipleship is the highest degree, in which divine service is the patent of nobility.

It is a kingdom, strange to say it, *in which the king's laws are none of them written upon paper.* The king's laws are not promulgated by mouth of herald, but are written upon the heart. Do you not perceive that in the narrative Christ bids his servants go and take his royal steed, such as it was, and this was the law, "Loose him and let him go?" but where was the law written? It was written upon the heart of that man to whom the ass and the foal belonged, for he immediately said, "Let them go" cheerfully and with great joy; he thought it a high honor to contribute to the royal state of this great King of peace. So, brethren, in the kingdom of Christ you shall see no huge law books, no attorneys, no solicitors, no barristers who have need to expound the law. The law-book is here in the heart, the barrister is here in the conscience, the law is written no more on parchment, no more promulgated and written, as the Roman decrees were, upon steel and brass, but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart. The human will is subdued to obedience, the human heart is moulded to Christ's image, his desire becomes the desire of his subjects, his glory their chief aim, and his law the very delight of their souls. Strange kingdom this, which needs no law save those which are written upon the hearts of the subjects.

Stranger still, as some will think it, this was a kingdom *in which riches unsure no part whatever of its glory.* There rides the King, the poorest of the whole state, for yonder King had not where to lay his head. There rides the King, the poorest of them all, upon another man's ass that he has borrowed. There rides the King, one who is soon to die; stripped of his robes to die naked and exposed. And yet he is the King of this kingdom, the First, the Prince, the Leader, the crowned One of the whole generation, simply because he had the least. He it was who had given most to others, and retained least himself. He who was least selfish and most disinterested, he who lived most for others, was King of this kingdom. And look at the courtiers, look at the princes! they were all poor too; they had no flags to hang out from the windows, so they cast their poor clothes upon the hedges or hung them from the windows as he rode along. They had no splendid purple to make a carpet for the feet of his ass, so they cast their own toil-worn clothes in the way, they strewed along the path palm branches which they could easily reach from the trees which lined the road, because they had no money with which to bear the expense of a greater triumph. Every way it was a poor thing. No spangles of gold, no flaunting banners no blowing of silver trumpets, no pomp, no state! It was poverty's own triumph. Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast rides through the streets. Strange kingdom this, brethren! I trust we recognize it—a kingdom in which he that is chief among us, is not he that is richest in gold, but he that is richest in faith; a kingdom which depends on no revenue accept the revenue of divine grace; a kingdom which bids every man sit down under its shadow with delight, be he rich or be he poor.

Strange kingdom this! But, brethren, here is something perhaps yet more exceeding wonderful, *it was a kingdom without armed force.* Oh, prince, where are thy soldiers? Is this thine army? These thousands that attend thee? Where are their swords? They carry branches of palm. Where are their accoutrements? They have almost stripped themselves to pave thy way with their garments. Is this thine host? Are these thy battalions? Oh strange kingdom, without an army! Most strange King, who wears no sword, but rides along in this midst of his people conquering and to conquer a strange kingdom, in which there is the palm without the sword, the victory without the battle. No blood, no tears, no devastation, no burned cities, no mangled bodies! King of peace, King of peace, this is thy dominion! 'Tis even so in the kingdom over which Christ is king to-day, there is no force to be used. If the kings of the earth should any to the ministers of Christ, "We will lend you our soldiers," our reply would be, "What can we do with them?—as soldiers they are worthless to us."

It was an ill day for the Church when she borrowed the army of that unhallowed heathen, the emperor Constantine and thought that would make her great. She gained nothing by it save pollution, degradation and shame, and that Church which asks the civil arm to help it, that Church which would make her Sabbaths binding on the people by force of law, that Church which would have her dogmas proclaimed with beat of drum, and make the fist or the sword to become her weapons, knoweth not what spirit she is of. These are carnal weapons. They are out of place in a spiritual kingdom. His armies are loving thoughts, his troops are kind words. The power by which he rules his people is not the strong hand and the stretched-out arm of police or soldiery, but by deeds of love and words of overflowing benediction he asserts his sovereign sway.

This was a strange kingdom too, my brethren, *because it was without any pomp*. If you call it pomp, what singular pomp it was! When our kings are proclaimed, three strange fellows, the like of whom one would never see at any other time, called heralds, come riding forth to proclaim the king. Strange are their dresses, romantic their costume, and with sound of trumpet the king is magnificently proclaimed. Then comes the coronation and how the nation is moved from end to end with transport when the new king is about to be crowned! What multitudes crowd the street. Sometimes of old the fountains were made to flow with wine, and there was scarce a street which was not hung with tapestry throughout. But here comes the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth; no mottled steed, no prancing horse which would keep at a distance the sons of poverty; he rides upon his ass, and as he rides along speaks kindly to the little children, who are crying, "Hosanna," and wishes well to the mothers and fathers of the lowest grade, who crowd around him. He is approachable; he is not divided from them; he claims not to be their superior, but their servant so little stately as a king, he was the servant of all. No trumpet sounds—he is content with the voice of men, no caparisons upon his ass, but his own disciple's garments, no pomp but the pomp which loving hearts right willingly yielded to him. Thus on he rides; his the kingdom of meekness, the kingdom of humiliation. Brethren, may we belong to that kingdom too; may we feel in our hearts that Christ is come in us to cast down every high and every proud thought, that every valley may be lifted up, and every hill may be abased, and the whole land exalted in that day!

Listen again, and this perhaps is a striking part of Christ's kingdom—*he came to establish a kingdom without taxations*. Where were the collectors of the King's revenue? You say he had not any; yes he had, but what a revenue it was! Every man took off his garments willingly; he never asked it; his revenue flowed freely from the willing gifts of his people. The first had lent his ass and his colt, the rest had given their clothes. Those who had scarce clothes to part with, plucked the branches from the trees, and here was state for once which cost no man anything, or rather for which nothing was demanded of any man, but everything spontaneously given. This is the kingdom of Christ,—a kingdom which subsists not upon tithe, Church-rate or Easter dues, but a kingdom which lives upon the free-will offering of the willing people, a kingdom which demands nothing of any man, but which comes to him with a stronger force than demand, saying to him, "Thou art not under the law, but under grace, wilt thou not, being bought with a price, consecrate thyself and all that thou hast, to the service of the King of kings! Brethren, do you think me wild and fanatical in talking of a kingdom of this sort? Indeed, 'twere fanatical if we said that any mere man could establish such a dominion. But Christ has done it, and this day there be tens of thousands of men in this world who call him King, and who feel that he is more their King than the ruler of their Dative land; that they give to him a sincerer homage than they ever give to the beg beloved sovereign, they feel that his power over them is such as they would not wish to resist—the power of love, that

their gifts to him are an too little, for they wish to give themselves away, 'tis all that they can do. Marvellous and matchless kingdom! it's like shall never be found on earth.

Before I leave this point, I should like to remark that apparently *this was a kingdom in which all creatures were considered*. Why did Christ have two beasts? There was an ass and a colt the foal of an ass; he rode on the foal of the ass because it had never been ridden before. Now I have looked at several of the commentators to see what they say about it, and one old commentator has made me laugh—I trust he will not make you laugh too—by saying, that Christ telling his disciples to bring the foal as well as the sea should teach us thee infants ought to be baptized as well as their parents, which seemed to me to be an argument eminently worthy of childish baptism. Thinking the matter over, however, I consider there is a better reason to be given,—Christ would not have any pain in his kingdom, he would not have even an ass suffer by him, and if the foal had been taken away from its mother, there would have been the poor mother in the stable at home, thinking of its foal, and there would have been the foal longing to get back, like those oxen that the Philistines used when they took back the ark, and which went lowing as they went, because their calves were at home. Wondrous kingdom of Christ, in which the very beast shall have its share! “For the creature was made subject to vanity by our sin.” It was the beast that suffered because we sinned, and Christ intends that his kingdom should bring back the beast to its own pristine happiness. He would make us merciful men, considerative even to the beasts. I believe that when his kingdom fully comes, the animal nature will be put back to its former happiness. “Then shall the lion eat straw like the ox, the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.” Old Eden’s peacefulness, and the familiarity between man and the lower creatures, shall come back once more. And even now, wherever the gospel is fully known in man’s heart, man begins to recognize that he has no right wantonly to kill a sparrow or a worm, because it is in Christ’s dominion; and he who would not ride a foal without having its mother by its side, that it might be at peace and happy, would not have any of his disciples think lightly of the meanest creature that his hands have made. Blessed kingdom this which considereth even the berate! Doth God care for oxen? Ay, that he doth; and for the very ass itself, that heir of toil, he careth. Christ’s kingdom, then, shall care for beasts as well as men.

Once more: Christ, in riding through the streets of Jerusalem, taught in a public manner, that his kingdom *was to be one of joy*. Brethren, when great conquerors ride through the streets, you often hear of the joy of the people; how the women throw roses on the pathway, how they crowd around the hero of the day, and wave their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of the deliverance he has wrought. The city has been long besieged; the champion has driven away the besiegers, and the people will now have rest. Fling open wide the gates, clear the road and let the hero come, let the meanest page that is in his retinue be honored this day for the deliverer’s sake. Ah! brethren, but in those triumphs how many tears there are that are hidden! There is a woman who hears the sound of the bells for victory, and she says, “Ah! victory indeed, but I am a widow, and my little ones are orphans.” And from the balconies where beauty looks down and smiles, there may be a forgetfulness for the moment of friends and kindred over whom they will soon have to weep, for every battle is with blood, and every conquest is with woe, and every shout of victory hath in it weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Every sound of trumpet because the battle is obtained, doth but cover over the cries, the sorrows, and the deep agonies of those that have been bereaved of their kinsfolk! But in thy triumph, Jesu, there were no tears! When the little children cried, “Hosanna,” they had not lost their fathers in battle. When the men and women shouted, “Blessed



is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," they had no cause to shout with bated breath, or to mar their joys with the remembrance of misery. No, in his kingdom there is unalloyed, unmingled joy. Shout, shout, ye that are subjects of King Jesus! Sorrows ye may have, but not from him, troubles may come to you because you are in the world, but they come not from him, His service is perfect liberty. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.

"Joy to the world, the Saviour comes,  
The Saviour promised long;  
Let every heart prepare a tune,  
And every voice a song."

He comes wipe away your tears and not to make them flow, he comes to lift you from your dunghills and set you upon his throne, to fetch you from your dungeons and make you leap in liberty.

"Blessings abound wherein he reigns,  
The prisoner leaps to lose his chain;  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the eons of want are blessed."  
Singular kingdom this!

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last head. The Saviour, in his triumphal entrance into the capital of his fathers, declared to us very plainly *the practical effects of his kingdom*. Now what are these? One of the first effects was *that the whole city was moved*. What does that mean? It means that everybody had something to say about it, and that everybody felt something because Christ rode through the street. There were some who leaned from the tops of their houses, and looked down the street and said to one another—"Aha! Did ever you see such fool's play as this? Humph! Here is Jesus of Nazareth down here riding on an ass! Surely if he meant to be king he might have chosen a horse. Look at him! They call that pomp! There is some old fisherman has just thrown down his bad-smelling garment; I dare say it had fish in it an hour or two ago? "Look," says one, "see that old beggar throwing his cap into the air for joy!" "Aha!" say they, "was there ever such a ridiculous thing as that?" I cannot put it in such terms as they would describe it; if I could, I think I would. I should like to make you see how ridiculous this must have seemed to the people. Why, if Pilate himself had heard about it he would have said—"Ah! there is nothing much to fear from that. There is no fear that that man will ever upset Caesar; there is no fear that he will ever overturn an army. Where are their swords? There is not a sword among them! They have no cries that sound like rebellion; their songs are only some religious verses taken out of the Psalms." "Oh!" says he, "the whole thing is contemptible and ridiculous." And this was the opinion of a great many in Jerusalem. Perhaps that is your opinion, my friend. The kingdom of Christ, you say, is ridiculous; you do not believe perhaps that there are any people who are ruled by him though we say that we own him as our King, and that we feel the law of love to be a law which constrains us to sweet obedience. "Oh," you say, "it is cant and hypocrisy." And there are some who attend where they have golden censers, and altars, and priests, and they say, "Oh! a religion that is so simple—singing a few hymns, and offering extempore prayer!—Ah! give me a bishop with a mitre—a fine fellow in lawn sleeves—that is the thing for me." "Oh," says another, "let me hear the peals of the organ; let me see the thing done scientifically, let me see a little drapery too; let the man come up clad in his proper garb to show that he is something different from other people; do not let him stand dressed as if he were an ordinary man; let me see something in the worship

different from anything I have seen before.” They want it clothed with a little pomp, and because it is not so they say—“Ah! Humph!” They sneer at it, and this is all that Christ gets from multitudes of men who think themselves exceeding wise. He is to them foolishness and they pass by with a sneer. Your sneers will be exchanged for tears ere long sirs! When he comes with real pomp and splendor you will weep and wail, because you disowned the King of Peace.

“The Lord shall come! a dreadful form,  
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,  
With cherub voice and wings of wind,  
The appointed Judge of all mankind.”

Then you will find it inconvenient to have treated him with contempt. Others no doubt there were in Jerusalem who were filled with *curiosity*. They said—“Dear me, whatever can it be? What is the meaning of it? Who is this? I wish you would come,” they said to their neighbors, “and tell us the history of this singular man, we should like to know about it.” Some of them said, “He is gone to the temple, I dare say he will work a miracle;” so off they ran, and squeezed and pressed, and thronged to see a marvel. They were like Herod, they longed to see some wonder wrought by him. It was the first day of Christ’s coming too, and of course the enthusiasm might last some nine days if he would keep it up, so they were very curious about it. And this is all Christ gets from thousands of people. They hear about a revival of religion. Well, they would like to know what it is and hear about it. There is something doing at such-and-such a place of worship; well, they would like to go if it were only to see the place. “There is a strange minister says queer things; let us go and hear him. We had intended to go out”—you know who I mean among yourselves—“we had intended to go out on an excursion today,” said you, “but let us go there instead.” Just so, curiosity, curiosity; this is all Christ gets to-day, and he that died upon the cross becomes a theme for an idle tale, and he that is Lord of angels and adored of men, is to be talked of as though he were a Wizard of the North or some eccentric impostor! Ah! you will find it inconvenient to have treated him thus by-and-bye; for when he comes, and when every eye shall see him, you who merely curiously enquired for him shall find that he shall inquire for you, not with animosity but with wrath, and it shall be—“Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” But anon the crowd there were some who were worse still, for they looked on the whole thing with *envy* “Ah!” said Rabbi Simeon to Rabbi Hillel, “the people were never so pleased with *us*. We know a great deal more than that impostor; we have read through all our religious books.” “Don’t you remember *him*,” says one, “that when he was a boy he was rather precocious? You remember he came into the temple and talked with us, and since then he deceiveth the people,” meaning by that he outshone them, that he had more esteem in the hearts of the multitude than they had, though they were prouder far. “Oh!” said the Pharisee, “he does not wear any phylactery, and I have made mine very large; I have made my garments almost all borders, so that they may be exceeding broad.” “Ah!” says another, “I tithe my mint, my anise, and my cummin, and I stand at the corner of the street and blow a trumpet when I give away a penny, but yet people will not put me on an ass; they will not clap their hands and say, ‘Hosanna’ to me, but the whole earth is gone after this man like a parcel of children. Besides, think of going into the temple disturbing their betters, disturbing us who are making a show of our pretended prayers and standing in the courts!” And this is what Christ gets from a great many. They do not like to see Christ’s cause get on. Nay, they would have Christ be lean that they might fatten themselves upon the plunder, they would have his Church be despicable. They like to hear of the falls of Christian ministers. If they can find a fault in a Christian man “Report it, report it, report

it," say they. But if a man walk uprightly, if he glorifies Christ, if the Church increases, if souls are saved, straightway there is an uproar and the whole city is stirred, the whole uproar begins and is carried on by falsehoods, lying accusations, and slanders against the characters of Christ's people. In some way or other, men are sure to be moved, if they are not moved to laugh, if they are not moved to enquire, they are moved to envy. But blessed is it that some in Jerusalem were moved to *rejoice*. Oh! there were many who, like Simeon and Anna rejoiced to see that day, and many of them went home and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." There was many a bedridden woman in the back streets of Jerusalem, that sat up in the bed and said, "Hosanna," and wished that she could get down into the street, that she might throw her old mantle in the way, and might bow before him who was the King of the Jews. There were many weeping eyes that wiped away their tears that day, and many mourning believers who began from that hour to rejoice with joy unspeakable. And so there are some of you that hear of Christ the King with joy. You join in the hymn; not as we have all joined with the voice, but with the heart.

"Rejoice, the Saviour reigns,  
The God of peace and love  
When he had purged our stains.  
He took his seat above  
Rejoice, rejoice!  
Rejoice aloud, ye saints, rejoice!"

Such, then, the first effect of Christ's kingdom! Wherever it comes, the city is stirred. Do not believe the gospel is preached at all if it does not make a stir. Do not believe, my brethren, that the gospel is preached in Christ's way if it does not make some angry and some happy, if it does not make many enemies and some friends.

There is yet another practical effect of Christ's kingdom. He went up to the temple and there at one table sat a lot of men with baskets containing pairs of doves. "Any doves, sir, any doves!" He looked at them and said, "Take these things hence." He spoke with a holy *furor*. There were others changing money as the people came in to pay their half shekel; he overturned the tables and set them all a-flying, and soon emptied the whole court of all these merchants who were making a gain of godliness, and making religion a stalking-horse for their own emolument. Now this is what Christ does wherever he comes. I wish he would come in the Church of England a little more, and purge out the sale of advowsons, get rid of that accursed simony which is still tolerated by law and purge out the men that are malappropriators, who take that which belongs to the ministers of Christ, and apply it to their own uses. I would that he would come into all our planes of worship, so that once for all it might be seen that they who serve God serve him because they love him, and not for what they can get by it. I would that every professor of religion could be quite clean in his own conscience that he never made a profession to get respectability or to get esteem, but only made it that he might honor Christ and glorify his Master. The spiritual meaning of it all is this—We have no houses of God now; bricks and mortar are not holy, the places where we worship God are places of worship, but they are not the houses of God any longer than we are in them. We believe no superstition which makes any place holy, but we are the temple of God. Men themselves are God's temples, and where Christ comes he drives out the buyers and sellers, he expunges all selfishness. I will never believe that Christ, the King, has made your heart his palace till you are unselfish. Oh, how many professors there are who want to get so much honor, so much respect! As to giving to

the poor, thinking it more blessed to give than to receive, as for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, as for living for other people, and not for themselves—they do not think of that. O Master, come into thy temple and drive out our selfishness, now come, turn out all those things which would make it convenient to serve Mammon by serving God; help us to live unto thee, and to live for others by living to thee, and not live unto ourselves!

The last practical effect of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingdom was he held a grand levee; he had, if I may so speak, a drawing-room day; and who we be the people who came to attend him? Now, ye courtiers, the disciples, show up your nobility and gentry that are come to wait upon him. Here comes one man, he has a bandage over here, and the other eye has almost failed—show him in, here comes another, his feet are all twisted and contorted—show him in, here comes another limping on two crutches, both his limbs are disabled, and another has lost his limbs. Here they come and here is the levee. The King himself comes here and holds a grand meeting, and the blind and the lame are his guests, and now he comes, he touches that blind eye and light shines in; he speaks to this man with a withered leg, he walks; he touches two eyes at once, and they both see, and to another he says, "I will take away thy crutches, stand upright and rejoice and leap with joy." This is what the King does wherever he comes. Come hither this morning, I beseech thee, thou great King! There are blind eyes here that cannot see thy beauty. Walk, Jesu, walk among this crowd and touch the eyes. Ah! then, brethren, if he should do that, you will say, "There is a beauty in him that I never saw before." Jesu, touch their eyes, they cannot take away their own blindness, do thou do it! Help them to look to thee hanging upon the cross! They cannot do it unless thou dost enable them. May they do it now, and find life in thee! O Jesu, there are some here that are lame—knees that cannot bend, they have never prayed; there are some here whose feet will not run in the way of thy commandments—feet that will not carry them up where thy name is praised, and where thou art had in honor. Walk, great King, walk thou in solemn pomp throughout this house, and make it like the temple of old! Display here thy power and hold thy grand meeting in the healing of the lame and the curing of the blind "Oh!" saith one, "I would that he would open my blind eyes." Soul, he will do it, he will do it. Breathe thy prayer out now, and it shall be done, for he is nigh thee now. He is standing by thy side, he speaks to thee, and he saith—"Look unto me and be thou saved, thou vilest of the vile." There is another, and he says—"Lord, I would be made whole." He says—"Be thou whole then." Believe on him and he will save thee. He is near you, brother, he is near you. He is not in the pulpit more than he is in the pew, nor in one pew more than in another. Say not—"Who shall go to heaven to find him, or into the depths to bring him up?" He is near you; he will hear your prayer even though you speak not; he will hear your heart speak. Oh! say unto him—"Jesus, heal me," and he will do it; he will do it now. Let us breathe the prayer, and then we will part.

Jesus, heal us! Save us, Son of David, save us! Thou seest how blind we be—oh, give us the sight of faith! Thou seest how lame we be—oh, give us the strength of grace! And now, e'en now, thou Son of David, purge out our selfishness, and come and live and reign in us as in thy temple-palaces! We ask it, O thou great King, for thine own sake. Amen. And ere we leave this place, we cry again, "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

## The Infallibility of God's Purpose

A Sermon

(No. 406)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, August the 25th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“But he is in one minds, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.—Job 23:13.

