



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 60: 1914

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 60: 1914* by Charles Spurgeon

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A New Year's Benediction

A Sermon

(No. 3387)

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."—Hebrews 13:5.

OBSERVE the way in which the apostles were accustomed to incite believers in Christ to the performance of their duties. They did not tell them, "You must do this or that, or you will be punished; you must do this, and then you shall obtain a reward for it." They never cracked the whip of the law in the ears of the child of God. They knew the difference between the man who was actuated by sordid motives and the fear of punishment, and the new-born man who is moved by sublimer motives, namely, motives that touch his heart, that move his regenerated nature, and that constrain him, out of affection, to do the will of him that sent him. Hence the address here is not, "Be content, or else God will take away what you have," but "Be content, and have naught to do with covetousness, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The promise is made the argument for the precept. Obedience is enforced by a covenant blessing. He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"; what then? Shall I be discontented and covetous? Nay! but for the very reason that he has made, by his promise, my very safety absolute and unconditional, assuring me, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," for that reason I will keep out of my conversation covetousness and every other evil thing, and will seek to walk contentedly and happy in the presence of my God. See, brethren, this gospel motive. It is a free grace argument. It is not a weapon taken from the arsenal of Mount Sinai, but taken from the region of the cross, and from the council-chamber of the covenant of love.

Another thing in the text, to which I would call your notice is this: that an inspired apostle, who might very well have used his own original words, nevertheless in this case, as indeed in many others, quotes the Old Testament. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Behold, then, the value of Holy Scripture. If an inspired man quotes the text, as of divine authority, much more should we so regard it, who are without such inspiration. We should be much in searching the Scriptures, and when we want to clench an argument, or answer an opponent, it would always be well for us to take our weapon from the grand old Book, and come down with "He hath said." Oh! there is nothing like this for force and power. *We* may think a thing, but what of that? Our thinkings are but of little worth. General authority and universal opinion may sustain it, but what of that? The world has been more frequently wrong than right, and public opinion is a fickle thing. But "*He* hath said," that is to say, God hath said—immutable truth and eternal fidelity have said; God that made heaven and earth, and that changeth not, though nations melt like the hoar frost of the morning; God who ever liveth when hills, and mountains, and this round world, and everything upon it shall have passed away—"He hath said." Oh! the power there is in this, "He hath said, I

will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So, then, let us be much in searching the Scriptures, much in feeding upon them, much in diving into their innermost depths, and then afterwards much in the habit of quoting them, using them as arguments for the defence of truth, as weapons against error, and as reasons to call us to the path of duty, and to pursue it.

But now to come to the promise itself, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I shall call your attention, first of all, to:—

I. THE REMARKABLE CHARACTER OF THIS PROMISE.

Is it not a wonderful and arrestive fact that, whilst *others do leave us and forsake us, that God never does?* It is to each one of his own redeemed people that he says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How often do men play false, and forsake those whom they call their friends when those friends fall into *poverty!* Ah! the tragedies of some of these cruel forsakings! May you never know them! These so-called friends knew their friends when that suit of black was new, but how sadly their eyesight fails them now it is turned to a rusty brown! They knew them extremely well when once a week they sat with their legs under their table and shared their generous hospitality, but they know them not now that they knock at their door and crave help in a time of need.

Matters have changed altogether, and friends that once were cherished are now forgotten. In fact, the man almost pities himself to think that he should have been so unfortunate to have a friend who has so come down, and he has no pity for his friend, because he is so much occupied in pitying himself. In hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of cases, as soon as the gold has gone, the pretended love has gone, and when the dwelling has been changed from the mansion to the cottage, the friendship which once promised to last for ever, has suddenly disappeared.

But, brethren, God will never leave us on account of poverty: however low we may be brought, there it always stands, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Scant may be your board; you may have hard work to provide things honest in the sight of all men; you may sometimes have to look, and look again, and wonder by what straits you will be enabled to escape out of your present difficulty. But when all friends have turned their backs, and when acquaintances have fallen from you like leaves in autumn, he hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Then beneath his bounty you shall find a shelter, and when these other hands are shut his hands shall be out-stretched still in loving-kindness and tender mercy, to help and deliver the soul of the needy.