IT is very advantageous to the Christian mind frequently to consider the deep and unsearchable attributes of God. The beneficial effect is palpable in two ways, exerting a sacred influence both on the judgment and the heart. In respect to the one, it tends to confirm us in those good old orthodox doctrines which lie at the basis of our faith. If we study man, and make him the only object of our research, there will be a strong tendency in our minds to exaggerate his importance. We shall think too much of the creature and too little of the Creator, preferring that knowledge which is to be found out by observation and reason to that divine truth which revelation alone could make known to us. The basis and groundwork of Arminian theology lies in attaching undue importance to man, and giving God rather the second place than the first. Let your mind dwell for a long time upon man as a free agent, upon man as a responsible being, upon man, not so much as being under God's claims as having claims upon God, and you will soon find upspringing in your thoughts a set of crude doctrines, to support which the letter of some few isolated texts in Scripture may be speciously quoted, but which really in spirit are contrary to the whole tenour of the Word of God. Thus your orthodoxy will be shaken to its very foundations, and your soul will be driven out to sea again without peace or joy. Brethren, I am not afraid that any man, who thinks worthily about the Creator, stands in awe of his adorable perfections and sees him sitting upon the throne, doing all things according to the counsel of his will, will go far wrong in his doctrinal sentiments. He may say, “My heart is fixed, O God;” and when the heart is fixed with a firm conviction of the greatness, the omnipotence, the divinity indeed of him whom we call God, the head will not wander far from truth. Another happy result of such meditation is the steady peace, the grateful calm it gives to the soul. Have you been a long time at sea, and has the continual motion of the ship sickened and disturbed you? Have you come to look upon everything as moving till you scarcely put one foot before the other without the fear of falling down because the floor rocks beneath your tread? With what delight do you put your feet at last upon the shore and say, “Ah! this does not move; this is solid ground. What though the tempest howl, this island is safely moored. She will not start from her bearings; when I tread on her she will not yield beneath my feet.” Just so is it with us when we turn from the ever-shifting, often boisterous tide of earthly things to take refuge in the Eternal God who hath been “our dwelling-place in all generations.” The fleeting things of human life, and the fickle thoughts and showy deeds of men, are as moveable and changeable as the waters of the treacherous deep; but when we mount up, as it were, with eagles' wings to him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, before whom all its inhabitants are as grasshoppers, we nestle in the Rock of ages, which from its eternal socket never starts, and in its fixed immovability never can be disturbed. Or to use another simile. You have seen little children running round, and round, and

round till they get giddy, and they stand still and hold fast a moment and everything seems to be flying round about them, but by holding fast and still, and getting into the mind the fact that that to which they hold at least is firm, at last the braise grows still again, and the world ceases to whirl. So you and I have been these six days like little children running round in circles, and everything has been moving with us, till perhaps as we came, to this place this morning we felt as if the very promises of God had moved, as if Providence had shifted, our friends had died, our kindred passed away, and we came to look on everything as a floating mass—nothing firm, nothing fixed. Brethren, let us get a good grip to-day of the immutability of God. Let us stand still awhile, and know that the Lord is God. We shall see at length that things do not move as we dreamed they did: “to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens.” There is still a fixedness in that which seems most fickle. That which appears to be most dreamy has a reality, inasmuch as it is a part of that divinely substantial scheme which God is working out, the end whereof shall be his eternal glory. ‘Twill cool your brain, ‘twill calm your heart, my brother, ‘twill make you go back to the world’s fight quiet and composed, ‘twill make you stand fast in the day of temptation if now through divine grace you can come near to God and offer him the tribute of our devotion, who is without variableness or shadow of a turning.

The text will be considered by us this morning—first, as enunciating a great general truth; and, secondly, out of that general truth, we shall fetch another upon which we shall enlarge, I trust, to our comfort.

I. The text may be regarded as TEACHING A GENERAL TRUTH. We will take the first clause of the sentence, “He is in one mind.” Now, the fact taught here is, that in all the acts of God in Providence, he has a fixed and a settled purpose. “He is in one mind.” It is eminently consolatory to us who are God’s creatures, to know that he did not make us without a purpose, and that now, in all his dealings with us he has the same wise and gracious end to be served. We suffer, the head aches, the heart leaps with palpitations, the blood creeps sluggishly along where its healthy flow should have been more rapid. We lose our limbs, crushed by accident, some sense fails us; the eye is eclipsed in perpetual night; our mind is racked and disturbed; our fortunes vary; our goods disappear before our eyes; our children, portions of ourselves, sicken and die. Our crosses are as continual as our lives, we are seldom long at ease; we are born to sorrow, and certainly it is an inheritance of which we are never deprived; we suffer continually. Will it not reconcile us to our sorrows, that they serve some end? To be scourged needlessly we consider to be a disgrace, but to be scourged if our country were to be served we should consider an honor, because there is a purpose in it. To suffer the maiming of our bodies, because of some whim of a tyrant, would be a thing hard to bear, but if we administer thereby to the weal of our families, or to the glory of our God, we would be content not to be mutilated once but to be cut piece-meal away, that so his great purpose might be answered. O believer, ever look, then, on all thy sufferings as being parts of the divine plan, and say, as wave upon wave rolls over thee, “He is in one mind!” He is carrying out still his one great purpose; none of these cometh by chance, none of these happeneth to me out of order, but everything cometh to me according to the purpose of his own will, and answereth the purpose of his own great mind. We have to labor too. How hard do some men labor who have to toil for their daily bread! Their bread is saturated with their sweat; they wear no garment which they have not woven out of their own nerves and muscles. How sternly, too, do others labor, who have with their brain to serve their fellow-men or their God! How have some heroic missionaries spent themselves, and been spent in their fond enterprise! How have many ministers of Christ exhausted

not simply the body, but the mind! Their hilarity so natural to them has given place to despondency, and the natural effervescence of their spirits has at last died out into oneness of soul, through the desperateness of their ardor. Well, and sometimes this labor for God is unrequited. We plough, but the furrow yields no harvest. We sow, but the field refuses the grain, and the devouring belies of the hungry birds alone are satisfied therewith. We build, but the storm casts down the stones which we had quarried with Herculean efforts piling one on another. We sweat, we toil, we moil, we fail. How often do we come back weeping because we have toiled, as we think, without success! Yet, Christian man, thou hast not been without success, for "He is still in one mind." All this was necessary to the fulfillment of his one purpose. Thou art not lost; thy labor has not rotted under the clods. All, though thou seest it not, has been working together towards the desired end. Stand upon the sea-beach for a moment. A wave has just come up careening in its pride. Its crown of froth is spent. As it leaps beyond its fellow, it dies, it dies. And now another, and it dies, and now another, and it dies. Oh! weep not, deep sea, be not thou sorrowful, for though each wave dieth, yet thou prevaiest! O thou mighty ocean! onward does the flood advance, till it has covered all the sand and washed the feet of the white cliffs. So it is with God's purpose. You and I are only waves of his great sea; we wash up, we seem to retire, as if there had been no advance; another wave comes still each wave must retire as though there had been no progress; but the great divine sea of his purpose is still moving on. He is still of one mind and carrying out his plan. How sorrowful it often seems to think how good men die! They learn through the days of their youth, and often before they come to years to use their learning, they are gone. The blade is made and annealed in many a fire, but ere the foeman useth it, it snaps! How many laborers, too, in the Master's vineyard, who when by their experience they were getting more useful than ever, have been taken away just when the Church wanteth them most! He that stood upright in the chariot, guiding the steeds, suddenly falls back, and we cry, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the chariot thereof!" Still notwithstanding all, we may console ourselves in the midst of our grief with the blessed reflection that everything is a part of God's plan. He is still of one mind: nothing happeneth which is not a part of the divine scheme. To enlarge our thoughts a monument, have you never noticed, in reading history, how nations suddenly decay? When their civilization has advanced so far that we thought it would produce men of the highest mould, suddenly old age begins to wrinkle its brow, its arm grows weak, the scepter falls, and the crown droops from the head, and we have said, "Is not the world gone back again?" The barbarian fall has sacked the city, and where once everything was beauty, now there is nothing but ruthless bloodshed and destruction. Ah! but, my brethren, all those things were but the carrying out of the divine plan. Just so you may have seen sometimes upon the hard rock the lichen spring. Soon as the lichen race grows grand, it dies. But wherefore? It is because its death prepares the moss, and the moss which is feebler compared with the lichen growth, at last increases till you see before you the finest specimens of that genus. But the moss decays. Yet weep not for its decaying, its ashes shall prepare a soil for some plants of a little higher growth, and as these decay, one after another, race after race, they at last prepare the soil upon which even the goodly cedar itself might stretch out its roots. So has it been with the race of men—Egypt, and Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, have crumbled, each and all, when their hour had come, to be succeeded by a better. And if this race of ours should ever be eclipsed, if the Anglo Saxons' boasted pride should yet be stained, even then it will prove to be a link in the divine purpose. Still, in the end his one mind shall be carried out, his one great result shall be thereby achieved. Not only the decay of nations, but the apparent degeneration of some races of men, and even the total

extinction of others, forms a part of the like fixed purpose. In all those cases there may be reasons of sorrow, but faith sees grounds of rejoicing. To gather up all in one, the calamities of earthquake, the devastations of storm, the extirpations of war, and all the terrible catastrophes of plague, have only been co-workers with God—slaves compelled to tug the galley of the divine purpose across the sea of time. From every evil good has come, and the more the evil has accumulated the more hath God glorified himself in bringing out at last his grand, his everlasting design. This, I take it, is the first general lesson of the text—in every event of Providence, God has a purpose. “He is in one mind.” Mark, not only a purpose, but only one purpose, for all history is but one. There are many scenes, but it is one drama; there are many pages, but it is one book; there are many leaves, but it is one tree, there are many provinces, yea, and there be lords many and rulers many, yet is there but one empire, and God the only Potentate. “O come let us worship and bow down before him: for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods!”

2. “Who can turn him?” This is the second clause of the sentence, and here I think we are taught the doctrine that *the purpose of God is unchanged*. The first sentence shows that he has a purpose, the second shows that it is incapable of change. “Who can turn him?” There are some shallow thinkers who dream that the great plan and design of God was thrown out of order by the fall of man. The fall they consider all accidental circumstances, not intended in the divine plan, and so, God being placed in a delicate predicament of requiring to sacrifice his justice or his mercy, used the plan of the atonement of Christ as a divine expedient Brethren, it may be lawful to use such terms, it may be lawful to you, it would not be to me, for well am I persuaded that the very fall of man was a part of the divine purpose—that even the sin of Adam, though he did it freely, was nevertheless contemplated in the divine scheme, and was by no means such a thing as to involve a digression from his primary plan. Then came the delude, and the race of man was swept away, but God’s purpose was not affected by the destruction of the race. In after years his people Israel forsook him and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth, but his purpose, was not changed any more by the defection of his chosen nation than by the destruction of his creatures. And when in after years the gospel was sent to the Jews and they resisted it, and Paul and Peter turned to the Gentiles, do not suppose that God had to take down his book and make an erasure or an amendment. No, the whole was written there from the beginning, he knew everything of it, he has never altered a single sentence nor changed a single line of the divine purpose. What he intended the great picture to be, that it shall be at the end, and where you see some black strokes which seem not in keeping, these shall yet be toned down; and where there are some brighter dashes, too bright for the sombre picture, these shall yet be brought into harmony; and when in the end God shall exhibit the whole, he shall elicit both from men and angels tremendous shouts of praise, while they say, “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! Thou only art holy. All nations shall come and worship before Thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.” Where we have thought his government wrong, there shall it prove most right, and where we dreamed he had forgotten to be good, there shall his goodness be most clear. It is a sweet consolation to the mind of one who muses much upon these deep matters, that God never has changed in any degree from his purpose; and the result will be, notwithstanding everything to the contrary, just precisely in every jot and tittle what he foreknow and fore-ordained it should be. Now then, wars, ye may rise, and other Alexanders and Caesars may spring up, but he will not change. Now, nations and peoples, lift up yourselves and let your parliaments pass your decrees but he changeth not. Now, rebels, foam at the mouth and let your fury boil, but he changeth not for you. Oh! nations, and



peoples, and tongues, and thou round earth, thou speedest on thy orbit still, and all the fury of thine inhabitants cannot make thee move from thy predestinated pathway. Creation is an arrow from the bow of God and that arrow goes on, straight on, without deviation, to the center of that target which God ordained that it should strike. Never varied is his plan; he is without variableness or shadow of a turning. Albert Barnes very justly says, "It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God has a plan—for who could honor a God who had *no* plan, but who did everything by haphazard? It is matter of rejoicing that he has *one* great purpose which extends through all ages, and embraces all things; for then everything falls into its proper place, and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God *does* execute all his purposes for as they were all good and wise, it is *desirable* that they should be executed. It could be a calamity if a good plan were *not* executed. Why, then, should men murmur at the purposes or the decrees of God?"

3. The text also teaches a third general truth. While God had a purpose, and that purpose has never changed, the third clause teaches us that *this purpose is sure to be effected*. "What his soul desireth, that he doeth." He made the world out of nothing, there was no resistance there. "Light be," said he, and light was, there was no resistance there. "Providence be," said he, and Providence shall be, and when you shall come to see the end as well as the beginning, you shall find that there was no resistance there. It is a wonderful thing how God effects his purpose while still the creature is free. They who think that predestination and the fulfillment of the divine purpose is contrary to the free-agency of man, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. It were no miracle for God to effect his own purpose, if he were dealing with stocks and stones, with granite and with trees but this is the miracle of miracles, that the creatures are free, absolutely free, and joy the divine purpose stands! Herein is wisdom! This is a deep unsearchable. Man walks without a fetter, yet treads in the very steps which God ordained him to tread in, as certainly as though manacles had bound him to the spot. Man chooses his own seat, selects his own position, guided by his will he chooses sin, or guided by diving grace he chooses the right, and yet in his choice sits as sovereign, on the throne: not disturbing, but still over-ruling, and proving himself to be able to deal as with free creatures as with creatures without freedom, as well able to effect his purpose when he has endowed men with thought, and reason, and judgment, as when he had only to deal with the solid rocks and with the imbedded sea. O Christians! you shall never be able to fathom this, but you may wonder at it. I know there is an easy way of getting out of this great deep, either by denying predestination altogether or by denying free-agency altogether, but if you can hold the two, if you can say, "Yes, my consciousness teaches me that man does as he wills, but my faith teaches me that God does as he wills, and these two are not contrary the one to the other; and yet I cannot tell how it is, I cannot tell how God effects his end, I can only wonder and admire, and say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Every creature free and doing as it wills yet God more free still and doing as he wills, not only in heaven but among the inhabitants of this lower earth. I have thus given you a general subject upon which I would invite you to spend your meditations in your quiet hours, for I am persuaded that sometimes to think of these deep doctrines will be found very profitable it will be to you like the advice of Christ to Simon Peter:—"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." You shall have a draught of exceeding great thoughts and exceeding great graces if you dare to launch out into this exceeding deep sea, and let out the nets of your contemplation at the command of Christ. "Behold God is great." "O Lord! how great are

thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep! A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this.”

II. I now come to the second part of my subject, which will be, I trust, cheering to the people of God. From the general doctrine that God has a plan, that this plan is invariable, and that this plan is certain to be carried out, I drew the most precious doctrine that IN SALVATION GOD IS OF ONE MIND,—and who can turn him?—and what his heart desireth, that he doeth. Now, mark, I address myself at this hour only to you who as the people of God. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heal? Is the spirit of adoption given to thee whereby thou canst say, “Abba, Father?” If so draw nigh, for this truth is for thee.

Come then, my brethren, in the first place let us consider that *God is of one mind*. Of old, my soul, he determined to save thee. Thy calling proves thine election, and thine election teaches thee that God ordained to save thee. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of Man that he should repent. He is of one mind. He saw thee ruined in the fall of thy father Adam, but his mind never changed from his purpose to save thee. He saw thee in thy nativity. Thou well test astray from the woman speaking lies, ‘thy youthful follies and disobedience he saw, but never did that gracious mind alter in its designs of love to thee. Then in thy manhood thou didst plunge into vice and sin. Cover, O darkness, all on guilt, and let the night conceal it from our eyes for ever! Though he added sin to sin, and our pride waxed exceeding high and hot, yet he has of one mind.

“Determined to save, he watched o’er my path

When Satan’s blind slave, I spotted with death.”

At last, when the happy hour arrived, he came to our door and knocked, and he said, “Open to me.” And do you remember, O my brothel, how we said, “Get thee gone, O Jesu, we want thee not?” We scorned his grace, defied his love, but he was of one mind, and no hardness of heart could turn him. He had determined to have us for his spouse, and he would not take “No” for an answer. He said he would have us, and he persevered. He knocked again, and do you remember how we half opened the door? But then some strong temptation came and we shut it in his very face, and he said, “Open to me, my dove, my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night”—yet we bolted and barred the door, and would not let him in. But he was of one mind and none could turn him. Oh! my soul weeps now when I think of the many convictions that I stifled, of the many movings of his Spirit that I rejected, and those many times when conscience bade me repent, and urged me to flee to him, but I would not; of those seasons when a mother’s tears united with all the intercession of the Saviour, yet the heart harder than adamant, and less eat to be melted than the granite itself, refused to move and would not yield. But he was of one mind. He had no fickleness in him. He said he would have us, and have us he would. He had written our names in his book, and he would not cross them out. It was his solemn purpose that yield we should. And O that hour when we yielded at the last! Then did he prove that in all our wanderings he had been of one mind. And O since then, how sorrowful the reflection! Since then, how often have you and I turned! We have backslidden, and if we had the Arminian’s God to deal with, we should either have been in hell, or out of the covenant at this hour. I know I should be in the covenant and out of the covenant a hundred times a day if I had a God who put me out every time I sinned and then restored it when I repented. But no, despite our sin, our unbelief, our backslidings, our forgetfulness of him, he was of one mind. And brethren, I know this, that though we shall wander still, though in dark hours you and I may slip, and often fall, yet his lovingkindness changes not. Thy strong arm, O God shall bear us on; thy loving heart will never fail; thou wilt not turn thy love away from

us, or make it cease or pour upon us thy fierce anger, but having begun, thou wilt complete the triumphs of thy grace. Nothing shall make thee change thy mind. What joy is this to you, believers? for your mind changes every day, your experience varies like the wind, and if salvation were to be the result of any purpose on your part, certainly it never would be effected. But since it is God's work to save, and we have proved hitherto that he is of one mind, our faith shall revel in the thought that he will be of one thought even to the end, till all on glory's summit we shall sing of that fixed purpose and that immutable love which never turned aside until the deed of grace was triumphantly achieved.

Now, believer, listen to the second lesson: "*Who can turn him?*" While he is immutable from within, he is immovable from without. "Who can turn him?" That is a splendid picture presented to us by Moses in the Book of Numbers. The children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. As the trees of lign aloes which the Lord had planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters, were their tents. Quietly and calmly they were resting in the valley—the tabernacle of the Lord in their midst, and the pillar of cloud spread over them as a shield. But on the mountain range there were two men—Balak, the son of Zippor, king of the Moabites, and Balaam the prophet of Pethor. They had builded seven altars and offered seven bullocks, and Balak said unto Balsam, "Come, curse me Jacob, come, defy Israel." Four times did the prophet take up his parable. Four times did he use his enchantments, offering the sacrifices of God on the altars of Baal. Four times did he vainly attempt a false divination. But I would have you mark that in each succeeding vision the mind God is brought out in deeper characters. First, he confesses his own impotence, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed, how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?" Then the second oracle brings out more distinctly the divine blessing. "Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." A third audacious attempt is not with a heavier repulse, for the stifled curse recoils on themselves—"Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Once again in the vision that closes the picture, the eyes of Balaam are opened till he gets a glimpse of the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Scepter that shall rise out of Israel, with the dawning glory of the latter days. Well might Balaam say, "There is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel. And now transfer that picture in your mind to all your enemies, and specially to that arch-fiend of hell. He comes before God to-day with the remembrance of your sins, and he desires that he may curse Israel, but he has found a hundred times that there is no enchantment against Jacob nor divination against Israel. He took David into the sin of lust, and he found that God would not curse him there, but bless him with a sorrowful chastisement and with a deep repentance. He took Peter into the sin of denying his Master, and he denied him with oaths and curses. But the Lord would not curse him even there, but turned and looked on Peter, not with a lightning glance that might have shivered him, but with a look of love that made him weep bitterly. He had taken you and me at divers times into positions of unbelief, and we have doubted God. Satan said—"Surely, surely God will curse him there," but never once has he done it. He has smitten, but the blow was full of love. He has chastised, but the chastisement was fraught with mercy. He has not cursed us, nor will he. Thou canst not turn God's mind, then, fiend of hell, thine enchantments cannot prosper, thine accusations shall not prevail. "He is in one mind, who can turn him?" "And brethren, you know when men are turned, they are sometimes turned by advice. Now who can advise with God. Who shall counsel the Most High to cast off the darlings of his bosom, or persuade the Saviour to reject his spouse? Such counsel offered were blasphemy, and it would be not pugniant to his soul. Or else men are turned by entreaties. But how shall God

listen to the entreaties of the evil one? Are not the prayers of the wicked an abomination to the Lord? Let them pray against us, let them entreat the Lord to curse us. But he is of one mind and no revengeful prayer should change the purpose of his love. Sometimes as men are changed by the ties of relationship: a another interposes and lose yields, but in our case, who can interpose? God's only begotten Son is as much concerned in our salvation as his Father, and instead of interposing to change, he would—if such a thing were needed—still continue to plead that the love and mercy of God might never be withdrawn. Oh, let us rejoice in this,—

“Midst all our sin, and care, and woe,  
His Spirit will not let us go.”

The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. “He is in one mind, and who can turn him?”

I know not how it is, but I feel that I cannot preach from this text as I should like. But oh! the text itself is music to my ears. It seems to sound like the martial trumpet of the battle, and my soul is ready for the fray. It seems now that if trials and troubles should come, if I could but hold my hand upon this precious text, I would laugh at them all. “Who can turn him?”—I would shout—“Who can turn him?” Come on, earth and hell, come on, for “who can turn him?” Come on, ye boisterous troubles, come on, ye innumerable temptations, come on, slanderer and liar, “who can turn him?” And since he cannot be changed, my soul must and will rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I wish I could throw the text like a bombshell into the midst of the army of doubters, that that army might be routed at once, for when we get a text like this, it must be the text which takes effect, and not our explanation. This surely is a most marvellous death-blow to our doubts and fears.

“He is in one mind, and who can turn him?”

And now with a few words upon the last sentence I shall conclude:—*God's purpose must be effected*—“What his soul desireth, that he doeth.” Beloved, what God's soul desireth is your salvation and mine, if we be his chosen. Well, that he doeth. Part of that salvation consists in our perfect sanctification. We have had a long struggle with inbred sin, and as far as we can judge, we have not made much progress, for still is the Philistine in the land, and still doth the Canaanite invade us. We sin still, and our hearts still have in sheen unbelief and proneness to depart from the living God. Can you think it possible that you will ever be without any tendency to sin? Does it not seem a dream that you should ever be without fault before the throne of God—without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But yet you shall be; his heart desireth it, and that he doeth. He would have his spouse without any defilement he would have his chosen generation without anything to mar their perfection. Now, inasmuch as he spake and it was done, he has but to speak and it shall be done with you. You cannot rout your foes but he can. You cannot overcome your besetting sins, but he can do it. You cannot drive out your corruptions, for they have chariots of iron, but he will drive out the last of them, till the whole land shall be without one enemy to disturb its perpetual peace. O what a joy to know that it will be ere long! Oh! it will be so soon with some of us—such a few weeks, though we perhaps are reckoning on years of life! A few weeks, or a few days, and we shall have passed through Jordan's flood and stand complete in him, accepted in the Beloved! And should it be many years—should we be spared till the snows of a century shall have fallen upon our frosted hair—yet even then we must not doubt that his purpose shall at last be fulfilled. We shall be spotless and faultless and unblameable in his sight ere long.

Another part of our salvation is, that we should at last be without pain, without sorrow, gathered with the Church of the first-born before the Father's face. Does it not seem, when you sit down to think of yourself as being in heaven, as a pretty dream that never will be true? What! shall these fingers one day smite the strings of a golden harp? O aching head! shalt thou one day wear a crown of glory that fadeth not away? O toil-worn body! shalt thou bathe thyself in seas of heavenly rest? Is not heaven too good for us, brothers and sisters? Can it be that we, poor we, shall ever get inside those pearly gates, or tread the golden streets? Oh shall we ever see his face? Will he ever kiss us with the kisses of his lips? Will the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour, take us to his bosom, and call us all his own? Oh! shall we ever drink out of the rivers of pleasure that are at the right hand of the Most High? Shall we be among that happy company who shall be led to the living fountains of waters and kill tears be wiped away from our eyes? Ah! that we shall be! for "he is in one mind and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doeth." "Father, I will that they whom thou hath given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." That is an immortal omnipotent desire. We shall be with him where he is; his purpose shall be effected, and we shall partake of his bliss. Now rise, ye who love the Saviour, and put your trust in him—rise like men who have God within you, and sit no longer down upon your dunghills. Come, ye desponding ones; if salvation were to be your own work, ye might despair, but since it is his, and he changes not, you must not even doubt.

"Now let the feeble all be strong,  
And make Jehovah's power their song;  
His shield is spread o'er every saint.  
And thus supported, who can faint?"

If you perish—even the weakest of you—God's purpose cannot be effected. If you fall, his honor will be stained. If you perish, heaven itself will be dishonored; Christ will have lost one of his members; the Divine Husband will be disappointed in part of his well-beloved spouse; he will be a king whose regalia has been stolen; nay, he will not be complete himself, for the Church is his fullness, and how can he be full if a part of his fullness shall be cast away? Putting these things together, let us take courage, and in the name of God let us set up our banners. He that has been with us hitherto will preserve us to the end, and we shall soon sing in the fruition of glory as we now recite in the confidence of faith, that his purpose is completed, and his love immutable.

This I say by way of close such a subject ought to inspire every man with awe. I speak to some here who are unconverted. It is an awful thought; God's purpose will be subserved in you. You may hate him, but as he get him honor upon Pharaoh and all his hosts, so will he upon you. You may think that you will spoil his designs: that shall be your idea, but your very acts, though guided with that intent, shall only tend to sum serve his glory. Think of that! To rebel against God is useless, for you cannot prevail. To resist him is not only impertinence but folly. He will be as much glorified by you, whichever way you go. You shall either yield him willing honor or unwilling honor, but either way his purpose in you shall most certainly be subserved. O that this thought might make you bow your heads and say, "Great God, glorify thy mercy in me, for I have revolted; show that thou canst forgive. I have sinned, deeply sinned. Prove the depths of thy mercy by pardoning me. I know that Jesus died, and that he is set forth as a propitiator; I believe on him as such. O God! I trust him: I pray thee, glorify thyself in me by showing what thy grace can do in casting sin behind thy back, and blotting out iniquity, transgression, and sin." Sinner, he will do it, he will do it, if thus you plead and thus you pray, he will do it, for there was never a sinner rejected yet, that came

to God with humble prayer and faith. Going to God to-day, confessing your sin, and taking hold of Christ, as upon the horns of the altar of mercy, and of sacrifice, you shall find that it was a part of the divine plan to bring you here to-day, to strike your mind with awe, to lead you humbly to the cross, to lead you afterwards joyfully to your God, and to bring you perfect at last before his throne.

God add his blessing for Christ's sake! Amen.

## Natural or Spiritual?

A Sermon

(No. 407)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September the 1st, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”—1 Corinthians 2:14.

THE APOSTLE PAUL knows of only two classes of men—natural and spiritual. Before his eye all other distinctions are extinguished. Barbarian or Scythian, bond or friar, male or female, circumcision or uncircumcision—all these varieties among men are mere accidents in his esteem. He does not stay to divide men, according to the symptoms of their nature. They may be devout men, such as make a profession of godliness, men of morality, men who have commenced sin, or men who have become adepts in it. He knows better than merely to judge of men by their symptoms; he takes either their diseased state or their healthy state, and so divides them. He lays the axe at the root of the trees, and doing so, he perceives only two classes of men—the natural and the spiritual. Under the term “natural,” the apostle includes all those persons who are not partakers of the Spirit of God; it matters not how excellent, how estimable, how intelligent, how instructed they may be. If the Spirit of God hath not given to them a new and higher nature than they ever possessed by their creature birth, he puts them all down at once in the list of natural men. They are what they are by nature. They never professed to have received the Spirit of God. He puts them down, therefore, as natural men. On the other hand, all into whom the Spirit of God has come, breathing into them a new and diviner life, he puts down under the other head of spiritual men. They may be as yet but babes in grace; their faith may be weak; their love may be but in its early bud; as yet their spiritual senses may be little exercised, perhaps their faults may be in excess of their virtues, but inasmuch as the root of the matter is in them, and they have passed from death unto life, out of the region of nature into that which is beyond nature—the kingdom of grace—he puts them down also, all of them in one list, as spiritual men. And then he goes on to affirm concerning natural men,—those who are not partakers of the Spirit,—that the truths of God, which are spiritual, they do not and cannot receive. He teaches that it is utterly impossible that they ever should receive them, unless lifted out of that class of natural men and transformed by the Spirit’s work into spiritual men. This change, however, being effected, they will not only receive the things of the Spirit, but embrace them with delight, feed upon them with intense satisfaction, and rise eventually into that state of glory which is next beyond the state of grace.

This morning I propose—and O that God the Holy Spirit may bear witness in our hearts!—I propose, first of all, to dwell a little while upon the great truth that *natural men do not receive the things of the Spirit of God, but count them foolishness*; in the second place, I shall show, for a moment only, that *the reason of the rejection of the things of God cannot be because they are really foolish, for they are not so*; thirdly, we shall come to the inference that *the reason why the natural man rejects the things of God, is to be found in himself alone*; and then, fourthly, we shall consider *the practical lessons which the whole subject teaches*.

I. First, then, it is a well-known fact, and one which can be proved by the observation of every day, that **THE NATURAL MAN RECEIVES NOT THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**

Mark, we lay this down as a rule. We do not say that the drunken or debauched natural man receives not the things of God. That is true; but we also insist upon it that the delicate and the refined natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. I do not pick out some one case, and say the uneducated, illiterate, coarse, low-minded natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things; but all alike, the most intelligent, enlightened, and trained natural men, equally, do not, and cannot, and will not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. Like our apostle, we take a wide range, and do not leave out one. However amiable in natural temperament, however well trained by the best parental associations, however kept in check by the most excellent position in providence, however patriotic, however self-denying, however benevolent, however estimable in an other respects, the natural man does not and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God.

Now look around and search for the facts which prove the truth of this. How many natural men there are, and such as you would call good men too in some ways, who *oppose violently* the things of the Spirit of God. They do not believe them; nay, they say they are a lie. They cannot understand how men should be simpletons enough to believe such ridiculous things. Honestly do they imagine that they shall be snapping the chains of priestcraft and unrivetting the fetters of superstition, if they should come forward and attempt to prove that these spiritual things are a mere delusion. There, gentlemen, we have lived to see you, under a profession of religion, actually oppose those spiritual things which this religion teaches. We have lived to see what we scarcely ever dreamed to be possible—clergymen of the Church of England themselves denying the truths which they swore they would defend, and in their “Essays and Reviews” seeking to cast down those spiritual things which once they professed to have understood when they claimed to have received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of their bishop. We have not only in these times opened and avowed infidel lecturers who, like honest men deny everything openly, but we have the hypocritical Christian infidel who, like a dishonest thief and wolf in sheep’s clothing, willing always to take the gain of godliness, denies godliness itself. Perhaps it was left for this age to permit wickedness to culminate to the highest, and to see the growth of the vilest hypocrisy that ever appeared among the sons of men. We have had abundant proof that men of the most scientific minds, persons who have been exceedingly inquiring, men who have trod the realms of knowledge, and gone even to the seventh heaven of wisdom, that these have nevertheless proved that they could not receive the things of the kingdom of God, by their determined opposition and enmity against anything like the truth as it is in Jesus. When you hear them blaspheming the holy name of Christ, when you hear them bringing what they call “scientific facts” against the truth of revelation, be not amazed as though it were some new thing, but write this down in your memorandum book—the Holy Ghost said of old, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” and these men live to prove that what the Spirit of God said was very truth.

A greater proportion of persons there are who do not so much oppose violently as more *secretly despise and condemn*. Well, they tell us, they dare say that the Christian religion is a very good thing for some people, and especially for old women and for persons that are on the borders of the grave, but still no rational being would endorse full all the doctrines of the gospel, and especially that particular form of them which John Calvin taught; for if there be any doctrines that excite more the spleen of these wise men than any other, it is the doctrines of grace, the doctrine of discriminating, distinguishing love, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of God, being really God, and



not man. Against these they have no words too bitter. "Oh," they say, "it is an exploded theory; it has had its day, and it has become effete," and so, without actually persecuting those who hold the truth, or without even setting themselves up by active efforts to put it down they do secretly with a sneer and with a jest, pass it by as a thing utterly unworthy of a rational person, a thing that is not for a moment to be thought of as being one half so important as the wing of a beetle, or as the particular flight of a sparrow, or the period of the migration of a swallow. All the facts of natural history they think valuable and important, but these grander truths which have to do with the kingdom of God they despise utterly, and think they are but the dream of simpletons. Again, I say, my brethren, marvel not at this. Let this be to you another argument that the Spirit of God knew what was in man, and rightly judged of the human heart when he said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Probably in this assembly there are very few of either of these two classes, but a far more numerous company now claims our attention. The great mass of mankind say, "We dare say it is all well, and good, and true, and it is a proper thing for ministers think about, and the deacons of churches, and so on, no doubt they should see to it: it is very proper that there should be a right creed, and that the articles of the Church should be defended, and of course the Bible Society should spread the Bible, but then, of course, nobody ought to be importuned to read it, it is of no particular importance." Better read the almanack than read the Bible, according to some; and as to the doctrines, "Oh," they say—

"For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

"O yes, no doubt," they say, when they see some zealous brother vindicating a truth, "you are all right, and so is your friend opposite who believes the very reverse; you are both right as far as you go; and as far as I am concerned, I should never interfere with you, for I do not consider the things to be worth the turning of a hair; I never trouble my head at all about it. I have so much to do with the rise and fall of stocks in the market, of attending to my cattle, or seeing after my shop, that it would not do for me to attempt to be a theologian. The Bible is an excellent book; I have nothing to say against that, certainly; but, at the same time, for a farmer, a book on practical chemistry is more useful, and no doubt, for a person who holds some office in the parish, he had better buy a handy-book of common law than a book on the law of God." I only just give you a sketch of what many say and of what many more think. I know there are many of you here present to-day who say, "O yes, it is a good thing for us to go somewhere on a Sunday; we do not think the Sabbath should be broken; we like to hear a minister, and we like to see him in earnest, but it is of no importance to us; it is not a matter of concern to us." Ah! since, you, too have proved that, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned." These things which are so important, that you should neglect everything else to attend to them, are by you thought folly; these eternal realities, compared with which the world's highest interests are but as unsubstantial shadows, you pass by as being idle dreams and doubtless they *are* dreams to you, because you, still being in your natural estate, do not, cannot, will not, receive the things of the Spirit of God.

We are not without those persons, also, who even go farther. They say, "Well these things are of no importance to *me*;" and they think that those are fools who feel that there is any importance in them to them *personally*. "Oh!" says one, "for a man to sit down and think the doctrine of election, and believe himself to be elect—why the man must be of a very debased intellect." "Oh," says

another, "to be always meditating upon the atonement of Christ—why there are other themes more expansive to think thou this." "Ay," says a third, "to be turning over a mere system of divinity, and professing to be able to revel in certain mysterious truths, such persons must be of a weak mind, or else very fanatical or enthusiastic." And so you will often hear persons say, if a man be a little more earnest than usual, "Surely that man is going wild; certainly he is attaching an undue importance to these matters." They will put him down as a Sectarian, perhaps which is one of the most honorable names by which a true Christian is known in these times. "Ah!" they will say, "a zealot, a bigot!" because a man happens to be honest in what he professes to believe, and thinks that if religion be anything, it would be everything and if it be worth all our thought, it is worth all our thoughts: that if it have any truth in it, it ought to be the master and ruler of all other truths, and governor of all the thoughts and the acts of life. Now, Christian men and women, when ye see any who turn upon their heel and despise you, because with earnestness you would seek the Lord your God, and strive to honor him, think it not some new display of human depravity; think not that you have made a fresh discovery in the awful deep of human departure from God, but say, rather now again, "I know, and once more am I confirmed in the fact, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." It is a great wonder that there is one Christian upon the face of the earth. Some religions teach doctrines palatable to human nature, but the doctrines of Christ are the most unpalatable that could have been suggested. Some religions find that in nature which echoes to their voice, but Christ comes and brings a sword upon the earth to slay the fondest darlings of our fancy, and put to death the proudest favourites of our ambition. Oh! had the religion of Christ taught us that man was a noble being, only a little fallen—had the religion of Christ taught that Christ had taken away by his blood, sin from every man, and that every man by his own free-will, without divine grace, might be saved—it were indeed a most acceptable religion to the mass of men; it would just suit their taste; and as the ox drinks down water, so would they drink it down. But such a religion as that of Christ, so diametrically opposed as it is to all the evil propensities of man, owes its very existence to the might of God: that it has not long ago died from the earth, through the decease of its last admirer, is only due to that supreme power of the Holy Spirit which goeth with the preaching of the gospel wherever Christ is faithfully lifted up.

II. Now, briefly on my second point.—THE NATURAL MAN COUNTS THE THINGS OF GOD TO BE FOOLISH; but there is nothing whatever in the things themselves to justify such an estimation.

Sir, you do not know what you say when you declare that the gospel of Christ is absurd. I am certain you do not understand it, and that you are talking of something you have never studied. You are generally pretty safe with a man who rails at the Bible, by saying, "Did you ever read it?" You are not often wrong, when you hear a minister of Christ found fault with, by saying to the man, "Did you ever hear him? did you ever read his sermons?" In nine cases out of ten it is, "No, I do not know anything about him, yet I do not like him, I do not know anything about Christ, but I do not like him, I do not know anything about his doctrines, but I do not wish to know." I have heard persons rail at Calvinistic doctrine, who never in their lives have read a word that Calvin wrote. If you were to offer them a small treatise in which that noble system of divinity should be vindicated, they would say, "Oh! it is no doubt so dry, I should not be able to read it." Yet these learned gentlemen know what is inside a book without opening it! They are like some critics of whom I have heard, who, when they meet with a new volume, take the knife and cut the first page, smell it, and then condemn or praise. Many there are who do just the same with the Bible. They have

heard some verses of it once or twice, they have got some idea of it, and straightway they are wise. They take to themselves their own degree of Doctor of Divinity, and they have much boldness in their unbelief. Now, of any man who should denounce the system of truth which is taught in Scripture as ridiculous and foolish, I can only say he has never taken the trouble to search it out for himself. Have not the mightiest intellects confessed that the truths of this book were infinitely above their highest flights? Even Newton, who could thread the spheres, and map the march of what else had seemed discordant planets, even he said there were depths here which no mortal could fathom. "O the depths of the wisdom of God!" This has been the exclamation of some of the most glorious minds that have ever enlightened the world. And I can say, and I know it to be a truth, that every man who reads the Word of God, and studies the divinity therein revealed—if he at first thinketh that he understandeth it, when he reads again, finds that he has only begun to know; and when he shall have searched year after year, and have become more than usually prescient in the study of the things of God, he will still say, "Now I begin to know my folly, now I began to discover that God is above me and beneath me, but I cannot grasp him, I cannot find out the Almighty to perfection, his words, his works, his ways, herein revealed to the sons of men, are past finding out." You wise fellows who turn upon your heels, and sneer at things which have astonished minds infinitely vaster than yours, prove your own folly when you call the things of God folly. With regard to that particular form of divine truth which we hold so dear, currently called Calvinistic doctrines—there is no philosophy propounded by any sage, so profound as that philosophy. There are no truths that were ever taught so wonderful, so worthy of the profoundest research of the most expanded minds, as those doctrines of the eternal love, the discriminating grace, and the infinite power of God, co-working to produce the results which his wisdom had decreed. When every other science shall have been exhausted, when astronomy shall have no wonders left, when geology shall have no secrets to unravel, when natural history and philosophy shall have given up all their infinite treasures, there will still remain a mine without a bottom, there will still remain a sea of wisdom without a shore, in the doctrines of the gospel of the grace of God. The folly, therefore, cannot be in the doctrines themselves.

And as on the one hand, these things of the Spirit of God are wise and profound, so on the other hand, they are most important, and most imperatively necessary to be understood, so that if they be not received, it is not because they are uncongenial with our necessities. There are some speculations which a man need not enter upon. I receive constantly questions upon speculations which never struck my mind before, and certainly never will again. Persons want to know what is the origin of sin; they ask ten thousand questions which, if they could be answered, would not make them a whit the better. But the things of the gospel of God, which are as important as life and death depending upon them, men are content to slur over without making any earnest enquiry, or setting themselves to ascertain their truth. O sirs! the doctrines of God teach you your relationship to your Maker—is not that worth understanding? They teach you your condition before the Most High God—should you not know that? Ought you not to have clear ideas of it? They show you how God can be just to man, and yet be gracious—is not that a riddle that is worthy to have an answer? They reveal to you how you can approach to God, and become his child; how you may be conformed to his image, and made a partaker of his glory—is not that worth understanding? They reveal to you the world to come; they put to your short-sighted eye, a telescope which enables you to pierce the darkness and to see the unseen. The doctrines of grace put into your hands the keys of heaven, and unveil the secrets of death, and hell—are not these things worth grasping? Are not the secrets of

these places worth the discovery? The doctrines of grace put inside your hands powers infinitely greater than ever wizard was conceived to have wielded when he used his magic rod. By their might you can destroy your troubles; you can see your sins swallowed up; you can behold your enemies defeated; you can see death destroyed, the grave swallowed up, and life and immortality brought to light. If you, then, as a natural man, say that the things that are written in this book are foolish, it is not because they are trivial, unimportant, and despicable, for no man can ever over-estimate their value, and no soul can solemnly enough weigh them, and understand how important they are. It argues a high excess of impiety, when a man shall say that that which came from God is foolish. Perhaps blasphemy itself cannot outlive that, and yet how many have been guilty of this constructive blasphemy! Let my finger run around these galleries, and along these seats beneath; are there not many of you who have said the Bible was a dull and uninteresting book? And yet God wrote it! And what have you said? Have you not impugned your Maker? Have you not said, perhaps, that the doctrines of the Gospel were very unimportant? Can you believe that your Maker sat down to write an unimportant book, or that the Holy Ghost inspired men of old to write that which, if not nonsense, is certainly of no importance whatever? Come, bow your head and repent of this your grave offense, for an offense it is, since it is not within the compass of any modest reason to imagine that any word which God has written can be foolish, or unimportant or unworthy to be understood. I suppose it is granted by all who love the Word of God, and to those mainly I must appeal, that the reason why the natural man rejects the sinners of God is not because they are foolish; then there must be some other reason.

III. Thirdly, therefore. I propose to speak of THE REASON FOR THE REJECTION OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL BY NATURAL MEN.

The reasons are to be found in themselves. And what are those reasons? The apostle tells us they cannot receive them, for they are foolishness unto them. I think he means they cannot receive them, first of all, *for want of taste*. You have sometimes seen a man standing before a splendid picture. It was painted by Raphael, or Rubens, or Titians, and he stands and admires it. "What a noble countenance!" says he, "How well the colouring has been placed! How excellently he understands his lights and shadows! What a fine conception! I could stand a week and admire that splendid picture." Some country bumpkin, who is walking through the gallery, hears what our friend the artist is saying, and he says, "I should not like to stand a week and look at it, it looks to me to be an old decayed piece of canvas that wants cleaning. "I do not think the world would be much the worse if it should all get cleaned off." He walks through the gallery, and notices that on the wall outside there is a great daub—a picture of an elephant standing on its head, and a clown or two performing in some circus, and he says, "That's beautiful; that's just my taste." Now you blame our country friend because he cannot admire that which is really excellent, but finds a great deal more satisfaction in a common daub plastered on the wall. It would be quite correct to say of him that he cannot receive the beauties of refinement and taste, because he has never been in any way instructed in the matter; he has a want of taste for such things. Just so is it with the natural man. Give him some work of fiction—a daub upon the wall. Give him some fine piece of imagination; (and what is that when compared with the word of him that spake from heaven?) and he is satisfied. But before the book of God, before the revelation of the Most High, of the All-Wise, he stands and he sees nothing; nothing to admire; nothing to enchant his heart; nothing to kindle his imagination; nothing to enlist his faith; nothing to arouse his powers; nothing to excite his hopes.

Surely there in a sad want of taste here, and the natural man, for want of taste for such things, loves not the things of God.

But it is not merely for want of taste, it is for *want of organs* by which to appreciate the third. Here is a blind man, and we have taken him upon a pilgrimage to the summit of a mountain. What a landscape, my friend; what a landscape! What do you think of it? “Not much,” says he. Why, look at those lakes there melting into one! Do you not see the mountain yonder across the valley? What a variety of colors upon its sides! Did ever you see such a blending of colors as that which is here produced by the Great Artist? And there, cannot you see yonder clouds how nobly they sail along? Look downward. What a pleasant sight is that village which seems to have diminished till it looks like a few children’s toys put together there in sport. And now turn yonder and see that winding river like a thread of silver going through the emerald fields—what a magnificent view! What do you think of it, my friend? “I do not think much of it,” says he. You are astonished. At last you say, “Well, if you do not think something of this, you must be blind.” “That is just what I am,” says he, “and of course I do not think much of this when I am blind.” Now that natural man is blind. The eye of the Christian is his faith; but the natural man, being destitute of a living faith in thy living Saviour, is like a man without eyes. He says it is foolish; it is nothing to him. Do you think you could get a blind man to count down hundreds of pounds for a single picture? It is of no use to him. What would a deaf man give to go where you hear the sweetest singing that ever trilled from human lips? “Oh! no,” thinks he, “it is foolish.” He can hardly understand why men should spend their money and give the time to listen to the numerous combinations of sound produced by a Handel. Or if blind, he cannot comprehend why men should build long galleries and hang their fortunes out in pictures, or why they should travel to the Alps, or wish to cross the sea to view the mighty wonders of other lands. “No,” says he, “it is foolish and trivial; better stop at home; there is nothing in it.” So is it with the natural man. He lacks the organs, he has no ear of faith, no eye of faith, and he cannot therefore receive the things of God; they are foolishness to him.