Sometimes, and very often, too, men lose all their friends if they fall into any *temporary disgrace*. They may really have done no wrong; they may even have done right, but public opinion may condemn the course they took, or slander may be propagated, which casts them into the shade, and then men suddenly grow forgetful. They do not know the man; how should they? He is not the same man, to them at any rate, and as the world gives him the cold shoulder, his friends serve him the same. The old proverb, "The devil take the hindmost," seems to be generally the custom with our friends when we get into seeming disgrace. They are all off, seeing who can run away first, for they fear that they shall be left to share in our dishonour. But it is never so with our God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Thou mayest be put into the dungeon, like Paul and Silas, but God will make thee sing there, even at midnight. Thou mayest be set in the stocks, but even there God will cause thee to rejoice greatly. Thou mayest be cast into the fiery furnace, but he will tread the flames with thee there. Thou mayest be so dishonoured that men shall treat thee as they did God's only Son, and lift thee up upon the cross of shame, and put thee to death; but thou shalt never say, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thy Lord said it when he bore thy guilt, but thou shalt never need to say it, for thy guilt is put away for ever, and Jehovah will stand by thee in all thy dishonour.

And let me here say, that there is never a child in the family that is dearer to the great Father than the child that is suffering shame and contempt from others. He loves them dearest when they suffer reproach for his sake. These are nearer to his heart than any other, and he bids them rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great shall be their reward in heaven if thus they bear and endure for his name. "I will never leave thee, my persecuted one: I will pour such joy into thy heart that thou shalt forget all the dishonour. I will send an angel to minister to thee: yea, I will myself be with thee, and thou shalt rejoice in my salvation, while thy heart is glad and calm in the midst of the tumult and the strife around."

Blessed be God, all the shame and spitting that men can put upon us can never put our God away, for "He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Alas! sad is it for human nature that we must say it— how many have been forsaken when they have been no longer able to *minister to the pleasure and comfort* of those who admired them while they profitted by them? Some are thus thrown aside, just as men throw away household stuff that is worn out, and is of no further use. Depend upon it, men will not forsake us while they can get anything out of us; but when there is no longer anything to profit by, when the poor woman becomes so decrepit that she can scarcely move from her bed to her chair, when the man becomes so laid aside by accident, or is so weak that he cannot take his place in the great march of life, then he is like the soldiers in Napoleon's march, he drops out of the line to die, and thousands either march over him, or if they are a little more merciful, march by and round him, but few are those who will stop to care for such, and attend to them. How often are the incurable forsaken and left! But he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If we should get so old that we cannot serve the church of God, even by a single word; if we should become so sick that we are only a burden to those of our house who have to nurse us; if we should grow so feeble that we could not lift our hand to our lip, yet the eternal love of Jehovah would not have diminished, no, not so much as by a single jot, towards the souls whom he had loved from before the foundation of the world. However low your condition, you shall find God's love is ever underneath for your uplifting. However weak you are, his strength shall be revealed in the everlasting arms that will not permit you to sink into disaster, and your soul into perdition. This, then, is a very precious text. Others may forsake us, for different reasons, too many to be mentioned now, but he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Well, then, let the rest go. If the Lord Jehovah standeth at our right hand, we can well afford to see the backs of all our friends, for we shall find friends enough in the Triune God, whom we delight to serve.

Again, this is a very remarkable promise, if we *think of our own conduct towards God*. "He hath said, I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." And have not we often said the same to him? We were like Peter: we felt we did love our Saviour: we were sure we did, and we did not, could not believe that *we* could ever be so false, so faithless, as to forsake *him*. We almost longed for some temptation to prove how true we should be. We felt very vexed with other professors that they should prove so untrue. We felt in our heart that we could not do like that, and that we should stand firm under any imaginable pressure. But what became of us, my brethren? Charge your memories a moment. Did the cock that accused Peter never accuse you? Did you never deny your Lord and Master, and at last, hearing the warning voice, go out and weep bitterly because you had forgotten him, him whom you had declared so solemnly you never would forsake? Oh! yes, I fear we, many and many a time, we have said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and yet under some sarcasm, some ridicule, or some pressing trial, we have been like the children of Ephraim, and, though armed and carrying bows, we have turned our back in the day of battle. If the voice

has never denied Christ, has the heart never done so? If the tongue has remained silent, has not the soul sometimes gone back to the old flesh-pots of Egypt, and said, "I would fain find comfort once again where I did find it, with my old companions and in the old ways"? Ah! well, as you think of this, how unkindly and ungenerously you have treated your Lord, let this text stand out in bold relief, "He hath said, "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." Although you have often forgotten him, yet his loving-kindness changes not. Though you have been fickle, he has been firm; though you have sometimes believed him not, yet he has remained faithful, glory be to his name.