But more than this—not only does he lack taste and lack organs, *but he actually lacks the nature which could appreciate these things*. I will tell you a fable. There was a certain swine exceedingly learned among its class. It had studied the flavour of all manners of seeds, and fruits, and acorns, and knew right well, by long calculations and experience, the right time when the trough would be full, and when it would be time for it to come forth from its resting place. Greatly respected was this aged swine, and considered by its fellows to be one of the great dignitaries of the sty, and one day it enlightened its fellows by a speech to this effect:—“I saw,” said he, “the other night, by the light of the moon, a man—poor simple man that he was, looking through a long tube at the stars. Now I thought within myself that surely he was mad. If he had been scraping up acorns, there would have been some common sense in it; if he had been getting together husks, why there would have been something practical in it, but for a man with two feet and two hands, to be letting them be still, and only using his eyes to look up at the stars—ah! he must be a fanatic and an enthusiast; he is not as sensible and practical as you and I are, who are content so long as we get our barley meal regularly, and can creep back and lie down again in our straw.” And all his audience grunted their approbation. They said at once that this human being was far inferior to the swine in the matter of practical wisdom. Do not smile, perhaps you belong to these gentry yourselves. I heard a human swine say the other day—mark, a human swine—it was one who sometimes could look through a telescope, and this human swine said, “Ah! there you are! You are going to your chapel on Thursday night, and to your prayer-meeting on the Monday, and you spend hours in praying and reading your

Bible; it is fanaticism. Now, I am the man for common-sense; I stick to my business, I do. I say, 'Leave these things to take care of themselves.' I am looking out for the present; I am practical, I am." And those that were by, grunted their approval, like human swine, as they were, and if a really spiritual man had been present he would not have wondered, but he would have said, "Every being to its taste; these are natural men, and they set up their own nature; it is a swinish nature, and they act up to their swinish spirit." He would not have been angry with them, but he would have pitied them. Poor things, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "What a degrading simile!" saith one. It is, sir, but not more degrading than human nature is. "Why you make us out to be inferior to Christians then! "Of course you are. As much as the brute is inferior to a man, so is a mere natural man inferior to a spiritually-minded man, because we rise by three steps of the ladder. There is the animal, he lacks intellect. God gives intellect, and there comes the man; God gives his Spirit, and then comes the Christian, but the Christian is a higher and nobler creature than the mere offspring of Adam. Just as much as the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, exceeds the first Adam, who was but made of the dust of the earth, so do the seed of the second Adam exceed all the offspring of the first Adam; rising to a higher life, to greater dignities, and to a nobler destiny than they.

IV. And now, lastly, I come to THE PRACTICAL TRUTHS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS GREAT THOUGH SORROWFUL FACT.

Do you not perceive, men and brethren, that if what I have stated be true there is *absolute necessity for regeneration, or the work of the Spirit?* An absolute necessity, I say, because in no one single instance can it be dispensed with. You may educate a nature till it should attain the highest point, but you cannot educate an old nature into a new one. You may educate a horse, but you cannot educate it into a man. You shall train the bird that sits upon your finger but you cannot train a limpet into an eagle, nor is it possible for you to train by the best instruction the natural man into a spiritual man. Between the two there is still a great gulf fixed. But cannot the natural man, by great efforts long-continued at last come to be spiritual? No, he cannot. Let the fish in the water wish as much as ever it likes, and despite Dr. Darwin's hypothesis, I aver that no pike by all its wishing ever wished itself into an ostrich, and that no single minnow was ever known to make itself into a lark. It may get as high as its own nature can get it but not beyond; it is a transformation which only the Divine Being can effect. So you may by your own efforts make yourselves the best of natural men. You may become the most patriotic of statesmen, you may become the most sober and discreet of moralists, you may become the kindest and most benevolent of philanthropists, but into a spiritual man you cannot bring yourself. Do what you will, and still at your very best there is a division wide as eternity between you and the regenerate man. But cannot another man help us out of such a nature into a state of grace? No, by no means; as man is powerless for himself, so is he powerless for his fellow. The priest may dip his pretentious fingers into the water which he professes to have sanctified, and may put the drops upon the infant's brow but that the child is regenerate is a lie. He may take the child in after-life into the baptismal pool if he will, and there bury him agreeably to the apostle's metaphor, but that by immersion any more than by sprinkling a soul can be regenerate, is a gross and infamous lie. He may put his hand upon his head and bless him in God's name, he may perform divers enchantments over him, and conclude at last with the final sacred greasing, and dispatch his spirit with extreme unction into another world but to regenerate another man is as impossible to our fellow-men as to create a world or to make another heaven, and rival the majesty of Deity. How, then, is it to be done? The Spirit of God alone can do it. O

sirs! this is a great mystery, but you must know it if you would be saved, it is a solemn secret, but it is one which must be known in your consciences, or else shut out from heaven you must be. The Spirit of God must new make you, ye must be born again. "If a man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." The same power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead must he exerted in raising us from the dead, the very same omnipotence, without which angels or worms could not have had a being, must again step forth out of its privy-chamber, and do as great a work as it did at the first creation in making us anew in Christ Jesus our Lord. There have been attempts at all times to get rid of this unpleasant necessity. Constantly the Christian Church itself tries to forget it, but as often as ever this old doctrine of regeneration is brought forward pointedly, God is pleased to favor his Church with a revival. The doctrine which looks at first as though it would hush every exertion with indolence, and make men sit down with listlessness and despair, is really like the trump of God to awake the dead, and where it is fully and faithfully preached, though it grate upon the carnal ear, though it excite enmity in many against the man who dares to proclaim it, yet it is owned of God. Because it honors God, God will honor it. This was the staple preaching of Whitfield, and it was by the preaching of this that he was made as the mighty angel flying through the midst of heaven preaching the everlasting gospel to every creature. He was always great upon that which he called the great R—Regeneration. Whenever you heard him, the three R's came out clearly—Ruin, Regeneration, and Redemption! Man ruined, wholly ruined, hopelessly helplessly, eternally ruined! Man regenerated by the Spirit of God, and by the Spirit of God alone wholly made a new creature in Christ! Man redeemed, redeemed by precious blood from all his sins, not by works of righteousness, not by deeds of the law, not by ceremonies, prayers, or resolutions, but by the precious blood of Christ! Oh! we must be very pointed, and very plain about regeneration, for this is the very pith and marrow of the matter—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Another practical inference. If you and I, or any of us, have received the things of the Spirit of God, we ought to look upon that as comfortable evidence that we have been born again. What say you, my hearer? Does your faith lay her hand this morning upon the head of Christ, and take him to be your Saviour, your teacher, and your all? If so, blessed art thou, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee. Or does thy spirit this morning not only agree to the truth of divine election, of assured redemption, and of the finished work and immutable love of Christ; but dost thou love the truth in thy heart as well as agree to it in the head? If so, the natural man receiveth not these things, therefore thou art no natural man; but the Spirit of God has brought thee into his kingdom, because he has enabled thee to receive his truth. Precious is faith indeed, because it assuredly evidences to us what is beyond the reach of our senses. You can't tell whether you are born again or not, except by your faith. There will be no difference in your face, there will be no difference in your flesh, nor even in your mental characteristics; you may remain to a great extent the same man as far as mind and body are concerned; but faith—that which was not there before—faith is the grand symptom which betokens returning health; it is the flag hung out upon the castle of the soul, showing that the King is the secret tenant in the state-room of the soul, it is the light which shows that the sun has risen; it is the morning star which heralds the full illumination and meridian sunlight of eternal glory. Prize your faith, ask for more of it, but look upon it as being an evidence that you have passed from death unto life.

And, lastly, my dear hearers, how this text shows you the necessity of accompanying all your efforts to do good with earnest prayer to God! "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon."

When we first begin to preach, we think that the doctrines that are so sweet to us will be sure to be sweet to other people; and when persons begin to abuse and find fault we are so astonished. Oh! if we had begun to learn the truth a little better, we should not be astonished at all, except when any receive the truth, for that we should always think to be the greatest miracle of all. You have been trying to teach your child, and it is not converted yet. Ah! don't marvel, but take your child in the arms of your prayer to the spirit of God, and say, "O Lord, I cannot put the truth into this child, for it cannot receive it: do thou renew its heart, and then it shall receive the truth indeed!" "And specially may I ask your continued and earnest prayers for me. What is the minister of Christ to do? He has to speak to a mountain and bid it be removed. Can his words remove it? He has to speak to fire and bid it change its nature into water. He has to speak to the dead, and say, "Ye dry bones, live! "Is not his ministry a foolish and a futile thing unless the Spirit of God be with him? I pray you then, be instant in your prayers to God. Strive earnestly at the throne of grace for all the ministers of the New Testament, that power may be bestowed upon them, for we are better at home than here if the Spirit of God be not with us. In vain, O ye unbelievers, ye sound your trumpets! in vain, O ye Gideons, ye break your pitchers that the light may shine in vain, ye Jonahs, ye cry through the midst of the wretched city! in vain, ye Peters, ye preach even to peoples of many nations! If the Spirit come not down from on high like tongues of fire, if God send not life, and energy, and light with the Word, ye shall go back without your sheaves,—ye shall return without success, wearied by disappointment, damaged by fear and ready to lay down and die. But oh! if thou comest forth, O Spirit of God! there is not a preacher in the corner of the streets who shall not win his souls; there is not a minister to-day in the humblest conventicle, in the lowest of back streets, which shall not be made like Peter on the Pentecostal day, there is not one feeble man or woman teaching children in the Sabbath-school who shall not become a winner of souls when the Spirit of God is with him!

Of all that I have taught this morning, this is the sum.—Man is dead in sin, and life is a gift of God. You who have received it should plead with God that that gift should be bestowed on others. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."



## Accidents, Not Punishments

**Spurgeon preached this message in response to two disasters that had hit very close to home. On Sunday, August 25, 1861, a nightmarish collision between two trains in the Clayton Tunnel (a 1.5-mile long tunnel between London and Brighton) had claimed 23 lives and severely injured hundreds. Barely more than two weeks later, on Monday, September 2, another train wreck in Kentish Town Fields (in North London) claimed 15 more lives. See:**

<http://ukhrail.uel.ac.uk/glossary/clayton.html>

<http://ukhrail.uel.ac.uk/glossary/sigs.html>

[http://www.hassocksuk.com/clayton\\_tunnel.htm](http://www.hassocksuk.com/clayton_tunnel.htm)

A Sermon

(No. 408)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September the 8th, 1861 by the  
Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem! I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke 13:1-5.

THE YEAR 1861 will have a notoriety among its fellows as the year of calamities. Just at that season when man goeth forth to reap the fruit of his labors, when the harvest of the earth is ripe, and the barns are beginning to burst with the new wheat, Death too, the mighty reaper, has come forth to out down his harvest; full sheaves have been gathered into his garner—the tomb, and terrible have been the wailings which compose the harvest hymn of death. In reading the newspapers during the last two weeks, even the most stolid must have been the subject of very painful feelings. Not only have there been catastrophes so alarming that the blood chills at their remembrance, but column after column of the paper has been devoted to calamities of a minor degree of horror, but which, when added together, are enough to astound the mind with the fearful amount of sudden death which has of late fallen on the sons of men. We have had not only one incident for every day in the week, but two or three; we have not simply been stunned with the alarming noise of one terrific clash, but another, and another, and another, have followed upon each other’s heels, like Job’s messengers, till we have needed Job’s patience and resignation to hear the dreadful tale of woes.

Now, men and brethren, such things as these have always happened in all ages of the world. Think not that this is a new thing; do not dream, as some do, that this is the produce of an overwrought civilization, or of that modern and most wonderful discovery of steam. If the steam engine had never been known, and if the railway had never been constructed, there would have been sudden deaths and terrible accidents, not withstanding. In taking up the old records in which our ancestors wrote down their accidents and calamities, we find that the old stage coach yielded quite as heavy a booty to death as does the swiftly-rushing train; there were gates to Hades then as many as there are now, and roads to death quite as steep and precipitous, and traveled by quite as

vast a multitude as in our present time. Do you doubt that? Permit me to refer you to the chapter before you. Remember those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. What if no collision crushed them; what if they were not destroyed by the ungovernable iron horse dragging them down from an embankment; yet some badly-built tower, or some wall beaten by the tempest could fall upon eighteen at a time, and they might perish. Or worse than that, a despotic ruler, having the lives of men at his girdle, like the keys of his palace, might fall upon worshippers in the temple itself, and mix their blood with the blood of the bullocks which they were just then sacrificing to the God of heaven. Do not think, then, that this is an age in which God is dealing more hardly with us than of old. Do not think that God's providence has become more lax than it was, there always were sudden deaths, and there always will be. There always were seasons when death's wolves hunted in hungry packs, and, probably, until the end of this dispensation, the last enemy will hold his periodic festivals, and glut the worms with the flesh of men. Be not, therefore, cast down with any sudden fear, neither be ye troubled by these calamities. Go about your business, and if your avocations should call you to cross the field of death itself, do it, and do it bravely. God has not thrown up the reins of the world, he has not taken off his hand from the helm of the great ship, still

“He everywhere hath sway,  
And all things serve his might;  
His every act pure blessing is,  
His path unsullied light.”

Only learn to trust him, and thou shalt not be afraid of sudden fear; “thy soul shall dwell at ease, and thy seed shall inherit the earth.”

The particular subject of this morning, however, is this—the use which we ought to make of these fearful texts which God is writing in capital letters upon the history of the world. God hath spoken once, yea, twice, let it not be said that man regardeth it not. We have seen a glimmering of God's power, we have beheld something of the readiness with which he can destroy our fellow-creatures. Let us “hear the rod and him that hath appointed it,” and in hearing it, let us do two things. First, let us not be so foolish as to draw the conclusion of superstitious and ignorant persons—that conclusions which is hinted at in the text, namely, that those who are thus destroyed by accident are sinners above all the sinners that be in the land. And, secondly, let us draw the right and proper inference, let us make practical use of all these events for our own personal improvement, let us hear the voice of the Savior saying, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

**I. First, then, LET US TAKE HEED THAT WE DO NOT DRAW THE RASH AND HASTY CONCLUSION FROM TERRIBLE ACCIDENTS, THAT THOSE WHO SUFFER BY THEM SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SINS.**

It has been most absurdly stated that those who travel on the first day of the week and meet with an accident, ought to regard that accident as being a judgment from God upon them on account of their violating the Christian's day of worship. It has been stated even by godly ministers, that the late deplorable collision should be looked upon as an exceedingly wonderful and remarkable visitation of the wrath of God against those unhappy persons who happened to be in the Clayton tunnel. Now I enter my solemn protest against such an inference as that, not in my own name, but in the name of Him who is the Christian's Master and the Christian's Teacher. I say of those who were crushed in that tunnel, think ye that they were sinners above all the sinners “I tell you, all: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Or those who perished but last Monday, think ye that they were sinners above all the sinners that were in London? “I tell you, Nay: but, except

ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Now, mark, I would not deny but what there have sometimes been judgments of God upon particular persons for sin; sometimes, and I think but exceedingly rarely, such things have occurred. Some of us have heard in our own experience instances of men who have blasphemed God and defied Him to destroy them, who have suddenly fallen dead; and in such cases, the punishment has so quickly followed the blasphemy that one could not help perceiving the hand of God in it. The man had wantonly asked for the judgment of God, his prayer was heard and the judgment came. And, beyond a doubt, there are what may be called natural judgments. You see a man ragged, poor, houseless; he has been profligate, he has been a drunkard, he has lost his character, and it is but the just judgment of God upon him that he should be starving, and that he should be an outcast among men. You see in the hospitals loathsome specimens of men and women foully diseased; God forbid that we should deny that in such a case—the punishment being the natural result of the sin—there is a judgment of God upon licentiousness and ungodly lusts. And the like may be said in many instances where there is so clear a link between the sin and the punishment that the blindest men may discern that God hath made Misery the child of Sin. But in cases of accident, such as that to which I refer, and in cases of sudden and instant death, again, I say, I enter my earnest protest against the foolish and ridiculous idea that those who thus perish are sinners above all the sinners who survive unharmed.

Let me just try to reason this matter out with Christian people, for there are some unenlightened Christian people who will feel horrified by what I have said. Those who are ready at perversions may even dream that I would apologise for the breach of the day of worship. Now I do no such thing. I do not extenuate the sin, I only testify and declare that accidents are not to be viewed as punishments for sin, for punishment belongs not to this world, but to the world to come. To all those who hastily look on every calamity as a judgment I would speak in the earnest hope of setting them right. Let me begin, then, by saying, my dear brethren, do not you see that *what you say is not true?* and that is the best of reasons why you should not say it. Does not your own experience and observation teach you that one event happeneth both to the righteous and to the wicked? It is true, the wicked man sometimes falls dead in the street; but has not the minister fallen dead in the pulpit? It is true that a pleasure-boat, in which men were seeking their own pleasure on the Sunday, has suddenly gone down; but is it not equally true that a ship which contained none but godly men, who were bound upon an excursion to preach the gospel, has gone down too? The visible providence of God has no respect of persons; and a storm may gather around the “John Williams” missionary ship, quite as well as around a vessel filled with riotous sinners. Why, do you not perceive that the providence of God has been, in fact, in its outward dealings, rather harder upon the good than upon the bad? For; did not Paul say, as he looked upon the miseries of the righteous in his day, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable?” The path of righteousness has often conducted men to the rack, to the prison, to the gibbet, to the stake; while the road of sin has often led a man to empire, to dominion, and to high esteem among his fellows. It is not true that in this world God does punish men for sin, and reward them for their good deeds. For, did not David say, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree?” and did not this perplex the Psalmist for a little season, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood their end? Although your faith assures you that the ultimate result of providence will work out only good to the people of God, yet your life, though it be but a brief part of the Divine drama of history, must have taught you that providence does not outwardly discriminate between the righteous and the wicked—that the righteous perish suddenly as well as the wicked—that

the plague knows no difference between the sinner and the saint—and that the sword of war is alike pitiless to the sons of God and the sons of Belial. When God sendeth forth the scourge, it slayeth suddenly the innocent as well as the perverse and froward. Now, my brethren, if your idea of an avenging and Awarding providence be not true, why should you talk as if it were? And why, if it be not correct as a general rule, should you suppose it to be true in this one particular instance? Get the idea out of your head, for the gospel of God never needs you to believe an untruth.

But, secondly, there is another reason. The idea that whenever an accident occurs we are to look upon it as a judgment from God *would make the providence of God to be, instead of a great deep, a fiery shallow pool*. Why, any child can understand the providence of God, if it be true that when there is a railway accident it is because people travel on a Sunday. I take any little child from the smallest infant-class form in the Sunday-school, and he will say, “Yes, I see that.” But then, if such a thing be providence, if it be a providence that can be understood, manifestly it is not the Scriptural idea of providence, for in the Scripture we are always taught that God’s providence is “a great deep;” and even Ezekiel, who had the wing of the cherubim and could fly aloft, when he saw the wheels which were the great picture of the providence of God, could only say the wheels were so high that they were terrible, and were full of eyes, so that he cried, “O wheel!” If—I repeat it to make it plain—if always a calamity were the result of some sin, providence would be as simple as that twice two made four; it would be one of the first lessons that a little child might learn. But Scripture teaches us that providence is a great depth in which the human intellect may swim and dive, but it can neither find a bottom nor a shore, and if you and I pretend that we can find out the reasons of providence, and twist the dispensations of God over our fingers, we only prove our folly, but we do not prove that we have begun to understand the ways of God. Why, look, sirs; suppose for a moment there were some great performance going on, and you should step in in the middle of it and see one actor upon the stage for a moment, and you should say, “Yes, I understand it,” what a simpleton you would be! Do you not know that the great transactions of providence began near six thousand years ago? and you have only stepped into this world for thirty or forty years, and seen one actor on the stage, and you say you understand it. Tush! you do not; you have only begun to know. Only He knoweth the end from the beginning, only He understands what are the great results, and what is the great reason for which the world was made, and for which He permits both good and evil to occur. Think not that you know the ways of God; it is to degrade providence, and to bring God down to the level of men, when you pretend that you can understand these calamities and find out the secret designs of wisdom.

But next, do you not perceive that such an idea as this would *encourage Phariseeism*? These people who were crushed to death, or scalded, or destroyed under the wheels of railway carriages, were worse sinners than we are. Very well, then what good people we must be; what excellent examples of virtue! We do not such things as they, and therefore God makes all things smooth for us. Inasmuch as we here traveled some of us every day in the week, and yet have never been smashed to pieces, we may on this supposition rank ourselves with the favourites of Deity. And then, do not you see, brethren, our safety would be an argument for our being Christians?—our having traveled on a railway safely would be an argument that we were regenerate persons, yet I have never read in the Scriptures, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we have traveled from London to Brighton safely twice a day.” I never found a verse which looked like this; and yet if it were true that the worst of sinners met with accidents, it would follow as a natural converse to that proposition, that those who do not meet with accidents must be very good people, and what

Pharisaical notions we thus beget and foster. But I cannot indulge the folly for a moment. As I look for a moment upon the poor mangled bodies of those who have been so suddenly slain, my eyes find tears, but my heart does not boast, nor my lips accuse—far from me be the boastful cry, “God, I thank thee that I am not as these men are!” Nay, nay, nay, it is not the spirit of Christ, nor the spirit of Christianity. While we can thank God that we are preserved, yet we can say, “It is of thy mercy that we are not consumed,” and we must ascribe it to his grace, and to his grace alone. But we cannot suppose that there was any betterness in us, why we should be kept alive with death so near. It is only because he hath had mercy, and been very long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that we should perish, but that we should come to repentance, that he has thus preserved us from going down to the grave, and kept us alive from death.

And then, will you allow me to remark, that the supposition against which I am earnestly contending, is a *very cruel and unkind one*. For if this were the case, that all persons who thus meet with their death in an extraordinary and terrible manner were greater sinners than the rest, would it not be a crushing blow to bereaved survivors, and is it not ungenerous on our part to indulge the idea unless we are compelled by unanswerable reasons to accept it as an awful truth? Now, I defy you to whisper it in the widow’s ear. Go home to her and say, “Your husband was a worse sinner than the rest of men, therefore he died.” You have not brutality enough for that. A little unconscious infant, which had never sinned, though, doubtless, an inheritor of Adam’s fall, is found crushed amidst the *debris* of the accident. Now think for a moment, what would be the infamous consequence of the supposition, that those who perished were worse than others. You would have to make it out that this unconscious infant was a worse sinner than many in the dens of infamy whose lives are yet spared. Do you not perceive that the thing is radically false and I might perhaps show you the injustice of it best, by reminding you, that it may one day turn upon your own head. Let it be your own case that you should meet with sudden death in such a way are you willing to be adjudged to damnation on that account? Such an event may happen in the house of God. Let me recall to my own, and to your sorrowful recollection, what occurred when once we met together; I can say with a pure heart, we met for no object but to serve our God, and the minister had no aim in going to that place but that of gathering the many to hear who otherwise would not have listened to his voice and yet there were funerals as the result of a holy effort (for holy effort still we avow it to have been, and the aftersmile of God hath proved it so). There were deaths, and deaths among God’s people, I was about to say, I am glad it was with God’s people rather than with others. A fearful fright took hold upon the congregation, and they fled, and do you not see that if accidents are to be viewed as judgments, then it is a fair inference that we were sinning in being there—an insinuation which our consciences repudiate with scorn? However, if that logic were true, it is as true against us as it is against others, and inasmuch as you would repel with indignation the accusation that any were grounded or hurt on account of sin, in being there to worship God, what you repel for yourself repel for others, and be no party to the accusation which is brought against those who have been destroyed during the last fortnight, that they perished on account of any great sin.