Again, this promise is a very remarkable one, if we notice how *it overrides all the suggestions that might arise from a mere view of strict and severe justice*. It might be said, "Surely a child of God might justly be forsaken: he might so sin against God that it would only be just to leave him utterly to himself." Now, I am free to grant that a child of God might do so, nay, that all the children of God do so, and that God would be just if he acted upon the stern principle of law, to forsake his children as soon as ever they were converted, for it is not long after their conversion that they sin, and that sin is a special kind of treason against God. He would be just, even if he cast them away. But what I desire to enforce is this, that the promise is remarkable because it makes no kind of provision for this in any sort or degree, and under no imaginable circumstances. It does not say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if—" as certain brethren are prone to put it—"if—thou dost not forsake me." Nor does it say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, if thou doest so-and-so and so-and-so." It is an absolute promise without any peradventures, ifs, buts, conditions, or promises. "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee."

He that believeth in Jesus shall never be so left of God as to fall finally from grace. He shall never be so deserted as to give up his God, for his God will never give him up so far as to let him give up his confidence, or his hope, or his love, or his trust. The Lord, even our God, holds us with his strong right hand, and we shall not be moved, and even if we sin—sweet thought!—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Over the heads of all our sins and iniquities, this promise sounds like a sweet silver bell, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, there are some that would make licentiousness out of this, and go into sin, but in doing so they prove themselves not to be the children of God. They show at once that they know nothing of the matter, for the genuine child of God, when he has a promise which is unconditional, finds holiness in it. Being moved by gratitude, he wants no buts, and ifs, and conditions, and racks, and scourges, in order to do right. He is ruled by love, and not by fear, governed by a holy gratitude which becomes a stronger bond to sacred obedience than any other bond that could be invented. Hence to the child of God, the knowledge that God will not leave nor forsake him, never suggests the thought of plunging into sin; he were an awful monster, indeed, if he did any such thing, but he hates it, and he says:—

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I choose him in return."

Observe, then, how remarkable is the promise—so contrary to the manner of men, so contrary to our own conduct, and so absolute and unconditional, that it is, indeed, marvellous that such a word should be on record. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

I cannot leave this part of the subject without remarking that such a promise as this seems to me that *it makes a clean sweep of every suggestion to the child of God to be depressed in mind*. You tell me you do not feel just now as you did some time ago: you are not anything like so earnest and lively in the divine ways.

When a believer is in this state, it is sometimes suggested to him that doubtless he is not a Christian at all, and that he must go back altogether to Egypt, in order to get gospel liberty, which is foolishness. But this promise comes in, and says to him, "God has not left thee, nor forsaken thee"; whatever may be your present state of thought and feeling, however low you may have fallen, the Eternal God is still faithful: he has not forgotten you. Go to him now: ask for revivings and refreshings, for he will surely give them to you. Conscience will, perhaps, say to some child of God to-night, indeed I hope it will, "There has been much to-day in business that has not been what it should have been, and as you look back upon the day you will see much to mourn over," and then, perhaps, conscience will add, "Therefore, God will leave you." Now, if you come to believe that, you will live worse to-morrow than to-day, and the next day worse still. But if you can answer, "No, he has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' and can go with child-like confidence to your God, and confess the sin of the day, and begin again, washing once more in the precious fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, to-morrow there will be a better day. The joy of the Lord will be your strength against the sin, and your confidence in your Father's immutable affection will inspire you with zeal to trample down your temptations. Perhaps the devil may be injecting into your soul to-night all sorts of strange things, that God has forsaken you quite, and that he will be gracious no more to you, and other lies of that kind. But he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and if you can get hold of this, it will be a sufficient refutation of all the suggestions of your own fear; and of the infernal power. No, Satan! I will cast myself upon the precious blood of Jesus, and if God should take all my property away, yet he has not left me, nor forsaken me. I am sure of that, and if my spirit sinks so low that I dare not look up, yet still he has said he has not left me, and he never will. If my sins should roll over me, like a big billow, and my conscience should cry out against me, and I should feel no rest and no peace, yet still I will hold on to Jesus, sink or swim, for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and let God be true, and every man, and every devil, and even my own conscience, prove a liar, sooner than God's Word should for a moment be placed in doubt. We now pass on to ponder upon:—

II. THE REMARKABLE COMFORT CONTAINED IN THIS PROMISE.

See how it abounds! I note, first *its constancy*. "I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee." That is, not for a day, not for an hour, not for a minute. There are no breaks in the divine love. God does not depart from his people to return to them by-and-by, but he assures, "I will never, no never, leave thee." Perhaps that dear child of yours that is sickening is soon to die: well, God will not leave you in the moment when she is taken from you. Possibly that dear one who is now your comfort and delight, your husband, may sicken, and it will be a terrible stroke for you to be visited with, but "I will never leave thee, not even for an instant, then: in that trying time thou shalt prove the power and solace of my presence."

Perhaps, business man, that great commercial project, that great transaction, of yours may prove to be a losing one; that bill may be dishonoured; you may come to bankruptcy without any fault on your part, but "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Yes, you may have to go to Australia, and you may greatly dread the leaving your native land, but even then "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It may be you may be so misrepresented as to become suspected by those whom you

love best, and you may be even put out of the church of God, without any fault, but entirely through error. Well, but then, even then, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," not even for a minute. Oh! brethren, what would be the consequences if the Lord left us for one-quarter of an hour? I solemnly believe that, if God were to leave his people even on their knees for one twenty minutes, they would be brought to the deepest hell; but he will not leave them even there. And if it were dangerous to leave them on their knees alone, how much more so in the market, or in business, amidst enemies—seeking to catch them in their speech and deed! But he will never for a moment leave his people, nor forsake them. He will be at all times, at all hours, at all seasons, in all days of emergency, at their right hand, and they shall not be moved.

I notice in the promise, next to constancy, *endurance*. As there shall be no breaks in God's love for his own, so there shall be no end to it. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Yes, it may not be desirable to live to extreme old age, when infirmities may abound, and all strength may decay, but if you should reach it, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It certainly is a painful thing, that last stroke, to pass to the throne of God, but "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There shall never be a time when the Lord will cast away one of his people. He shall never grow weary of them. He has espoused them unto himself, married them, taken them into eternal union with himself, and never, let the ages revolve as they may, and time change as it will, never will God leave or forsake his people. Comfort yourselves, therefore, with the confidence of the endurance, as well as the constancy of this love.

We are most pleased, however, with *the fulness of the promise*. The text means, manifestly means from its connection, a great deal more than it says. We are told not to be covetous. Why? Why should we be covetous? God has said he will never leave us, and if we have him we possess all things. Who has need to be covetous when all things are his, and God is his? We are told to be contented, not to seek to hoard up so much for the future, because God has provided for the future in the very promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God guarantees to his servants that they shall have enough; well, let that guarantee prevent both covetousness and discontent. How shall this promise apply to temporal things? "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," does not look at first sight as if it had anything to do with our ordinary expenses, but, according to the text, it has, for we are told not to be covetous, but to be content with such things as we have. So, then, the text applies to the ordinary working-man, to the merchant, to every Christian, even in his money matters, as well as in his soul matters. "I will not leave thee, even in these." He that doth not let a sparrow fall to the ground without his permission will not let his children want. If they should for a little time be in need, that shall work their lasting good, but they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed. The fulness that lies in the promise is perfectly unbounded. When God says he will be with his servants, he means this, "My wisdom shall be with them to guide them; my love shall be with them to cheer them; my Spirit shall be with them to sanctify them; my power shall be with them to defend them; my everlasting might shall be put forth on their behalf so that they may not fail nor be discouraged." To have God with you were better than to have an army of ten thousand men, and a host of friends were not equal to that one name, the name of Jehovah, for he is a host in himself. When God is with a man, he is not there asleep, negligent, indifferent, regardless in his time of suffering, but he is there intensely sympathizing, bearing the trouble, helping and sustaining the sufferer, and in due time—his own good time—delivering him in triumph. Oh! precious word of heartening promise! Plunge ye into it, for it is a sea without a bottom, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Better still, perhaps, in the promise is *the certain truth of it*. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," has been proved by God's saints in all the ages that are past. Turn to the pages of your Bibles, and see if ever a man was ashamed that put his trust in Christ: see if he that wrestled with the invisible God was ever confounded. Hath not the Lord kept with his people at all hazards—broken the necks of kings, and scattered empires like chaff before the wind, sooner than that one of his faithful ones should come to ruin?