Here I anticipate the outcries of prudent and zealous persons who tremble for the ark of God, and would touch it with Uzzah’s hand. “Well,” says one, “but we ought not to talk like this, for it is a very serviceable superstition, because there are many people who will be kept from travelling on a Sunday by the accident, and we ought to tell them, therefore, that those who perished, perished because they traveled on Sunday.” Brethren, I would not tell a lie to save a soul, and this would be telling lies, for it is not the fact I would do anything to stop Sunday labor and sin, but I would not

forge a falsehood even to do that. They might have perished on a Monday as well as on a Sunday. God gives no special immunity any day of the week, and accidents may occur as well at one time as at another, and it is only a pious fraud when we seek thus to prey upon the superstition of men to make capital for Christ. The Roman Catholic priest might consistently use such an argument, but an honest Christian man, who believes that the religion of Christ can take care of itself without his telling falsehoods, scorns to do it. These men did not perish because they traveled on a Sunday. Witness the fact that others perished on the Monday when they were on an errand of mercy. I know not why or wherefore God sent the accident. God forbid that we should offer our own reason when God has not given us his reason, but we are not allowed to make the superstition of men an instrument for the advancing the glory of God. You know among Protestants there is a great deal of popery. I meet with people who uphold infant baptism on the plea, "Well, it is not doing any hurt, and there is a great deal of good meaning in it, and it may do good, and even confirmation may be blessed to some people, and therefore do not let us speak against it." I have nothing to do with whether the thing does hurt or not, all I have to do with is whether it is right, whether it is scriptural, whether it is true, and if the truth does mischief, which is a supposition we can by no means allow, that mischief will not lie at our door. We have nothing to do but to speak the truth, even though the heavens should fall, I say again, that any advancement of the gospel which is owing to the superstition of men is a false advance, and it will by-and-bye recoil upon the people who use such an unhallowed weapon. We have a religion which appeals to man's judgment and common sense, and when we cannot get on with that, I scorn that we should proceed by any other means; and, brethren, if there be any person who should harden his heart and say, "Well, I am as safe on one day as another," which is quite true, I must say to him, "The sin of your making such a use as this of a truth must lie at your own door, not at mine; but if I could keep you from violating the Christian's day of rest by putting before you a superstitious hypothesis, I would not do it, because I feel that though I might keep you from that one sin a little time, you would by-and-bye grow too intelligent to be duped by me, and then you would come to look upon me as a priest who had played upon your fears instead of appealing to your judgment." Oh! it is time for us to know that our Christianity is not a weak, shivering thing, that appeals to the petty superstitious fears of ignorant and darkened minds. It is a manly thing, loving the light, and needing no sanctified frauds for its defense. Yes, critic! turn thy lantern upon us, and let it glare into our very eyes; we are not afraid, truth is mighty and it can prevail, and if it cannot prevail in the daylight, we have no wish that the sun should set to give it an opportunity. I believe that very much infidelity has sprung from the very natural desire of some Christian people to make use of common mistakes. "Oh," they have said, "this popular error is a very good one, it keeps people right; let us perpetuate the mistake, for it evidently does good." And then, when the mistake has been found out, infidels here said, "Oh, you see now these Christian people are found out in their tricks." Let us have no tricks, brethren; let us not talk to men as though they were little children, and could be frightened by tales of ghosts and witches. The fact is, that this is not the time of retribution, and it is worse than idle for us to teach that it is.

And now, lastly—and then I leave this point—do you not perceive that the un-Christian and un-Scriptural supposition that when men suddenly meet with death it is the result of sin, *robs Christianity of one of its noblest arguments for the immortality of the soul?* Brethren, we assert daily, with Scripture for our warrant, that God is just, and inasmuch as he is just, he must punish sin, and reward the righteous. Manifestly he does not do it in this world. I think I have plainly shown that in this world, one event happeneth to both; that the righteous man is poor as well as the

wicked, and that he dies suddenly as well as the most graceless. Very well, then, the inference is natural and clear, that there must be a next world in which these things must be righted. If there be a God, he must be just; and if he be just, he must punish sin; and since he does not do it in this world, there therefore must be another state in which men shall receive the due reward of their works, and they that have sown to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, while they that have sown to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Make this world the reaping place, and you have taken the sting out of sin. "Oh," says the sinner, "if the sorrows men endure here be all the punishment they will have, we will sin greedily." Say to them, "No; this is not the world of punishment, but the world of probation; it is not the court of justice, but the land of mercy; it is not the prison of terror, but the house of long-suffering;" and you have opened before their eyes the gates of the future; you have set the judgment-throne before their eyes; you have reminded them of "Come, ye blessed," and "Depart, ye cursed;" ye have a more reasonable, not to say a more Scriptural, ground of appeal to their consciences and to their hearts.

I have thus spoken with the view of putting down as much as I can the idea which is too current among the ungodly, that we as Christians hold every calamity to be a judgment. We do not; we do not believe that those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell were sinners above all the sinners that were in Jerusalem.

II. Now to our second point. WHAT USE, THEN, OUGHT WE TO MAKE OF THIS VOICE OF GOD AS HEARD AMIDST THE SHRIEKS AND GROANS OF DYING MEN? Two uses; first, *inquiry*, and secondly, *warning*.

The first *inquiry* we should put to ourselves is this: "Why may it not be my case that I may very soon and suddenly be cut off? Have I a lease of my life? Have I any special guardianship which ensures me that I shall not suddenly pass the portals of the tomb? Have I received a charter of longevity? Have I been covered with such a coat of armor that I am invulnerable to the arrows of death? Why am not I to die?" And the next question it should suggest is this: "Am not I as great a sinner as those who died? Are there not with me, even with me, sins against the Lord my God? If in outward sin others have exceeded me, are not the thoughts of my heart evil? Does not the same law which curses them curse me? I have not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them. It is as impossible that I should be saved by my works as that they should be. Am not I under the law as well as they by nature, and therefore am not I as well as they under the curse? That question should arise. Instead of thinking of *their* sins which would make me proud, I should think of *my own* which will make me humble. Instead of speculating upon *their* guilt, which is no business of mine, I should turn my eyes within and think upon *my own* transgression, for which I must personally answer before the Most High God." Then the next question is, "Have I repented of my sin? I need not be inquiring whether *they* have or not: have *I*? Since I am liable to the same calamity, am I prepared to meet it? Have I felt, through the Holy Spirit's convincing power, the blackness and depravity of my heart? Have I been led to confess before God that I deserve his wrath, and that his displeasure, if it light on me, will be my just due? Do I hate sin? Have I learned to abhor it? Have I, through the Holy Spirit, turned away from it as from a deadly poison, and do I seek now to honor Christ my Master? Am I washed in his blood? Do I bear his likeness? Do I reflect his character? Do I seek to live to his praise? For if not, I am in as great danger as they were, and may quite as suddenly be cut off, and then where am *I*? I will not ask where are *they*? And then, again, instead of prying into the future destiny of these unhappy men and women, how much better to inquire into our own destiny and our own state!

“What am I? my soul, awake,  
And an impartial survey take.”

Am I prepared to die? If now the gates of hell should be opened, shall I enter there? If now beneath me the wide jaws of death should gape, am I prepared with confidence to walk through the midst of them, fearing no evil, because God is with me? This is the proper use to make of these accidents; this is the wisest way to apply the judgments of God to our own selves and to our own condition. O sirs, God has spoken to every man in London during these last two weeks; he has spoken to me, he has spoken to you, men, women, and children. God's voice has rung out of the dark tunnel,—has spoken from the sunset and from the glaring bonfire round which lay the corpses of men and women, and he has said to you, “Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” It is so spoken to you that I hope it may set you inquiring, “Am I prepared? am I ready? am I willing now to face my Judge, and hear the sentence pronounced upon my soul?”

When we have used it thus for inquiry, let me remind you that we ought to use it also for *warning*. “Ye shall all likewise perish.” “No,” says one, “not *likewise*. We shall not all be crushed, many of us will die in our beds. We shall not all be burned, many of us will tranquilly close our eyes.” Ay, but the text says, “Ye shall all likewise perish.” And let me remind you that some of you may perish in the same identical manner. You have no reason to believe that you may not also *suddenly* be cut off while walking the streets. You may fall dead while eating your meals—how many have perished with the staff of life in their hands! Ye shall be in your bed, and your bed shall suddenly be made your tomb. You shall be strong, hale, hearty, and in health, and either by an accident or by the stoppage of the circulation of your blood, you shall be suddenly hurried before your God. Oh! may sudden death to you be sudden glory!

But it may happen with some of us that in the same sudden manner as others have died, so shall we. But lately in America, a brother, while preaching the Word, laid down his body and his charge at once. You remember the death of Dr. Beaumont, who, while proclaiming the gospel of Christ, closed his eyes to earth. And I remember the death of a minister in this country, who had but just given out the verse—

“Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of thine abode;  
I'd leave thine earthly courts and flee  
Up to thy house, my God,”

when it pleased God to grant him the desire of his heart, and he appeared before the King in his beauty, then, may not such a sudden death as that happen to you and to me?

But it is quite certain that, let death come when it may, there are some few respects in which it will come to us in just the same manner as it has to those who have so lately been hurried away. First, it will come quite as *surely*. They could not, travel as fast as they would, escape from the pursuer. They could not journey where they may, from home or to home, escape the shaft when the time had come. And so shall we perish. Just as surely, as certainly as death has set his seal upon the corpses which are not covered with the sod, so certainly shall he set his seal on us (unless the Lord should come before), for “it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.” There is no discharge in this way; there is no escape for any individual by any bye-path, there is no bridge over this river; there is no ferry-boat by which we may cross this Jordan dryshod. Into thy chill depths, O river, each one of us must descend, in thy cold stream, our blood must be frozen; and beneath thy foaming billows our head must sink! We, too, must surely die. “Trite,” you



say, "and commonplace" and death is commonplace, but it only happens once to us. God grant that that once dying may perpetually be in our minds, till we die daily, and find it not hard work to die at the last.

Well, then, as death comes both to them and to us surely, so will it come both to them and to us most *potently and irresistibly*. When death surprised them, then what help had they? A child's card house was not more easily crushed than these ponderous carriages. What could they do to help one another? They are sitting talking side by side. The scream is heard, and ere a second cry can be uttered, they are crushed and mangled. The husband may seek to extricate his wife, but heavy timbers have covered her body, he can only find at last her poor head, and she is dead, and he takes his sorrowful seat by her side, and puts his hand upon her brow, until it is stone cold, and though he has seen one and another plucked with broken bones from the midst of the ruined mass, he has to leave her body there. Alas! his children are motherless, and himself robbed of the partner of his bosom. They could not resist; they might do what they would, but as soon as the moment came, on they went, and death or broken bones was the result. So with you and me, bribe the physician with the largest fee, but he could not put fresh blood into your veins; pay him in masses of gold, but he could not make the pulse give another throb. Death, irresistible conqueror of men, there is none that can stand against thee, thy word is law, thy will is destiny! So shall it come to us as it did to them; it shall come with power, and none of us can resist.

When it came to them, it came *instantly*, and would not brook delay. So will it come to us. We may have longer notice than they, but when the hour has struck there shall be no postponing it. Gather up thy feet in thy bed, O Patriarch, for thou must die and not live! Give the last kiss to thy wife, thou veteran soldier of the cross. Put thy hands upon thy children's head, and give them the dying benediction, for all thy prayers cannot lengthen out thy life, and all thy tears cannot add a drop to the dry wellspring of thy being. Thou must go, the Master sendeth for thee, and he brooks no delay. Nay, though thy whole family should be ready to sacrifice their lives to buy thee but an hour of respite, it must not be. Though a nation should be a holocaust, a willing sacrifice, to give its sovereign another week in addition to his reign, yet it must not be. Though the whole flock should willingly consent to tread the dark vaults of the tomb, to let their pastor's life be spared but for another year, it must not be. Death will have no delay; the time is up, the clock has struck, the sand has run out, and as certainly as they died when their time was come, in the field by sudden accident, so certainly must we.

And then, again, let us remember that death will come to us as it did to them, with *terrors*. Not with the crash of broken timbers, perhaps, not with the darkness of the tunnel, not with the smoke and with the steam, not with the shrieks of women and the groans of dying men, but yet with terrors. For meet death where we may, if we be not in Christ, and if the shepherd's rod and staff do not comfort us, to die must be an awful and tremendous thing. Yes, in thy body, O sinner, with downy pillows beneath thy head, and a wife's tender arm to bear thee up, and a tender hand to wipe thy clammy sweat, thou will find it awful work to face the monster and feel his sting, and enter into his dread dominion. It is awful work at any time, and at every time, under the best and most propitious circumstances, for a man to die unprepared.

And now I would send you away with this one thought abiding on your memories; we are dying creatures, not living creatures, and we shall soon be gone. Perhaps, as here I stand, and rudely talk of these mysterious things, soon shall this hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain, power supreme, O everlasting King, come when thou mayest, oh! mayest thou

ne'er intrude upon an ill-spent hour; but find me wrapped in meditation high, hymning my great Creator; doing works of mercy to the poor and needy ones, or bearing in my arms the poor and weary of the flock, or solacing the disconsolate, or blowing the blast of the gospel trumpet in the ears of deaf and perishing souls! Then come when thou wilt, if thou art with me in life, I shall not fear to meet thee in death. But oh, let my soul be ready with her wedding-garment, with her lamp trimmed and her light burning, ready to see her Master and enter into the joy of her Lord! Souls, ye know the way of salvation, ye have heard it often, hear it yet again! "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus has everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe thou with thy heart, and with thy mouth make confession." May the Holy Ghost give the grace to do both, and this done, thou mayest say,

"Come, death, and some celestial band,  
To bear my soul away!"

## Fellowship With God

A Sermon

(No. 409)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September the 15th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”—1 John 1:3.

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD was one of the richest privileges of unfallen man. The Lord God walked in the garden and talked with Adam as a man talketh with his friend. So long as he was willing and obedient, Adam ate the fat of the land, and among the rich dainties and “wines on the lees well refined,” of which his soul was a partaker, we must number first and foremost, unbroken communion with God, his Father and his Friend. Sin, as it banished man from Eden, banished man from God, and from that time *our* face has been turned from the Most High, and *his* face has been turned from us;—we have hated God, and God has been angry with us every day. Christ came into the world to restore to us our lost patrimony. It was the great object of his wondrous sacrifice to put us into a position which should be equal and even superior to that which we occupied in Adam before the fall, and as he has already restored to us many things that we lost, so among the rest—fellowship with God. They who have by his grace believed, and have by the precious blood been washed, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, they are “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,” and they have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand. So they who are in the kingdom, and under the dispensation of the second Adam, have restored to them in all its fullness that fellowship which was lost to them by the sin and disobedience of their first federal head. John was among the number of those who had enjoyed this privilege with Christ in his flesh. He had been Christ’s chosen companion, elect out of the elect to a choice and peculiar privilege. During the incarnation, he was one of the favored three who had enjoyed the closest intimacy with the Redeemer; he had seen Christ in his transfiguration, had witnessed the raising of the dead maid, had been with the Lord in the garden, and he had lingered with him even when the thrust was given after death, and the blood and water flowed from his pierced heart. John had the nearest, the dearest, the closest fellowship with Christ in the flesh. As he had laid his head upon Christ’s bosom, so had he laid all his thoughts and all the emotions of his mind upon the heart’s love and divine affection of his Lord and Master but Christ was gone; it was no more possible to hear his voice, to see him with eyes, or to handle him with hands, yet John had not lost his fellowship, though he knew him no more after the flesh, yet he knew him after a nobler sort. Nor was his fellowship less real, less close, less sweet, or less divine, than it had been when he had walked and talked with him, and had been privileged to eat and drink with him at that last sacred feast. John says, “Truly our fellowship *is*”—not *was*—“*is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

And now, my brethren and sisters in the common faith of our Lord Jesus, this morning I trust that many of us can say, “Our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Did the apostle John need to say, “Truly”—as much as though some doubted or denied it? We, too,

have sometimes an occasion to make as solemn an affirmation as he has done. There are certain sectaries who exalt the form of their church government into a *sine qua non* of piety, and they say of us that it is impossible that we should have a fellowship with Christ, because we follow not after them. Because we reject not the ministry which God has appointed, to take up with some newly-devised scheme, by which everyone is to instruct his brother, forsooth therefore we have not the fellowship which is reserved for their sect and party. We have been led, when they have spoken very bitterly, to question ourselves; but after deep searchings of heart, in reply to them we can say, "Brethren, whether you be right, or we be right in the matter of church discipline or organization, yet we can assure you that 'truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'" And oftentimes the doctrinalist—the man who thinks more of the doctrine of Christ than of the person of Christ, and who couples therewith the conceit that he himself must be right, and all others wrong,—because we may not be able to endorse all the heights of his doctrine, or, on the other hand, may not be able to join with him in his legal statements—says, "O these people! there are many of them, but they can have no fellowship with God, because they do not sound our Shibboleth, they do not join with us in every separate dogma which we teach, and therefore the Lord is not with them." Ah, but we can say to them, "Brethren, we are content to leave these doctrinal disputes to the Great Arbiter of right and wrong; we have formed our opinion of Scripture; we hope, as in the sight of God, and as before the Most High, we can say, we have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." But whether this be so or not, we protest to you, "Truly," yes, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And perhaps the experimentalist—the man who attaches undue importance to his own particular form of experience—may cry out that the minister has not had the same experience of human depravity as himself; he may condemn us utterly because we do not give prominence to a certain favourite but unhealthy standard of spiritual conviction. Well, we can say to him, "We have preached what we do know, we have testified what we have seen, and if we cannot go to all the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, as yet, we hope to grow; but we can say, even should you doubt our declaration, 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'"

This brings me immediately and directly to the text. You will perceive that there is suggested by the text, *a quiet investigation, leading to a most solemn affirmation*. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And then there is, secondly, in the former part of the text, *a most affectionate desire, leading to appropriate action*. Our desire is, that you may have fellowship with us, and, therefore, "that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

I. First, then, let us in all quietude and stillness of heart, talk this matter over with one another, and see if it be not so, that we have had, and do have real FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

Now, brethren, we have had fellowship with the FATHER. In order to have fellowship with any man, there must be a *concord of heart*. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" At the very bottom of fellowship there must be a likeness; we must have like wishes, like desires; we must have espoused like ends, and our spirits must be welded together in the intention to effect like purposes. Now, I think we can avow, this morning, in the first place, that we do feel a sweet concord with God in *his eternal purposes*. I read the Book of God, and I find that he hath ordained Christ to be the Head of his Church, and that he hath chosen unto himself "a number that no man can number." I find it revealed in the Word of God that he is a God of distinguishing and discriminating grace; that he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom

he will have compassion," that he will bring many sons unto glory, "to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Brethren, cannot you and I say, as in the sight of a heart-searching God, we have full accord with God in his purposes? Why, we love them, we delight in them, the decrees of God are satisfactory to us. If it were possible for us to alter the roll in which his divine intentions are written, we would not do it, we feel that whatever he has ordained must be right, and as for his ordination of his people unto eternal life, and his loving them above all people that be on the face of the earth, why this is one of the richest joys that we know. The doctrine of election is a sweet cordial to the child of God. I can cry, "My Father, thou art King, thou hast chosen the base things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things out are; and in this I have fellowship with thee, for I can exclaim, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'"

Again, we have fellowship with God in the object for which the purpose was first formed, namely, *his own glory*. Ah, the deeds of the Most High tend to manifest his majesty and glorify his Godhead. O brethren, do not we sympathise with God in this object? Give glory unto him, give glory unto him, O all creatures that his hand hath made! The highest aspiration of our spirit, when it is most enlarged, and most inflamed is, that he in all things may be glorified. *He* knows, for he can read the heart, that oftentimes, when we have ourselves been bowed down, and we have been made as the very dust of the earth, we have said, "This is still my comfort, that he is exalted, that *he* still reigneth, and doeth as he wills arming the armies of heaven, and among the people of this lower world." Do you not desire *his* glory as he desires it? He has purposed to stain the pride of all human boasting, and to make the world know that Jehovah is God, and "that beside him there is none else" do not you also desire the same, and do you not daily pray, "Let him be magnified from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof; let all creatures call him blessed, let all that have breath, praise, laud, and magnify his name?" In this, then—in his purpose, and in the object of his purpose, we have "fellowship with the Father."

And now, have we not fellowship with him in *the plan by which he effects that purpose*? It pleased him, that in "the fullness of time, he should send forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He laid one foundation, and one only, and he said concerning it, that "other foundation shall no man lay but that which is laid." God has chosen "the stone which the builders refused," that it might be made the "headstone of the corner:" this is the Lord's doing, and cannot we say, "It is wondrous in our eyes?" As he is unto God "the chief corner stone, elect, precious," so "unto you that believe *He* is precious." Looking at all the plan from the beginning to the end, do you not agree in it? Does it not strike you as being the wisest, the most gracious, the most glorious scheme that could have been devised? And as from its first fountain in predestination, onward to the ocean of glory, you traverse the ever-flowing stream, do you not say of it in all matchless course, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world, and who having, chosen us, will glorify us and bring us to himself at the last?" Yes, there is not a single word that we would alter, there is not a line in this divine scheme that we would wish to change. If it approves itself to him, it certainly approves itself to us, if he chose it as the plan of divine operation, we adore his choice, we reverence both the wisdom and the love which planned and carried out the design.

And yet more I think we may add, we have fellowship with God in the most prominent *characteristics of that plan*. Throughout the whole way of salvation, you have seen displayed the justice and the mercy of God, each with undimmed lustre. You have seen his grace in forgiving the sinner, but you have seen his holiness in avenging sin upon the substitute. You have seen his truthfulness acting in two ways, his truth in threatening,—by no means sparing the guilty, his truth in the promise,—“passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.” Throughout the whole Divine plan of salvation, there is not a single blot upon any of the attributes of the Most High. “Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of Sabbath,” is still the son of angels, even when they see sinners who were once the vilest of the vile, brought to share their joys, and sing their songs. And, brethren, do not you and I feel we have fellowship with God in this? Would you have him unjust that you might be saved? I think you would say, “Never! never! not even for my sake let him be unjust.” Would you have him unloving to others, that he might make you his favourite? No! and there is no trace of anything like this. You would not have him retract his threatening, for then you might fear that he would forget his promise. I am sure, as you look upon the character of God, as he manifests it in the face of Jesus Christ, your soul is filled with ineffable and delightful adoration; you can sing unto him, “Great art thou, O God, thy mercy endureth for ever,” and taking up the words of David, you can say, “I will sing of mercy, and of judgment; unto thee, O God, will I sing!” In the purpose, then, in the object of that purpose, in the plan by which the purpose is achieved, and in the characteristics of that plan, the believer in Christ has fellowship or sweet concord with the Father.

But to proceed a step further: we have a most divine and precious communion with the Father in the *objects of his love*. When two persons love the same thing, their affection becomes a tie between them. The two may love each other, but when in the course of providence, children are brought into the house, their children become another bond between their parents, each of them mutually giving their hearts to their little ones, feel that their hearts are yet more fully given the one to the other. Now, there is a tie between God the Father and our souls, for did not he say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?” And cannot you and I add, “Yes, he is our beloved Savior, in whom we are well pleased?” Is it not written, “It pleased the Father to bruise him?” And do we not feel that ye have found a divine pleasure and satisfaction in looking into his wounds, his agonies, and his death? And has not Father determined to glorify his Son Jesus? And is not the fondest thought of our heart that we may help to glorify him here on earth, and may spread his glories even in heaven, by telling to the angels, and principalities, and powers, the height and depth of his lovingkindness? Does the Father love the Son?—even so do we love him, not to the same infinite extent, for we are finite beings, yet with sincerity, even as the Father loves Jesus, so sincerely do we love him—

“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,  
Had I no love for thee;  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
O may I cease to be!”

So in this, then, we have fellowship with the Father, seeing that we are both agreed in loving the Son. Does the Father love the *saints*?—even so do we. Doth he declare that “Precious shall their blood be in his sight? “Does he bear, and carry them, and show his interest for them? Will he say that “His delight is in his people,” and that “they are his peculiar portion,” and his “choice heritage?” My soul, canst thou not say, in the midst of all thy doubts and fears—“I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I love the brethren?” Canst thou not protest, “O my heart!

that the excellent of the earth are all thy delight, where they dwell, I would dwell, where they die, I would die, their portion shall be my portion, their God shall be my God for ever and ever." In this, too, we have fellowship with the Father.

But you know, brethren, the word "fellowship" not only signifies concord of heart but it implies *a carrying out of that concord a little further, in converse or mutual communication*. May the Holy Spirit grant that we may not say a word which is not strictly verified by our experience! but I hope we can say we have had converse with the Divine Father. We have not seen him at any time, nor have we beheld his shape. It has not been given to us, like Moses, to be put in the cleft of the rock, and to see the back parts, or the train of the invisible Jehovah; but yet we have spoken to him; we have said to him, "Abbe, Father;" we have saluted him in that title which came from our very heart, "Our Father, who art in heaven." We have had access to him in such a way that we cannot have been deceived. We have found him, and through the precious blood of Christ, we have come even unto his feet, we have ordered our cause before him, and we have filled our mouth with arguments, nor has the speaking been all on our side, for he has been pleased to shed abroad, by his Spirit, his love in our hearts. While we have felt the spirit of adoption, he, on the other hand, has showed to us the lovingkindness of a tender Father. We have felt, though no sound was heard; we have known, though no angelic messenger gave us witness, that his Spirit did "bear witness with our spirits that we were born of God." We were embraced of him—no more at a distance; we were "brought nigh by the blood of Christ." I trust, my brothers and sisters, you can each of you say—though you wish it could be more intense than it is—"I have in all these things had fellowship with the Father, for I have conversed with him, and he has spoken to me." You can join in the words of that hymn—

"If in my Father's love  
I share a filial part,  
Send down thy Spirit like a dove,  
To rest upon my heart."

Furthermore, and to conclude upon this point of fellowship with the Father, we can, I think, refer ourselves to the All-wise One, and we can say we have had fellowship with God in this respect, that *the very thing which is His happiness has been our happiness*. That which has been the delight of his Holy Being has been a delight to us. "And what is that?" say you. Why, brethren, doth not God delight in holiness, in goodness, in mercy, and in lovingkindness, and has not that been our delight too? I am sure our greatest miseries here have been our sins. We do not murmur at our afflictions, if we could but get rid of those sins which bind us down and hamper us when we would mount towards heaven. Holiness is our pleasure, purity is our delight, and if we could but be perfect even as he is perfect, and freed from sin, even as God our Father, is freed from everything like iniquity, then we should be in heaven, for this is our happiness; the same happiness which God finds in purity and righteousness, we find in it too.

And if it be the happiness of the Father to have communion with the persons of the Trinity—if the Father delights in his Son, even so do we delight in him, and such delight, that if we told it to the stranger, he would not believe us, and if we spoke it in the wordling's ear, he would think us mad. Jesu, thou art the sun of our soul; thou art to us the river of which we drink, the bread of which we eat, the air we breathe; thou art the basis of our life and thou art the summit of it, thou art the prop, the mainstay, the pillar, the beauty, the joy of our being! If we have but thee, we can ask nothing besides, for thou art all in all, and if we have thee not, we are wretched and undone. So,

then we have fellowship with the Father, because that which is his happiness is most certainly our happiness.

And so, also, that which is the Father's *employment* is our employment. I speak not of you all, He knows whom he hath chosen. We cannot join with the Father in upholding all worlds, we cannot send forth floods of light at the rising of the sun, we cannot feed the cattle on a thousand hills, nor can we give food and life to all creatures that have breath. But there is something which we can do which he does. He doeth good to all his creatures, and we can do good also. He beareth witness to his Son Jesus, and we can bear witness too. "The Father worketh hitherto" that his Son may be glorified, and we work too. O thou Eternal Worker! it is thine to save souls, and we are co-workers with thee. We are his husbandry, we are his building, he scatters the seed of truth, we scatter it too, his words speak comfort, and our words comfort the weary too, when God the Spirit is with us. We hope we can say, "For us to live is Christ," and is not this what God lives for too? We desire nothing so much as to glorify him, and this is the Father's will, as well as Jesus Christ's prayer, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Do you not see, brethren, we stand on the same scaffold with the eternal God? When we lift our hand, he lifts up his eternal arm, when we speak, he speaks too, and speaks the same thing; when we purpose Christ's glory, he purposes that glory too, when we long to bring home the wandering sheep, and to recall the prodigal sons, he longs to do the same. So that in that respect we can say, "Truly we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

2. And now I must turn with some brevity to announce also, and to affirm the fact, that we have fellowship with the Son as well as with the Father. In both these matters we are like little children that have begun to speak or learn their letters. We have not yet attained, O brethren, though I say we have fellowship with the Father, yet how little we have of it compared with what we hope to have! This fellowship is like the river in Ezekiel, at the first it is up to the ancles, and afterwards it is up to the knees, and then up to the loins, and then it becomes a river to swim in. There be, I fear, few of us who have waded where there is a river to swim in, but, blessed be God, though it be only up to the ancles, yet we have fellowship, and if we have but a little of it, that little is the seed of more, and the certain pledge of greater joys to come. Well, now we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I think we can say, for our hearts are united to him,—we cannot speak of this, but I think we can weep about it,—

"Jesus, we love thy charming name,

'Tis music to our ears."

We may sometimes have to sing—

"Tis a point I long to know

Oft it causeth anxious thought;

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I his, or am I not?"

But I think we can come back after all and answer, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." At any rate, it is strange that I should never be happy without thee, it is singular that I can find no peace anywhere but in thee. If I did not love thee, should I have such longings after thee? Should I have such mournings and such sorrowings when thou art gone? Would it be so dark without thee if I still were blind, and would it be so bright with thee if I did not see a glimmering of thy light and some rays of thy beauties? Ye men and brethren, Satan may say what he will, and our sense may seem to contradict the statements, but still our soul followeth hard after



him. He is to us all our salvation and all our desire. We have, then, fellowship with Christ, since his heart is set in us, and our heart is knit to him.

Further, we have had some small degree of fellowship with him in his sufferings. We have not yet “resisted unto blood striving against sin,” but we have carried his cross and we have suffered his reproach. There have been some who could say—

“Jesus, I my cross have taken  
All to leave and follow thee.”

And others of us, whose path has been somewhat smoother, have nevertheless felt the cross within us—for the new spirit within us has had to contend with all that once we loved, there have been wars and fightings, and a perpetual conflict, not only from without, but what is far more severe, from within also. Yet if it should cause more sorrow we still would follow *him*, for we count it as our riches that we may bear the reproach of Christ as he bore reproach for us. I trust, my brothers and sisters you that profess to be his followers do not blush to own his name. I hope you do not turn your backs in the day of battle. If you do, you may question whether your fellowship is with the Son Jesus Christ, but if you can welcome shame and hail reproach because he remembers you, then in this you have been conformed unto his death, and have been made partakers of his sufferings. I have sometimes thought it were worth all the bitterness if we might drink of his cup and be baptised with his baptism. We can have no Gethsemane with all its bloody sweat, yet we have had our Gethsemanes too, we cannot die on Calvary, but I hope we have been crucified with him and the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world; we cannot go into the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, yet we have been buried with him in baptism unto death, that like as Jesus Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might rise to newness of life; and I hope, inasmuch as he has risen and ascended up on high, though our bodies are still here, yet we have set our affection on things above and not on things on the earth; and as he has been raised up and made to sit together with his Father, I hope we know the meaning of that passage. “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And as he is to come and reign, I hope we know also something of that, for he hath made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. From the manger to the cross, and from the cross to the millennium, there should be in the Christian’s experience a blessed fellowship. We ought to know Christ in his obscurity and littleness—the babe Christ being in our hearts. We ought to know him in his wilderness temptations—ourselves being tempted in all points. We ought to know him in his blasphemies and slanders—ourselves being accounted by man to be as Beelzebub, and as the offscouring of all things, we must know him in his passion, in his agony, and in his death, and then, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,” we may know him in his triumphs, in his ascension upon high, in his session at the right hand of God, and in his coming to judge the quick and the dead, for we, too, shall judge angels through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have, I hope, in some humble measure in these respects, fellowship with the Son Jesus Christ.

But our fellowship has assumed also a practical form, in that the same desires and aspirations which were in Christ when he was on the earth are in us now. Oh! we have uttered feelingly the very words of Christ, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” And when we could not do all we would, when there seemed to be some insuperable obstacle in the path of our usefulness, we have nevertheless said, “My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me.” And when at any time we have been wearied in the Master’s service, we have yet found such good cheer

therein, that we could say with him, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And at times, in the thoughts of serving God and even of suffering for him we have said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" For we have desired with desire to eat that Passover, that we, too, might say of our humble work, "It is finished," and commend our spirit into the eternal hand. Oh! have you never wept with Christ as he did over poor Jerusalem? Did London's vices never bring the tears into your eyes? Did you never weep over hard-hearted souls, perhaps in your own family? Have you never cried as he did, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not?" Oh! I hope, without egotism, without saying more than we have really felt, we have thirsted and panted to bring others up out of their degradation and their fall, till we have felt that if we might be offered ourselves, if by our sacrifice souls might be saved, we would be willing to have it said, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." In this, then, we have had fellowship with Christ.

And yet, further, as I have said, fellowship requires converse. Oh! ye daughters of Jerusalem, have we not had converse with Him? Tell ye of that happy day when we went forth to meet king Solomon, and crowned him "with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals; and in the day of the gladness of his heart," when he took us up into his chariot, the bottom whereof was of silver and the sides thereof lined with love for the daughters of Jerusalem, and we rode in covenant safety and in royal pomp with him. When the king came into his palace and he said, "Let the fatlings be killed, eat; yea, eat abundantly and drink abundantly, O beloved!" and we ate of all his sweet wines and of all his luscious fruits which he had laid up in store for his beloved till we said, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love, his left hand is under my head, and his right arm doth embrace me." Brethren, we have leaped right out of the body to embrace him, at least so we have thought, from excess of joy, and that, too, when there was nothing in the world to give us content, when our prospects were blighted, when our health has failed us, when the sun of this world was quenched, then He came forth, even He who is all in all, and lifted the light of his countenance upon us.

You have had, I hope, some few of these in-flowings of love, when you have eaten angels' food, when you have forgotten the dry bread and mouldy crusts that you had in the wallet of your experience, and did eat the new corn of the kingdom, and did drink the new wine with your blessed and divine Master; you no longer traveled in rumbling chariots, but your soul was like the swiftly-speeding chariots of Amminadib; you flew after your beloved in transport so divine, that tongue can never tell, and lips can never describe the sacred rapture. Yes, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

We have but a few minutes remaining for the second head, which might very well demand an entire discourse.

II. There was, secondly, AN AFFECTIONATE DESIRE, LEADING TO APPROPRIATE EFFORT. This affectionate desire was that others might have fellowship with us. Having found the honey, we cannot eat it alone, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, it is one of the first instincts of the new-born nature to send us out crying, "So, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." We would that others had fellowship with us in all respects except our sins; for we can say with the apostle, "I would to God that ye were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds!" But these bonds of sin we would not wish that any should bear. Brethren,

we would that you had fellowship with us in the peace we feel with God our Father, in the access which we have to his throne, in the confidence which we have in the truth of his promise, in the overflowing joys we experience when he manifests himself to us! We would that you had our hopes, that you could look forward to death and the grave with the same delight as we can, expecting to be transformed into his image, and to see him as he is! We wish you had our faith, only more of it—that you might have the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! We wish that you had fellowship with us in prevailing prayer, that you knew how to cast your burdens upon the Lord—that you understood how to bring every blessing from on high, by pleading the merits of the Savior! We wish to gather up all in one, that in everything which is lovely and of good repute, in everything which is happy, ennobling, divine, and everlasting you might be made partakers and have fellowship with us!

And this desire leads the child of God to make use of an appropriate effort, and what is that? It is to tell to others what he has seen and what he has heard. Now, I shall try to use that means this morning, for I think, perhaps, the illustration of fact may be better than any illustration of words. Do I not address many here who never had any fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Perhaps you hardly know what it means, and when you hear what it means, you attach no importance to it. It is nothing to you to talk with God; you never dream of such a thing as speaking to Christ, and Christ speaking to you. Ah! if you knew its sweetness, you would never, never be content till you had it, you would thirst with such a thirst, that you would never cease, but thirst till you drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. Well now, soul, that thou mayest have fellowship with us in these things, let me tell thee what I have heard, and known, and seen, for this is what the text tells me to speak of—I have known and seen that Christ is one who is ready to forgive thee—able to forgive thee. Oh! shall I never forget when I first went to him, laden with iniquity, and black with sin, bowed down by five years of conviction, which had rendered my fears despair, and my doubts had gathered till they seemed impenetrable to the light! I went to him, and I thought he would reject me; I thought him to be hard, and unwilling to forgive. But I only looked on him, only looked at him,—one glimpse of a tearful eye at a crucified Savior, and that moment without a pause the burden rolled away; the guilt was gone, peace of mind took the place of despair, and I could sing, “I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven!” I had many sins, but He took them all away. Some of those sins were deeply aggravated. I would not tell them in a human ear, but they are gone, in one instant too, not because of any merit, but gone freely and graciously of his own abundant mercy, according to the riches of his lovingkindness in Christ Jesus the Lord. Now what we have seen and heard we do testify, that ye also may have fellowship with us, for “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Still he is willing to receive you, he is able to forgive you. Laden with guilt and full of woe, hie thee to that full relief! Make no tarrying! “Linger not in all the plain!” Let not thy heavy heart tempt thee to refrain thyself from him! He stands with open arms, ready to pardon, with open heart, willing to receive. Nay, he runs, methinks I see him, though thou art yet far off, he runs and meets thee, he falls upon thy neck, he kisseth thee, he saith, “Take off his rags, clothe him in the best robe; put shoes on his feet and a ring upon his hand, and let us eat and be merry, for the dead is alive and the lost is found.”

But I testify yet again, soul, that after thou hast once believed in Christ, and received thy pardon, thou wilt find him to be willing to keep thy soul from sin. I thought that even if Christ forgave me, it would be impossible for me to break off evil habits and the lusts of the flesh. And I have known many scores of men who were swearers, and they said they should never be able to rinse their

mouths of their oaths. They were drunkards too, and they said that drink would get the upper hand of them yet, but we have seen and we have testified that when we believe in Christ, he changes the heart, he renews the nature, makes us hate the things we loved before, and love the things we once despised. We have seen it, and we testify it. O drunkard, he can make thee sober! unchaste man, he can make thee virtuous! There is no lust which his arm cannot subdue, no mighty sin which he cannot drive out, he shall make thee run in the way of his commandments with delight, thou shalt neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left.

“But” saith another, “if he did uphold for awhile I should never be able to hold on.” What I have seen and heard, that I do declare unto thee. Blessed be his name, I am yet young in grace but he has been faithful to me. The child believed, and the child now testifies that God is faithful, and has not once forsaken nor left him, but preserved him. I half wish this morning that grey hairs were on my head that I might give force to this testimony of “what I have seen and heard.” I remember well, when declaring that God was a faithful God, my good old grandfather, who was sitting behind me in the pulpit, came forward and said, “My grandson can tell you that, but I can bear witness to it. I have passed my three score years and ten, but still He has been faithful and true.”

“E’en down to old age, all his people shall prove  
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;  
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in his bosom be borne.”

We testify this to you, that you may have fellowship with us, for “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

I have this much to say, and if I should never preach again, and if this might be the last discourse I should ever deliver in this world, I would wish to make this the final testimony. There is that joy in religion that I never dreamed of. He is a good Master whom I have served, that is a blessed faith which He has bestowed upon me, and yields such blessed hope, that

“I would not change my bless’d estate  
For all the world calls good or great.”

And if I had to die like a dog, and there were no hereafter, I would still prefer to be a Christian, and the humblest Christian minister to being a king or an emperor, for I am persuaded there are more delights in Christ; yea, more joy in one glimpse of his face than is to be found in all the praises of this harlot-world, and in all the delights which it can yield to us in its sunniest and brightest days. And I am persuaded that what he has been till now, he will be to the end; and where he hath begun a good work, he will carry it on. Yes, sinners, Christ’s cross is a hope that we can die by,—which can take us down to the grave without a fear, which can make us short in the midst of the swelling waters of Jordan, can make us transported with delight even when we are bowed down with physical pain or nervous distress. There is that in Christ, I say, which can make us triumph over the gloomiest terrors of grim death, and make us rejoice in the darkest of tempests which can blacken the grave. Trust ye, trust ye in the Lord, for our testimony, and that of all his people, is, that he is worthy to be trusted. “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

## Not Now, But Hereafter!

A Sermon

(No. 410)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September the 22nd, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done?”—Job 21:29-31.

THE SERMON WHICH I PREACHED two Lord's days ago upon the accidents, has caused considerable consternation among pious people with weak heads. Their idea that an calamities are judgments, is so inveterate a prejudice, and so favourite a dogma, that our exposure of its absurdity is, in their opinion, eminently calculated to encourage sin and quiet the consciences of offenders. Now, I feel quite at ease in this matter, and am confident that I have done service to our great cause, even though the timid should be alarmed, and the superstitious should be annoyed. Our gracious God and Father has seen fit to give us a whole book of the Bible upon the subject; the main drift of the Book of Job is to prove that temporal afflictions are not evidences of the Lord's displeasure, and I beg the modern Bildads and Zophars to reconsider their position, lest they too should be found to be “speaking wickedly for God, and talking deceitfully for him.”—Job 13:7. In my very soul I feel that if evil days shall come upon me, if poverty, desertion, and disease should place me upon Job's dunghill, I shall point to that sermon with pleasure, and say to those who will tell me that God is angry with me, and has judged me to be unworthy, “Nay, ye know not what ye say, for the judgment is not passed already, nor is this the field of execution; neither disease, nor bereavements, nor poverty, can prove a man to be wicked, nor do they even hint that the chosen are divided from the hearts of Christ.” O my beloved friends, settle it in your hearts that men are not to be judged according to their present circumstances, and learn like David to understand *their end*. It will save you from writing bitter things against yourselves in the time of trouble, and prevent your scanning the works of Providence, and measuring the infinite by line and plummet.

It is mainly my business, today, to deal with those who may wickedly continue in sin because their judgment tarries. If the Lord does not in this world visit the ungodly with stripes, this is but the surer evidence that in the world to come there is a solemn retribution for the impenitent. If the affliction which is here accorded to men be not the punishment of sin, we turn to Scripture and discover what that punishment will be, and we are soon informed that it is something far heavier than any calamities which occur in this life,—something infinitely more tremendous than the most disastrous accident, the most shocking mutilation, or the most painful death. I know that there be some in these days who are like those in the time of the royal preacher, of whom he said, “because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Should I be addressing some this morning who have found a stupid quiet for their consciences in the fact that God does not *here* usually visit men's sins upon their heads, let me put it to them whether such peace is reasonable. There is a city which has revolted. A great king has threatened them with entire destruction for the revolt. He does not, in hurried

passion, send against them a handful of soldiers to inflict instant and petty chastisement, he waits awhile, and marshals all his hosts, till every battalion has been put in array, till every mighty man has girded on his armor. Fools! will ye draw consolation from the delay of your destroyer? Will ye say, because he has not ridden forth against you on the very day of your rebellion that therefore this is a time of revelry and mirth? Nay, rather, inasmuch as he is gathering his hosts for the battle, let it cause you to tremble, for he shall break down your walls, and give your whole company to the sword. Imagine yourselves voyagers, far out upon the sea. A black cloud darkens in the sky, you say you fear not the cloud because it is not at present pouring forth the rain-flood. But that is the reason why ye should fear it, for the cloud is waiting until it grows and spreads, till under the wing of darkness the egg of cloud has been hatched into the black screaming eagle of the storm. See you, the clouds are hurrying from east and west, mustering for the strife! Mark you not the sea heaving heavily in sympathy with heaven's convulsions? Behold how all the dread artillery of heaven is gathering up for one tremendous shock. Fools! do ye say ye will not fear because the thundercloud has not yet burst, because as yet the breath of wind has not transformed itself into the blast of hurricane? It is gathering, sirs, congregating its forces and accumulating its fury, and the longer that it gathers, the more terrible shall be the moment when it bursts upon your devoted heads. And so to-day, God's clouds that float in the sky, the calamities of Providence, are not pouring on you the tempest of wrath; but is this a reason why ye should be at peace? Nay! the clouds are gathering, every sin is adding to the mass, every day of God's long-suffering is covering heaven in blacker sable, every moment that he spares he does but prepare to punish in more tremendous force; and dread and direful shall be the day, when at last omnipotence itself shall come to the assistance of outraged justice, and you shall feel that God is God as much in punishing sin, as in the making of the worlds.

It was a fable of the old Jewish rabbis, that when the angel Gabriel flew he used both wings, because he always came with good tidings; but that when Michael flew, bearing God's sword to smite through the loins of king", he always flew with one wing. But Michael arrives as surely at his destined goal as Gabriel himself. The feet of the avenging deities may seem to be shod with lead for tardiness, and their tread may be as noiseless as wool, but they are as sure as the feet of mercy. I know, when God comes to bless, the axles of his chariot are hot with speed, and his steeds are white with foam, and when he comes to curse he travels slowly, with many a sigh, for he willeth not the death of any, but had rather "that he should turn unto him and live;" but remember, in judgment he comes in all his might, and he shall be discovered to be not less a God when he smiteth than when he giveth the kisses of his lips, and lifts the pardoned sinner into acceptance and favor.

We shall now deal with the sorrowful topic of the punishment of sin in the world to come. I have preached less upon this subject than almost upon any other, and yet always is it thrown in our teeth that we delight to dwell upon these horrors. I never come to this subject without the deepest distress of heart, and God alone shall know how many tears it costs these eyes when I have to deal out as God's faithful ambassador the thunders of his law. I delight to preach of Calvary, and of divine love, and of grace unsearchable. But this theme is to me *the burden* of the Lord, we must not, we dare not keep it back; fidelity to conscience, truthfulness to God, love to the souls of men, constrains us to make this a part of our ministry, not keeping back any part of the price.

I shall divide the discourse this morning into three parts, first, I shall speak of the *punishment of sin, by way of affirmation*, or prove that it must be so; secondly, *by way of explanation*, of what kind and nature this punishment must be; and then, thirdly, *by way of expostulation*, pleading with

those who are yet in the land of mercy, that they would hasten to the voice of wisdom, and that God's grace may turn them from the error of their ways.