It has been so, even in your own experience. You, too, have found the text to be true. You have gone through fire and through water, but he has never left you nor forsaken you. Your vessel scarcely had enough draught of water to keep off the bottom, but through she has almost grated on the gravel, yet she has kept afloat, and though, perhaps, you have been wrecked, yet you have come safe to shore. You have lost much, you say, but you have been a gainer by your loss, and where you are to-day you are by eternal mercy and covenant grace, and you could not well be in a better position than God has put you in. Goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life up till now, and you are obliged to confess it, and to say:—

"Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise."

So fear not now that at this particular season God is about to alter his previous dispensation. Out with them, poor Little-Faith; away with thy doubts; put away those black suspicions. He is a God that changeth not, and, having helped you until now, he will help you even to the end. Why, how true this must be! "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." How can God forsake that which has cost him so much already? He has given his Son's blood to redeem us, and his Spirit's power to renew us, and if he were to leave undone the work which he has begun, why, a tower has been commenced, and he has not been able to finish it! A man who has spent much money upon one enterprise will spend yet more to finish it, because of what he has already spent. Now, God will not lose the work of Christ, and the precious blood of his Son, but, having begun, he will certainly carry on, even to the end. Besides this, also: God cannot leave his people, because he calls them his children, and how could he leave his child? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Even when the son has dishonoured his father's name, and lost his own character, that father's love still holds on, and follows that child still with tears of sorrow, but still with faithfulness and truth. And God will not cast away his own begotten sons, whom he has begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Beloved, Christ is married to his people, and therefore how can he leave them? He says, "As a young man rejoiceth over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," and will he leave them to whom he is knit by so near and dear, so tender and affectionate a union? It cannot be. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Now, see, if he did leave his people, what would it be? It would be giving up the whole quarrel between himself and Satan. It is in his people's hearts that the great battle is being fought out between good and evil. To give them up would be to give up the battle-ground to his great enemy, and what laughter there would be in the vaults of hell, what mockery in the halls of Pandemonium, if it could be said, "God has forsaken his people, given up his elect, suffered his redeemed to perish, cast away his regenerate, and forsaken the souls that trusted him"! The very thought of it is blasphemy. Far, far from us let us put it away. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

I cannot enlarge further upon the promise, and need not do so, because it opens up itself, or rather God the Holy Ghost will open it up to you if you sit awhile in your chamber and meditate

upon it. I do not know of a richer text, or one more full of consolation. It is a long skein of truth; unwind it. It is a precious granary, full as Joseph crammed the granaries of Egypt; open you the door, and feed to the full; there will be no fear of your ever exhausting it. "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Now, the third thing to be noticed concerning this promise is:—

III. THE REMARKABLE EFFECTS THAT SUCH A PROMISE SHOULD PRODUCE.

Surely the first blessed fruit of such a glorious promise should be *perfect contentment*. It is said to be hard to be contented. I have the pleasure of knowing some brethren who I am sure are perfectly content. They even say, and I think without the slightest mental reservation, that they have not an unfulfilled wish or desire so far as this world goes. They have all that heart could wish. And yet these are not the richest people in the world, and they are not persons who are much to be envied for their mere external circumstances: yet they are perfectly contented. The fact is that the grace of God makes the people of God to sing sweetly, where other people would murmur. They are satisfied where others would find easy ground for discontent. But how easy it is, how easy it must be, for a man to be contented when he knows that God has promised to be with him in all circumstances and at all times! Surely, if anything could be a kind of conservatory, a hot-house, in which to grow the delicate plant of contentment to perfection, it must be this full belief that high or low, rich or poor, well or sick, God hath said, "I will never leave, nor forsake thee." Surely it was this that made Bunyan's Pilgrim sing in the Valley of Humiliation:—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Christian did thereby say that he was content, whether he had little or much, and that he left everything in his lot to his God. Oh! get then, my friends, my text fully into your souls, and keep it there, as marrow and fatness, and you will be content.

Well, then, in the next place, *it will cure your covetousness*. A man does not need to go on scraping, and to use that muck-rake forever, when he knows "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." It was not a bad argument which one used with Alexander when he said to him, "When are you going to enjoy yourself fully?" Alexander did not answer the question, but the philosopher said, "What are you going to do next?" "First, we shall conquer Greece." "Yes, and then will you rest?" "No; we shall then attack Asia Minor." "And when you have conquered that, I suppose you will rest?" "No; we shall then take Persia." "And when you have overcome Persia, what then?" "We shall march to India." "And when you have taken India, what then?" "Why, then we shall sit down and make ourselves merry." "Well," said the philosopher, "I think we had better begin before we go to Greece, or Persia, or Asia Minor, or any of them." And truly so, it were as well for us to be content with that moderate income which God gives us. Let us enjoy what God bestows upon us now, in gratitude to him, and give ourselves up to his service; lest, perhaps, in seeking more, we become spiritually poorer while literally richer, and become less content with the great load on our back than we are to-day, when we have enough and no more. It is a sweet quietus to covetousness when God saith, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

And, beloved, what a promise this is *to make a man confident in his God*. In his works, in his sufferings, in his enterprises, what a stay of soul is here!

I know what it is to fall back upon this promise sometimes to keep from depression of spirit, and to find reviving in it. Perhaps you may suppose that those of us who are always before the public, and are speaking concerning the blessed promises of God, never have any moments of downcasting, and never any times of heartbreaking; but you are quite mistaken. We may have passed through all this, perhaps, that we may know how to say a word in season to any who are now passing through similar experiences. With many enterprises upon my hands, far too great for my own unaided strength, I am often driven to fall flat upon the promise of my God, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If I feel that any scheme has been of my own devising, and that I seek my own honour in it, I know it must come to the ground, and rightly so. But when I can prove that God has thrust it upon me, and that I am moved by a divine impulse, and not by my own monitions and wishings, then how can my God forsake me? How can he lie, however weak I may be? How is it possible for him to send his servant out to battle, and not succour him with reinforcements in the day when the battle goes hard? God is not David when he put Uriah in the front, and then left him that he might die. He will never put any of his servants forward and then desert them. Dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord shall call some of you even to things you cannot do, he will give you strength enough to do them; and if he should push you still forwarder till your difficulties increase and your burdens become heavy, still, as your days, your strength shall be, and you shall go on with the tramp of soldiers, with the indomitable spirit of men who have tried and trusted the naked arm of the Eternal God. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Then what matters it? Though all the world were against you, you could shake all the world as Samson shook the lion, and rent him as a kid. If God be for you, who can be against you? Though earth, and hell, and all their crew, come against you, and should combine together, yet if the God of Jacob stood at your back, you would thresh them as though they were but wheat, and winnow them as though they were but chaff, and the wind should carry them away. Oh! roll this promise under your tongue as a sweet morsel!

How I wish that it belonged to you all! Oh! that everyone of you had a share in it! But some of you, alas! have never fled to Jesus. Oh! that you would do so! Whoever trusts him to pardon by his atoning sacrifice, is saved. To look to the great Substitute, and depend upon him for salvation, this gives salvation, and then come the promises that belong to the saved.

The Lord of his infinite mercy bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Justification by Faith

A Sermon

(No. 3392)

Published on Thursday, February 5th, 1914.

Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's Day Evening, April 28th, 1867.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—Romans 5:1.