I. First, then, by way of affirmation—THERE MUST BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.

Job says, that this is a truth so written upon the very nature of man, that even those who go by the way, the ignorant traveler and wayfarer, dares not for a moment deny that such is the case. "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens?" And truly it is so. If there be one intuitive truth which man perceives without need of argument, it is that sin deserves to be punished, and since sin is not punished here, it follows that the punishment must be endured in the world to come.

Let us, however, very briefly, review the argument. Sin must be punished from *the very nature of God*. God *is*; if God is God, he *must* be just. You can no more separate the idea of justice from the idea of God, than you can omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. To suppose of a God who was not omnipotent, is to make a supposition which is contradictory in its terms; for the term "God" includes that thought. And to suppose an unjust God, is to imagine an absurdity,—you have used, I repeat it, contradictory terms;—justice is included in the very thought of God. See how the oppressed always recognize this. The slave who has long been trampled under the feet of a tyrannical master, with his back fresh from the gory lash, lifts up his eye to God the avenger, for he feels instinctively that God must be just. Nationalities who have made appeals to arms, but have been subdued again to serfdom, at last in their despair cry out to God, for this is the bottom of man's thoughts, and the one which is sure to come forth when pain has emptied out his lighter notions, that God doth execute righteousness and judgment "for all that are oppressed." So, too, when man would aver a thing to be true he calls upon God to be his witness, because in his innermost nature he feels that God will be a just and impartial witness. If he thought not so, it would be ridiculous to call upon God to witness to his asseveration. Note how the tearful eye, the groaning mind, the bursting heart, all turn instinctively to the Judge of all the earth. Man feels that God must be just. But how just? How *just*, if crowned beads that do injustice shall go unpunished? How *just*, if the adulterer, the thief, the liar, and the hypocrite unpunished here, should go unpunished in the world to come. Where is thy justice, God, if this world be all? We say, "Alas for love if, thou were an end nought beyond, O earth!" and we may add, alas, for justice too; for where could it live, where could it dwell, unless there were a world to come, in which God will right the wrongs, and avenge himself upon an who have trampled on his laws.

Not only does his very nature show this, but *those acts of God*, which are recorded in Revelation, prove incontestably that he will by no means spare the guilty. There have been judgment. I am not now appealing to the crotchets and opinions of ill-judging man, but to the inspired chronicles, for I will quote those judgments alone which the Word of God calls such. Adam sinned. 'Twas but the touching of an apple; Eden was blasted, Adam was exiled. The world sinned; they ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage; they forgot the Most High. The fountains of the great deep gave forth their floods; the cisterns of heaven emptied out their cataracts. All the world was drowned; and the last shriek of the strong swimmer yielding at last to universal death, told out to us that God is just. Look across to the allies of the plain. When they had wholly given themselves up to unnatural lusts, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrhah. And when he did so, what did he but write in letters of fire this word—"God is just, he furiously avengeth and terribly punisheth sin." Behold, too, Pharaoh and all his hosts drowned in the Red Sea. For what purpose was Pharaoh but that God might show forth his power in him—might prove

to the world that there were vessels of wrath, and that God knew how to fill them to the brim, and break them as with a rod of iron. Look to Palestine, and behold its kings put to death by the sword of the Lord and his servant Joshua. What means a land stained in blood? It meaneth this, that the race had offended much against heaven; and God, that man might have some glimpses of his terrible justice, declared that he would root out the races of Canaan, and would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. It is impossible to reconcile Old Testament history with the effeminate notion of neological divinity, that God is only a universal Father, but not a governor and a judge. If these gentlemen will quietly read some of those awful passages in the Old Testament, they cannot—unless they should deny the inspiration of the passage, or attempt to tone down in meaning—they cannot but confess that they see there far less a loving parent than a God dressed in arms, of whom we may say, “The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name. Thy right hand, O Lord, thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces thine enemies.” A God without justice is what this modern church is seeking after. These new doctrines would fashion a deity destitute of those sublime attributes, which keep the world in awe, and command for him the reverence of his creatures.

This brings me to my third argument. Not only do the nature and the acts of God prove that he will punish sin, but *the very necessities of the world demand it*. Imagine the contrary. Put in all our Christian pulpits men who should teach to sinners that there is no punishment for sin. Let them say to them, “What you suffer here is to be looked upon as God’s judgment on your offense; but there is no world to come in which your sins will be visited upon your heads.” Friends, you may at once advise the government to multiply the number of our jails tenfold. If there be no punishment for sin in another world, if it be so light and trifling an offense that the little sufferings of this life are sufficient atonement for it, then you have thrown up the floodgates which have hitherto dammed up the overflowing floods; you will soon see society swept from its moorings, there will be no possibility that men will seek to be honest, when they find that honesty or dishonesty are terms which have but a trifling difference between them. If sin be so slight a thing, men will think virtue to be a slight thing too, and if there be so little punishment for crime, they will soon think that there can be but little reason for virtue, and where will be our commonwealths, and our social compacts? The best lawgivers, however amiably disposed they may be, find that they must back up their laws with penalties. A state which should be founded upon laws without penalties could not last a week, or if it lasted, you would find that while the laws would be disregarded there would be more death and more suffering than there had been before. When was the guillotine most at work, but when there was loudest boast of liberty, and men’s living without law. When would there be the most of murder, but when there should no more be heard the threat of condemnation, and when they who were assassins might be permitted to go abroad untouched. There must be punishment for the world’s own good, to say nothing of the nature of God, which for its dignity and holiness necessarily demands that very offense and transgression should receive its just recompense of reward.

But further, I affirm the punishment of sin from *the atonement of Christ*. Friends, if there be no necessity that sin should be punished, why did Jesus die? Why, Father, didst thou send thy only begotten and well-beloved Son, and lay upon him the iniquities of us an? Was he needed for an example? He might have been our example without dying, in fact if this were all, virtue, crowned and glorified, might have been quite as noble an incentive to goodness, as virtue mocked and crucified. He was needed that he might take our sins, and having taken our sins, it became absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should die. In the death of Christ, if sin must not necessarily be punished,



I see nothing but the death of a martyr, like James, or Peter, or Polycarp, the death of a man murdered for being better than his fellows. And why do we make this fuss and noise about salvation by the death of Christ if that be all. Why has the Christian church existed to be a false witness, to testify to a fiction? Why has her blood been shed these many centuries, to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ taketh away the sin of the world, if the sin could be taken away without punishment? The wounds of Christ have no meaning, his precious blood has no value, his thorn-crowned head is not worthy of worship, nor is his death worthy of daily ministry, unless it be that he suffered "the just for the unjust to bring us to God;" God in Christ punished the sins of his people; and if he did it in Christ, unpardoned sinner, rest assured he will do it in you. If the imputed sins of Christ brought him the agonies of Gethsemane, what will your sins bring you? If guilt that was not his own brought him an exceeding heaviness, "even unto death," what will your sins bring you, sins remember which *are* your own? "He that spared not his own Son" will never spare rebels. He who did not spare his Son a single lash or a single stroke, will certainly make no exemption in your favor, if you live and die impenitent and reject the gospel of Christ.

Besides, my dear friends, permit me to say that those who think that sin is not to be punished, are generally the worst of men. Men hate hell for the reason that murderers hate the gallows. The miscreant Youngman, who was executed on the top of yonder gaol, informed the chaplain that he objected on principle to all capital punishment, an objection natural enough when it was his own inevitable doom. They who dissent from the doctrine of divine justice, are interested in forming that opinion; the wish is father to the thought, they would have their sin unpunished, they hope it may be, and then they say it will be. You will not hear a thief's objection to a policeman; you do not imagine that a criminal's objection to a judge is very valid, and the sinner's objection to hell lies only here, that he will not repent, and he therefore fears the dread certainty that he shall be punished. Besides even these worst of men, who pretend not to believe, do believe. Their fears betray the secret conviction of their consciences, and on their dying beds, or in a storm, whenever they have thought they were about to see with their own eyes the stern realities of eternity, their fears have proved them to be as strong believers as those who profess the faith. Infidelity is not honest. It may profess to be, but it is not. I think that our judges are right in not accepting the oath of an infidel. It is not possible that he should be honest in the notion that there is no God. When God is around him in every leaf, in every tree, and in every star in the sky; it is not possible that a man should be honest when he calls himself an atheist. Nor do we believe that any man can speak the dictates of his inmost heart, when he says that sin will never be punished, and that he may sin with impunity. His conscience gives him the lie, he knows it *must* be so, and that God will visit his offenses upon his head.

I shall not enlarge further, except to say in gathering up the thoughts, impenitent sinner, be thou sure of this; there shall not a sin of thine fall to the ground unremembered, "For every idle word that thou shalt speak God will bring thee into judgment," how much more for every blasphemous word and for every rebellious act. Do not wrap thyself up in the delusive thought that sin will escape unpunished. Even if it should be so, then the Christian is as well off as you are, but since righteousness will be laid to the line, and judgment to the plummet, what will become of you? Be wise before it is too late. Believe to-day what you will find out to be a fact ere long. God has revealed it to you, his revelation has tokens and signs which prove its divine origin. Believe what He has revealed; do not say in your heart "I never will believe there is a hell unless one should come from it." Do you not see, that if one should come from it then you would not believe at all, because you

would say, "If one person came from hell, then another may, and I may myself." It would take away all your dread of future punishment if any spirit should come back from it, and therefore it is you that you should not have that be given you. Yet methinks the shrieks of dying sinners, the cries which some of you have heard coming up from the death beds of blasphemers, ought to be enough evidence that there is a world to come whereof we speak, and that there are terrors of the law which are happily concealed to-day from your eyes and from your ears, but which you may soon know, and know far better than the best words can teach you, by your own feelings, by your own everlasting despair, and banishment from God.

II. I turn now to the second portion of the discourse: THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT by way of explanation.

How will God punish sin? The text says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." The old Puritanic preachers, such men as Alleyne, who wrote the "Alarm," and others of his class—always gave a very cross picture of the world to come. They could never represent it except by brimstone flames, and dancing fiends, and such like horrors. They were conscientious in the drawing of the picture, and to them the terrors of the Lord gross, corporeal, unscriptural ideas of hell, but rather let us feel that it is a great mystery, concerning which we must rather follow Scripture than imagination. The first punishment which will be executed upon man for his sins, will be punishment to his soul. The soul leaves the body, the body is *here* enclosed in the coffin, rotting in the tomb; the disembodied spirit will appear before its God. It will then know at once what its future destination shall be. The great assize will not then have been held, the Judge will not have officially pronounced the sentence, but the soul anticipating the sentence will antidote its execution. Memory will begin to reflect upon past sins, past mercies unimproved, past opportunities neglected, and past offenses which have long been forgotten. Then the conscience will begin to thunder. "Thou didst this wantonly," saith Conscience. "Thou didst it against light and knowledge, thou didst despise Christ, thou didst neglect the day of mercy, thou hast been a suicide, thou hast destroyed thyself." Then the fears will come in, the fears of the day of judgment, when the body shall be reunited with the soul. And those fears will sting the man with thoughts like these. "What wilt thou say when He comes to judge thee? How will thou bear the eyes of Him that shall read thee through and through? *Now* thou knowest that what was preached to thee on earth is true. Thou art no infidel *now*. *Now* the truth is not kept out of thy soul by the dulness of thy fleshly body; thou *seest* thou *knowest* it. What will become of thee when earth shall pass away and heaven shall shake, and hell shall gape to receive its prey?" So the spirit shall be virtually in hell before the body goes there. This shall be the first punishment of sin.

Then, when the day predestined shall have come, the trump of the archangel shall ring through the air—the trump this time of the second resurrection—for the dead in Christ shall have already risen, and have reigned with Christ upon the earth. Then rings the elation note that wakes the dead. They start up, and the soul returns to its old house, the body. Then it receives its sentence. It is brought forth as the text says, "to the day of wrath,"—it had been reserved in chains before, in blackness and darkness, it is now brought forth to receive the sentence, that the body may begin its hell. Then, mark you, beyond a doubt, for we cannot understand Scripture, and especially the words of Christ without it, the body shall have pains meet for its offenses. Your members were servants of your lusts, they shall be partakers of the wage of your soul—the feet that carried you in the paths of sin, shall tread the fiery road, the eyes which gazed with lustful glance, shall now be made to weep the scalding tear, the teeth which ministered to your gluttony, shall now gnash

for pain, the tongues which talked so exceeding proudly against God, shall be “tormented in this flame.” There shall be certainly a punishment for the body as well as for the soul, for what else did Christ mean when he said, “Fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.” I shall not enlarge upon what sort of punishment this will be, suffice me to say, that whatever it is, it will be *just*. The sinner in hell shall not endure one iota more than he deserves, he shall have the due reward of his deeds—no more. God is not unjust to punish men arbitrarily,—I know of no arbitrary condemnation. There is no such thing as sovereign damnation; it will be justice—inflexible, I grant you, but yet not such as shall pass the bounds of due and right desert. God will give to man only the harvest of his own deeds. He sowed the wind, and he shall reap the whirlwind. You shall not have the consolation in hell of saying that you did not deserve it, for in hell you will be made to feel, “I brought this on myself, I destroyed myself, it is true I am in pain, but I am the father of my own pains; I planted the tree which yields the bitter fruit, I digged about it and I watered it, I did the work, I labored, and this is my wages;” and you will have to feel there and then, that in every pang that rends the heart God is infinitely just. And then, whatever the pain may be, we know that while it is just, it will be *terrible*. Whose are those awful words, “He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire! “Is this the language of Moses? No, of Christ. It is a remarkable fact, that the most frightful descriptions of punishment, of another world are from the lips of the Savior. Had Peter spoken them, you would have said Peter was harsh in spirit. It was the Master spake them. He who wept over Jerusalem said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment;” he spoke of “burning up the chaff;” he spoke of “binding hand and foot and giving them up to the tormentors.” In the compass of revelation there are no words so grim and terrible in their awful suggestiveness, as the words of Him “who went about doing good,” and wept and cried, “Come unto me, and ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

And we know, again that this punishment will be *eternal*. This is the very pith of it. There were no hell, if it were not eternal, full the hope of an end would be the end of fear. If there could be an end to hell at any time, there would be an end to it at once, for no man would feel that desperate despair, if there were a hope that it should come to a close. But it is eternity, eternity, eternity, that makes punishment bad. This is the bell which tolls the funeral of every hope—eternity, eternity, eternity. To sail across a sea of fire for ever, never reaching a haven; to sink, but never reach the bottom, or to rise to heights of greater agony, and never reach the summit. Oh, brethren, brethren, it is not the wrath of God in this world that you have so much to fear, the wrath’s to come, the wrath’s to come. And it is not the wrath that the soul shall be filled with when it has been there a thousand years, it is the wrath’s to come. They will go on sinning and God will go on averaging, they will go on blaspheming and they shall go on gnawing their tongues, they shall go on hating God and they shall go on feeling his anger, they shall go from bad to worse in character, and doubtless from ball to worse in agony. O God, help us to escape from this awful thing—the wrath, the wrath to come!

### III. I close now by offering SOME FEW WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION.

You will kindly look at the thirty-first verse. He says “Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done!” Now there are many men who think they shall come off soot free, because in this life there are none who will dare to mention their sins to their face. The covetous man is very seldom rebuked for his covetousness. If a man lives an unclean life, he does not usually read books which would prick his conscience. If a man acts dishonorably in his trade, if another should tell him of it, he would be exceedingly insulted. It is true a faithful minister

will often make men feel uneasy in their sins, for he will be led by God's direction to give such a description of the offenses and of the punishment, that he will make sinners tremble in their shoes. But still are there not some among you here to-day who can sin with both your hands, and there is no Elijah to say, "Thou art the man. "You have none to meet you in Naboth's vineyard, and say to you, "Hast thou killed and taken possession?" "There is perhaps hardly a "still small voice:" there used to be one. The agonizing face of your wife when first you had forsaken the way of virtue; the ghastly look of your mother as you were bringing down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, the sorrowful gaze of your little children when first their father became a drunkard, these were still voices to you, but they are hushed now. When God gives you up, then indeed your damnation slumbereth not. But remember, however cheaply you can sin now, God will not fear insulting you; he will bring your sins to your remembrance and there shall be no consideration of your dignity. He will not consult your feelings, he will not look upon you as a great one; he will bring your sins to remembrance in no courtly phrases and in no polished terms. You shall find that the lips of Justice know not how to make distinctions between you and the basest menial whom once you despised. Now, if a man should speak your character it would be libel; but when God speaks it, you shall not threaten him. What thinkest thou that he will fear and tremble before thee? Who art thou, O man, that the lips of the Eternal God should be silent about thee? Who art thou that he should fail to draw thy character in black or crimson hues? He will convict thee to thy face, and thou shalt be utterly unable to plead guiltless of thy sins. And then the text says "Who shall repay him?" "Ah! there is no hand which dares repay you now; you have gone unpunished yet. No law can touch you, you say; ah! but there is a law which overrides the law that is human; and if the arm of human justice be too short, the arm of God is as long as it is strong, and he will reach you, and to the last jot and little pay you your due reward. You shall not escape, even in the slightest degree. No pleas and prayers, no tears and excuses, shall have any avail with him, but till justice shall have had its uttermost farthing, thou shalt by no means come out thence.

And now, sinner, why wilt thou dare the wrath of God? Why wilt thou run this fearful risk? Why wilt thou make thy bed in hell? Why wilt thou dwell in everlasting burnings? Is it wise, or art thou mad, and is thy reason gone? Have I preached to you a bugbear and a fable?—if so, go thy way and sin. But oh! if it be true—and it *must* be, unless you are prepared to reject that precious book and the very name of Christian—if it be true! Soul, I pray thee let me feel for thee, if thou wilt not feel for thyself. Why dash thyself upon the point of Jehovah's javelin? Why destroy thyself against the bosses of his buckler? What can there be that makes thee so in love with ruin? Why wilt thou hug the grave, and embrace destruction? Soul, again I say, art thou mad?—art thou mad?—art thou mad? May the Lord teach thee reason, and may he help thee to flee to the only refuge where a sinner may find mercy.

I shall close when I have tried to set out the way of Mercy. I have read in the old Histories of England, that Edward the Second, one of our kings, was exceedingly enraged against one of his courtiers; being out hunting one day, he threatened the courtier with the severest punishment. There was a river between them at the time, and the courtier thinking that he was perfectly safe, ventured to offer some jeering remark upon the king—telling him that at any rate he would not be likely to chastise him until he got at him. The king feeling his anger hot within him, told him that the water should not long divide them, leaped into the middle of the stream, and with some difficulty gained the other side. The courtier in great alarm fled in terror, and the king pursued him with might and main, spurring his horse to the utmost. Nor did his anger cease; he carried his drawn sword in his

hand with the intention of killing him. At last the courtier, seeing that there was no hope for any escape, knelt down upon the grass, and laying bare his neck, said, "I heartily deserve to die, mercy, King! mercy!" He sent back his sword into the scabbard in a moment, and said, "Whilst you sought to escape me I determined to destroy you, but when I see you humble at my feet I freely forgive you." Even so is it with the King of heaven. Sinners, ye say there is this life between you and God, ah! but how soon will the white horse of Justice pass the stream, and then flee, flee as you may today, he will surely overtake you. He now is swift to destroy, let it be yours on your knees to make confession of your sin and say, "I deserve thy wrath, Great King, I deserve thy wrath," and if to this thou art enabled to add the plea of the precious blood of Christ, the sword of Justice will return into its scabbard, and he will say, "I am just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly." For Jesus died, and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has died, Justice is satisfied on the account of all believers. Go thy way, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. "What must I do to saved?" saith one. This is all thou hast to do, and this the Holy Spirit will work in thee. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thine heart." "What is that?" say you. "I believe him to be divine; I believe that he is able to save." That will not save you, there must be something more than that. "What then?" "Believe in him,"—carry out practically your belief that he is able to save by trusting yourself in his hands. To exhibit again an old picture which has often been used, there is a child in a burning house, hanging from the upper window. A strong man stands beneath and offers to catch him, if he will but drop from yonder hot window sill to which he still clings. "Drop, my child," saith he, "I will catch you." The child believes the strength of his preserver; that does not save him. He trusts to the strength, he lets go his hold and falls, is caught and is preserved, that is faith. Let go your hold of your good works, your good thoughts, and all else, and tried in Christ. He never did let one soul dash itself to earth yet, that did but fall into his hands. Oh! for grace for every one of us to say in the words of Watts,—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ's kind arms I fall;  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my all."

## Infant Salvation

A Sermon

(No. 411)

Delivered on Sunday Morning, September 29th, 1861 by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well”—2 Kings 4:26.

THE SUBJECT of this morning’s discourse will be “Infant Salvation.” It may not possibly be interesting to all present, but I do not remember to have preached upon this subject to this congregation, and I am anxious moreover that the printed series should contain sermons upon the whole range of theology. I think there is no one point which ought to be left out in our ministry, even though it may only yield comfort to a class. Perhaps the larger proportion of this audience have at some time or other had to shed the briny tear over the child’s little coffin;—it may be that through this subject consolation may be afforded to them. This good Shunammite was asked by Gehazi, whether it was well with herself. She was mourning over a lost child, and yet she said, “It is well;” she felt that the trial would surely be blessed. “Is it well with thy husband?” He was old and stricken in years, and was ripening for death, yet she said, “Yes, it is well.” Then came the question about her child, it was dead at home, and the enquiry would renew her griefs, “Is it well with the child?” Yet she said, “It is well,” perhaps so answering because she had a faith that soon it should be restored to her, and that its temporary absence was well; or I think rather because she was persuaded that whatever might have become of its spirit, it was safe in the keeping of God, happy beneath the shadow of his wings. Therefore, not fearing that it was lost, having no suspicion whatever that it was cast away from the place of bliss—for that suspicion would have quite prevented her giving such answer—she said “Yes, the child is dead, but ‘it is well.’”

Now, let every mother and father here present know assuredly that it is well with the child, if God hath taken it away from you in its infant days. You never heard its declaration of faith—it was not capable of such a thing—it was not baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ, not buried with him in baptism; it was not capable of giving that “answer of a good conscience towards God;” nevertheless, you may rest assured that it is well with the child, well in a higher and a better sense than it is well with yourselves; well without limitation, well without exception, well infinitely, “well” eternally. Perhaps you will say, “What reasons have we for believing that it is well with the child?” Before I enter upon that I would make one observation. It has been wickedly, lyingly, and slanderously said of Calvinists, that we believe that some little children perish. Those who make the accusation know that their charge is false. I cannot even dare to hope, though I would wish to do so, that they ignorantly misrepresent us. They wickedly repeat what has been denied a thousand times, what they know is not true. In Calvin’s advice to Omit, he interprets the second commandment “shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me,” as referring to generations, and hence he seems to teach that infants who have had pious ancestors, no matter how remotely, dying as infants are saved. This would certainly take in the whole race. As for modern Calvinists, I know of no exception, but we all hope and believe that all persons dying in infancy are elect. Dr. Gill, who has been looked upon in late times as being a very standard of Calvinism, not to say of ultra-Calvinism, himself

never hints for a moment the supposition that any infant has perished, but affirms of it that it is a dark and mysterious subject, but that it is his belief, and he thinks he has Scripture to warrant it, that they who have fallen asleep in infancy have not perished, but have been numbered with the chosen of God, and so have entered into eternal rest. We have never taught the contrary, and when the charge is brought, I repudiate it and say, “*You* may have said so, *we* never did, and you know we never did. If you dare to repeat the slander again, let the lie stand in scarlet on your very cheek if you be capable of a blush.” We have never dreamed of such a thing. With very few and rare exceptions, so rare that I never heard of them except from the lips of slanderers, we have never imagined that infants dying as infants have perished, but we have believed that they enter into the paradise of God.

First, then, this morning, I shall endeavor to explain *the way in which we believed infants are saved*; secondly, give *reasons for do believing*; and then, thirdly, seek to bring out *a practical use of the subject*.

#### I. First of all, THE WAY IN WHICH WE BELIEVE INFANTS TO BE SAVED.

Some ground the idea of the eternal blessedness of the infant upon its *innocence*. We do no such thing; we believe that the infant fell in the first Adam, “for in Adam all died.” All Adam’s posterity, whether infant or adult, were represented by him—he stood for them all, and when he fell, he fell for them all. There was no exception made at all in the covenant of works made with Adam as to infants dying; and inasmuch as they were included in Adam, though they have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, they have original guilt. They are “born in sin and steepen in iniquity; in sin do their mothers conceive them;” so saith David of himself, and (by inference) of the whole human race. If they be saved, we believe it is not because of any natural innocence. They enter heaven by the very same way that we do; they are receives in the name of Christ. “Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid,” and I do not think nor dream that there is a different foundation for the infant than that which is laid for the adult. And equally is it far from our minds to believe that infants go to heaven through *baptism*—not to say, in the first place, that we believe infant sprinkling to be a human and carnal invention, an addition to the Word of God, and therefore wicked and injurious. When we reflect that it is rendered into some thing worse than superstition by being accompanied with falsehood, when children are taught that in their baptism they are made the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, which is as base a lie as ever was forged in hell, or uttered beneath the copes of heaven, our spirit sinks at the fearful errors which have crept into the Church, through the one little door of infant sprinkling. No; children are not saved because they are baptized, for if so, the Puseyite is quite right in refusing to bury our little children if they die unbaptized. Yes, the barbarian is quite right in driving the parent, as he does to this day, from the church yard of his own national Church, and telling him that his child may rot above-ground, and that it shall not be buried except it be at the dead of night, because the superstitious drops have never fallen on its brow. He is right enough if that baptism made the child a Christian, and if that child could not be saved without it. But a thing so revolting to feeling, is at once to be eschewed by Christian men. The child is saved, if snatched away by death as we are, on another ground than that of rites and ceremonies, and the will of man.

On what ground, then, do we believe the child to be saved? We believe it to be as lost on the rest of mankind, and as truly condemned by the sentence which said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” It is saved because it is *elect*. In the compass of election, in the Lamb’s Book of Life, we believe there shall be found written millions of souls who are only shown on

earth, and then stretch their wings for heaven. They are saved, too, because they were *redeemed* by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He who shed his blood for all his people, bought them with the same price with which he redeemed their parents, and therefore are they saved because Christ was sponsor for them, and suffered in their room and stead. They are saved, again not without *regeneration*, for, “except a man”—the text does not mean an adult man but a person, a being of the human race—“except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” No doubt, in some mysterious manner the Spirit of God regenerates the infant soul, and it enters into glory made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. That this is possible is proved from Scripture instances. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb. We read of Jeremiah also, that the same had occurred to him; and of Samuel we find that while yet a babe the Lord called him. We believe, therefore, that even before the intellect can work, God, who worketh not by the will of man, nor by blood, but by the mysterious agency of his Holy Spirit, creates the infant soul a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then it enters into the “rest which remaineth for the people of God.” By election, by redemption, by regeneration, the child enters into glory, by the selfsame door by which every believer in Christ Jesus hopes to enter, and in no other way. If we could not suppose that children could be saved in the same way as adults, if it would be necessary to suppose that God’s justice must be infringed, or that his plan of salvation must be altered to suit their cases, then we should be in doubt; but we can see that with the same appliances, by the same plan, on precisely the same grounds, and through the same agencies, the infant soul can behold the Savior a face in glory everlasting, and therefore we are at ease upon the matter.

II. This brings me now to note THE REASONS WHY WE THUS THINK INFANTS ARE SAVED.

First, we ground our conviction very much upon the *goodness of the nature of God*. We say that the opposite doctrine that some infants perish and are lost, is altogether repugnant to the idea which we have of Him whose name is love. If we had a God, whose name was Moloch, if God were an arbitrary tyrant, without benevolence or grace, we could suppose some infants being cast into hell; but our God, who heareth the young ravens when they cry, certainly will find no delight in the shrieks and cries of infants cast away from his presence. We read of him that he is so tender, that he careth for oxen, that he would not have the mouth of the ox muzzled, that treadeth out the corn. Nay, he careth for the bird upon the nest, and would not have the mother bird killed while sitting upon its nest with its little ones. He made ordinances and commands even for irrational creatures. He finds food for the most loathsome animal, nor does he neglect the worm any more than the angel, and shall we believe with such universal goodness as this, that he would cast away the infant soul I say it would be clear contrary to all that we have ever read or ever believed of Him, that our faith would stagger before a revelation which should display a fact so singularly exceptional to the tenor of his other deeds. We have learned humbly to submit our judgments to his will, and we dare not criticise or accuse the Lord of All; we believe him to be just, let him do as he may, and? Therefore, whatever he might reveal we would accept; but he never has, and I think he never will require of us so desperate a stretch of faith as to see goodness in the eternal misery of an infinite cast into hell. You remember when Jonah—petulant, quick-tempered Jonah—would have Nineveh perish God gave it as the reason why Nineveh should not be destroyed, that there were in it more than six score thousand infants,—persons, he said, who knew not their right hand from their left. If he spared Nineveh that their mortal life might be spared, think you that their immortal souls shall be needlessly cast away! I only put it to your own reason. It is not a case where we need much



argument. Would your God cast away an infant? If yours could, I am happy to say he is not the God that I adore.

Again, we think it would be inconsistent utterly with *the known character of our Lord Jesus Christ*. When his disciples put away the little children whom their anxious mothers brought to him, Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven," by which he taught, as John Newton very properly says, that such as these made up a very great part of the kingdom of heaven. And when we consider that upon the best statistics it is calculated that more than one third of the human race die in infancy, and probably if we take into calculation those districts where infanticide prevails, as in heathen countries, such as China and the like, perhaps one half of the population of the world die before they reach adult years,—the saying of the Savior derives great force indeed," Of such is the kingdom of heaven." If some remind me that the kingdom of heaven means the dispensation of grace on earth, I answer, yes, it does, and it means the same dispensation in heaven too, for while part of the kingdom of heaven is on earth in the Church, since the Church is always one, that other part of the Church which is above is also the kingdom of heaven. We know this text is constantly used as a proof of baptism, but in the first place, Christ did not baptize them, for "Jesus Christ baptized not;" in the second place, his disciples did not baptize them, for they withstood their coming, and would have driven them away. Then if Jesus did not, and his disciple did not, who did, ' It has no more to do with baptism than with circumcision. There is not the slightest allusion to baptism in the text, or in the context; and I can prove the circumcision of infants from it with quite as fair logic as others attempt to prove infant baptism. However, it does prove this, that infants compose a great part of the family of Christ, and that Jesus Christ is known to have had a love and amiableness towards the little ones. When they shouted in the temple, "Hosanna!" did he rebuke them? No; but rejoiced in their boyish shouts. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hath God ordained strength," and does not that text seem to say that in heaven there shall be "perfect praise" rendered to God by multitudes of cherubs who were here on earth—your little ones fondled in your bosom—and then suddenly snatched away to heaven. I could not believe it of Jesus, that he would say to little children, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire in hell!" I cannot conceive it possible of him as the loving and tender one, that when he shall sit to judge all nations, he should put the little ones on the left hand, and should banish them for ever from his presence. Could he address them, and say to them, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not? "How *could* they do it? And if the main reason of damnation lie in sins of omission like there which it was not possible for them to commit, for want of power to perform the duty how, then, shall he condemn and cast them away?

Furthermore, we think that *the ways of grace*, if we consider them, render it highly improbable, not to say impossible, that an infant soul should be destroyed. What saith Scripture? "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Such a thing as that could not be sail of an infant cast away. We know that God is so abundantly gracious that such expressions as the "unsearchable riches of Christ," "God who is rich in mercy," "A God full of compassion," "The exceeding riches of his grace," and the like are truly applicable without exaggeration or hyperbole. We know that he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, and that in grace he is able to do "exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or even think." The grace of God has sought out in the world the greatest sinners. It has not passed by the vilest of the vile. He who called himself the chief of sinners was a partaker of the love of Christ. All manner of sin and of blasphemy have been

forgiven unto man. He has been able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Christ, and does it seem consistent with such grace as this that it should pass by the myriads upon myriads of little ones, who wear the image of the earthy Adam, and never stamp upon them the image of the heavenly? I cannot conceive such a thing. He that has tasted and felt, and handled the grace of God, will, I think, shrink instinctively from any other doctrine than this, that infants dying such, are most assuredly saved.

Once again one of the strongest inferential arguments is to be found in the fact that Scripture positively states that *the number of saved souls at the last will be very great*. In the Revelation we read of a number that no man can number. The Psalmist speaks of them as numerous as dew drops from the womb of the morning. Many passages give to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, a seed as many as the stars of heaven, or as the sand on the sea shore. Christ is to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; surely it is not a little that will satisfy him. The virtue of the precious redemption involves a great host who were redeemed. All Scripture seems to tenon that heaven will not be a narrow world, that its population will not be like a handful gleaned out of a vintage, but that Christ shall be glorified by ten thousand times ten thousand, whom he hath redeemed with his blood. Now where are they to come from? How small a part of the map could be called Christian! Look at it. Out of that part which could be called Christian, how small a portion of them would bear the name of believer! How few could be said to have even a nominal attachment to the Church of Christ? Out of this, how many are hypocrites, and know not the truth! I do not see it possible, unless indeed the millennium age should soon come, and then far exceed a thousand years, I do not see how it is possible that so vast a number should enter heaven, unless it be on the supposition that infant souls constitute the great majority. It is a sweet belief to my own mind that there will be more saved than lost, for in all things Christ is to have the pre-eminence, and why not in this? It was the thought of a great divine that perhaps at the last the number of the lost would not bear a greater proportion to the number of the saved, than do the number of criminals in gaols to those who are abroad in a properly-conducted state. I hope it may be found to be so. At any rate, it is not my business to be asking, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" The gate is strait, but the Lord knows how to bring thousands through it without making it any wider, and we ought not to seek to shut any out by seeking to make it narrower. Oh! I do know that Christ will have the victory, and that as he is followed by streaming hosts, the black prince of hell will never be able to count so many followers in his dreary train as Christ in his resplendent triumph. And if so we *must* have the children saved; yea, brethren, if not so, we *must have them*, because we feel anyhow they must be numbered with the blessed, and dwell with Christ hereafter.

Now for one or two *incidental matters which occur in Scripture*, which seem to throw a little light also on the subject. You have not forgotten the case of David. His child by Bathsheba was to die as a punishment for the father's offense. David prayed, and fasted, and vexed his soul; at last they tell him the child is dead. He fasted no more, but he said, "I shall go to him, he shall not return to me." Now, where did David expect to go to? Why, to heaven surely. Then his child must have been there, for he said, "I shall go to him." I do not hear him say the same of Absalom. He did not stand over his corpse, and say, "I shall go to him;" he had no hope for that rebellious son. Over this child it was not—"O my son! would to God I had died for thee!" No, he could let this babe go with perfect confidence, for he said, "I shall go to him." "I know," he might have said, "that He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for he is with me, I shall go to my child, and in

heaven we shall be re-united with each other." You remember, his, those instances which I have already quoted, where children are said to have been sanctified from the womb. It casts this light upon the subject, it shows it not to be impossible that a child should be a partaker of grace while yet a babe. Then you have the passage, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath perfected praise." The coming out of Egypt was a type of the redemption of the chosen seed, and you know that in that case the little ones were to go forth, nay, not even a hoof was to be left behind. Why not children in the greater deliverance to join in the song of Moses and of the Lamb? And there is a passage in Ezekiel, for where we have but little, we must pick up even the crumbs, and do as our Master did—gather up the fragments that nothing be lost—there is a passage in Ezekiel, sixteenth chapter, twenty-first verse, where God is censuring his people for having given up their little infants to Moloch, having caused them to pass through the fire, and he says of these little ones, "Thou hast slain lay children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire," so, then, they were God's children those little ones who died in the red-hot arms of Moloch while babes, God calls "my children." We may, therefore, believe concerning all those who have fallen asleep in these early days of life, that Jesus said of them, "These are my children," and that he now to-day, while he leads his sheep unto loving fountains of water, does not forget still to carry out his own injunction, "Feed my lambs." Yea, to-day even he carrieth "the lambs in his bosom," and even before the eternal throne he is not ashamed to say, "Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me." There is another passage in Scripture which I think may be used. In the first chapter of Deuteronomy there hath been a threatening pronounced upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, that, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, they should never see the promised land; nevertheless, it is added. "Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it." To you, fathers and mothers who fear not God, who live and die unbelieving, I would say, your unbelief cannot shut your children out of heaven and I bless God for that. While you cannot lay hold on that text which says "The promise is unto us and our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet inasmuch as the sin of the generation in the wilderness did not shut the next generation out of Canaan but they did surely enter in, so the sin of unbelieving parents shall not necessarily be the ruin of their children, but they shall still, through God's sovereign grace and his overflowing mercy, be made partakers of the rest which he hath reserved for his people. Understand that this morning I have not made a distinction between the children of godly and ungodly parents. If they die in infancy, I do not mind who is father nor who their mother, they are saved; I do not even endorse the theory of a good Presbyterian minister who supposes that the children of godly parents will have a better place in heaven than those who happen to be sprung from ungodly ones. I do not believe in any such thing. I am not certain that there are any degrees in heaven at all; and even if there were, I am not clear that even that would prove our children to have any higher rights than others. All of them without exception, from whosoever loins they may have sprung, will, we believe, not by baptism, not by their parents' faith, but simply as we are all saved through the election of God, through the precious blood "Christ, through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, attain to glory and Immortality, and wear the image of the heavenly as they have worn the image of the earthy.

### III. I now come to make a PRACTICAL USE OF THE DOCTRINE.

First, let it be a *comfort to bereaved parents*. You say it is a heavy cross that you have to carry. Remember, *it is easier to carry a dead cross than a living one*. To have a living cross is indeed a

tribulation,—to have a child who is rebellious in his childhood, vicious in his youth, debauched in his manhood! Ah, would God that he had died from the birth; would God that he had never seen the light! Many a father's heirs have been brought with sorrow to the grave through his living childre, but I think never through his dead babes, certainly not if he were a Christian, and were able to take the comfort of the apostle's words—"We sorrow not as they that are without hope." So you would have your child live? Ah, if you could have drawn aside the veil of destiny, and have seen to what he might have lived! Would you have had him live to ripen for the gallows? Would you have him live to curse his father's God? Would you have him live to make your home wretched to make you wet your pillow with tears, and send you to your daily work with your hands upon your loins because of sorrow? Such might have been the case; it is not so now, for your little one sings before the throne of God. Do you know from what sorrows your little one has escaped? You have had enough yourself. It was born of woman, it would have been of few days and full of trouble as you are. It has escaped those sorrows, do you lament that? Remember, too your own sins, and the deep sorrow of repentance. Had that child lived, it would have been a sinner, and it must have known the bitterness of conviction of sin. It has escaped that; it rejoices now in the glory of God. Then would you have it back again? Bereaved parents, could you for a moment see your own offspring above, I think you would very speedily wipe away your team. There among the sweet voices which sing the perpetual carol may be heard the voice of your own child—an angel now, and you the mother of a songster before the throne of God. You might not have murmured had you received the promise that your child should have been elevated to the peerage, it has been elevated higher than that—to the peerage of heaven. It has received the dignity of the immortals, it is robed in better than royal garments it is more rich and more blessed than it could have been if all the crowns of earth could have been put upon its head. Wherefore, then would you complain? An old poet has penned a verse well fitted for an infant's epitaph;—

"Short was my life, the longer is my rest,  
 God takes those soonest whom he loveth best,  
 Who's born today, and dies tomorrow,  
 Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.  
 Other diseases often come to grieve us,  
 Death restrikes but once, and that stroke doth relieve us."

Your child has had that one stroke and has been relieved from all these pains, and you may say of it, this much we know, he is supremely blessed, has escaped from sin, and care, and woe, and with the Savior rests. "Happy the babe," says Hervey, "who,

Privileged by faith, a shorter labor and a lighter weight,  
 Received but yesterday the gift of breath,  
 Ordered tomorrow to return to death."

While another says, looking upward to the skies,

"O blest exchange, O envied lot,

Without a conflict crowned,

Stranger to pain, in pleasure bless'd

And without fame, renowned."

So is it. It is well to fight and will, but to will as fairly without the fight! It is well to sing the song of triumph after we have passed the Red Sea with all its terrors, but to sing the song without the sea is glorious still! I do not know that I would prefer the lot of a child in heaven myself. I think

it is nobler to have borne the storm, and to have struggled against the wind and the rain. I think it will be a subject of congratulation through eternity, for you and me, that we did not come so easy a way to heaven, for it is only a pin's prick after all, this mortal life; then there is exceeding great glory hereafter. But yet I think we may still thank God for those little ones that they have been spared our sins, and spared our infirmities, and spared our pains and are entered into the rest above. Thus saith the Lord unto thee, O Rachel, if thou weepest for thy children, and refuseth to be comforted because they are not: "Restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded with the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

The next and perhaps more useful and profitable inference to be drawn from the text is this: many of you are parents who have children in heaven. Is it not a desirable thing that you should go there, too? And yet have I not in these galleries and in this area some, perhaps many, who have no hope hereafter? In fact, you have left that which is beyond the grave to be thought of another day, you have given all your time and thoughts to the short, brief, and unsatisfactory pursuits of mortal life. Mother unconverted mother, from the battlements of heaven your child beckons you to Paradise. Father, ungodly, impenitent father, the little eyes that one—looked joyously on you, look down upon you now, and the lips which had scarcely learned to call you father, ere they were sealed by the silence of death, may be heard as with a still small voice, saying to you this morning, "Father, must we be for ever divided by the great gulf which no man can pass? "Doth not nature itself put a kind of longing in your soul that you may be bound in the bundle of life with your own children? Then stop and think. As you are at present, you cannot hope for that; for your way is sinful, you have forgotten Christ, you have not repented of sin, you have loved the wages of iniquity I pray thee go to thy chamber this morning and think of thyself as being driven from thy little ones, banished for ever from the presence of God, cast "where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched." If thou wilt think of these matters, perhaps the heart will begin to move, and the eyes may begin to flow, and then may the Holy Spirit put before thine eyes the cross of the Savior the holy child Jesus! And remember, if thou wilt turn thine eye to him thou shalt live: if thou believest on him with all thy heart thou shalt be with him where He is,—with all those whom the Father gave him who have gone before Thou needest not to be shut out. Wilt thou sign thine own doom, and write thine own death warrant? Neglect not this great salvation but may the grace of God work with thee to make thee seek, for thou shalt find—to make thee knock, for the door shall be opened—to make thee ask, for he that asketh shall receive! O might I take you by the hand—perhaps you have come from a newly-made grave, or left the child at home dead, and God has made me a messenger to you this morning; O might I take you by the hand and say, "We cannot bring him back again, the spirit is gone beyond recall, but you may follow!" Behold the ladder of light before you! The first step upon it is repentance, out of thyself the next step is faith, into, Christ, and when thou art there, thou art fairly and safely on thy way, and ere long thou shalt be received at heaven's gates by those very little ones who have gone before, that they may come to welcome thee when thou shouldest land upon the eternal chores.

Yet another lesson of instruction, and I will not detain you much longer. What shall we say to parent who have living children? We have spoken of those that are dead, what shall we say of the living? I think I might say, reserve your tears, bereaved parents, for the children that live. You may go to the little grave, you may look upon it and say, "This my child is saved; it resteth for ever beyond all fear of harm." You may come back to those who are sitting round your table, and you can look from one to the other and say, "These my children, many of them are unsaved." Out of

God, out of Christ, some of them are just ripening into manhood and into womanhood, and you can plainly see that their heart is like every natural heart, desperately wicked. There is subject for weeping for you. I pray you never cease to weep for them until they have ceased to sin, never cease to hope for them until they have ceased to live; never cease to pray for them until you yourself cease to breathe. Carry them before God in the arms of faith, and do not be desponding because they are not what you want them to be. They will be won yet if you have but faith in God. Do not think that it is hopeless. He that saved *you* can save *them*. Take them one by one constantly to God's mercy-seat and wrestle with Him, and say, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The promise is unto you and to your child, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call. Pray, strive, wrestle, and it shall yet be your happy lot to see your household saved. This was the word which the apostle gave to the gaoler, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." We have had many proofs of it, for in this pool under here I have baptised not only the father and the mother, but in many cases all the children too, who one after another have been brought by grace even to put their trust in Jesus. It should be the longing of every parent's heart to see all his offspring Christ's, and all that have sprung from his loins numbered in the host of those who shall sing around the throne of God. We may pray in faith, for we have a promise about it; we may pray in faith, for we have many precedents in Scripture, the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, but for this good thing he will be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them. Inquire of Him, plead with Him, go before Him with the power of faith and earnestness, and He will surely hear you.

One word to all the congregation. A little child was saying the other day—and children will sometimes say strange things—"Papa, I cannot go back again." When he was asked what he meant, he explained that he was here, he had begun his life, and it seemed such a thought to him that he could not cease to be,—he could not go back again. You and I may say the same; here we are; we have grown up, we cannot go back again to that childhood in which we once were; we have therefore no door of escape there. Good John Bunyan used to wish that he had died when he was a child. Then again, he hoped he might be descended from some Jew, for he had a notion that the Hebrews might be saved. That door God has closed. Every door is closed to you and me except the one that is just in front of us, and that has the mark of the cross upon it. There is the golden knocker of prayer: do we choose to turn aside from that to find another,—a gate of ceremonies, or of blood, or of birth? We shall never enter that way. There is that knocker! By faith, great God, I will lift it now. "I, the chief of sinners am, have mercy upon me! "Jesus stands there. "Come in," saith he, "thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" He receives me to his arms, washes, clothes, glorifies me, when I come to him. Am I such a fool that I do not knock? Yes, such I am by nature—then what a fool! O Spirit of God! make me wise to know my danger and my refuge! And now, sinner, in the name of him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, lay hold upon that knocker, lift it, give it a blow, and let your prayer be, ere thou leanest this sanctuary, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" May the Lord hear and bless, for his name's sake!

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