WE DESIRE this evening not to preach upon this text as a mere matter of doctrine. You all believe and understand the gospel of justification by faith, but we want to preach upon it tonight as a matter of experience, as a thing realized, felt, enjoyed, and understood in the soul. I trust there are many here who not only know that men may be saved and justified by faith, but who can say in their own experience, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and who are now at the present moment walking and living in the actual enjoyment of that peace.

Wishing to speak of the text, then, in this sense, I shall ask you to accompany me, not only with your ears, and with the attention which you usually give so generously, but also with the eye of your self-examination, asking yourselves, as we proceed step by step, "Do I know that? Have I received that? Have I been taught of God in this matter? Have I been led into that truth?" And our hope will be that some person to whom these things have hitherto been merely external, and therefore valueless, may be led by God to get hold of them, so that they may be matters of soul, and heart, and conscience, so that they may enjoy them, and find themselves where once they feared they would never be, namely, in a state of reconciliation with God, happily enjoying peace with the Most High.

Our first few thoughts shall be some plain, earnest talk concerning:—

I. A FEW PRELIMINARY DISCOVERIES WHICH A MAN MAKES BEFORE HE GETS PEACE WITH GOD.

These, I do not think, are by any means foreign to the text, or merely imported to it, but belong rightfully to it. You see that Paul, before he came to this justification by faith, had been *speaking about sin*. It would not have been possible for him to have given an intelligible definition of justification without mentioning that men are sinners, without informing them that they had broken God's holy law, and that the law, by and of itself, could never restore them to the favour of God. Now, some of these things of which I am going to speak are absolutely necessary, if not to my sermon, yet certainly to your spiritually understanding even so much as one jot or tittle of what it is to be justified by faith.

Well, then, what are these things? The first discovery that a man is led by the Spirit of God to make before he is justified is, that *it is important to be justified in the sight of God*. Many people do not know this. You shall step into a shop this evening, and find a man at the counter, and you say to him, "Well, do you never go to a place of worship?" "No," he would say, "but I am quite as

good as those who do." "How so?" "Well, I am a great deal better than some of them." "How is that?" "Well, I never failed in business; I never duped people in a limited liability company; I never told lies; I am no thief; I am not a drunkard; I am as honest as the days are long in the middle of June; and that is more than you can say of some of your religious people." Now, that man has got a hold of one part of a good man's character. There are two parts, but he can only see one, namely, that man is to be just to man. He sees that, but he does not see that man is to be also just to God. And yet if that man were really to think a little while, he would see that the highest obligations of a creature must be, not to his fellow-creatures, but to his Creator, and that, however just a man may be to another man, yet if he be altogether unjust to God, he cannot escape without the severest penalty. But oh! the most of men think that so long as they keep the laws of the land, so long as they give to their fellow-men their due, it matters not though God's day should be a subject of scorn, God's will be used as men will, and God's law trodden under their feet. Now, I think that everyone here who will but put his fingers to his brow for a moment and think, that he will see that, even though a man may go before the bar of his country, and say before any judge or jury, "I have in nothing injured my fellow-man; I am just before men," yet it does not make the man's character perfect. Unless he is also able to say, "And I am also just before the presence of the God who made me, and whose servant I am," he has only kept one half, and that the less important, of God's law for him.

It cannot help being, it must be, important to the highest degree that you and I should stand on good terms with the great God unto whom we shall so soon return in the great day when he shall say, "Return ye children of men." We must then render up our souls to him who created us. Well, you can surely go as far as that with me—that it is necessary. You do feel, do you not, a desire in your heart to be just before your Maker? I am thankful that you can go so far.

The next thing is this. A man, when the Spirit of God is bringing him to Christ, discovers that *his past life has been marred badly, by serious offences against the law of God*. Before the Spirit of God comes into our soul, we are like being in a room in the dark: we cannot see in it. We cannot discover the cobwebs, the spiders, the foul and loathsome things that may be lurking there. But when the Spirit of God comes streaming into the soul, the man is astonished to find that he is what he is, and especially if he sits down and opens the book of the law, and, in the light of the divine Spirit, reads that perfect law, and compares with it his own imperfect heart and life. He will then grow sick of himself, even to loathing and, sometimes, despair. Take but one command. Perhaps there are some here who will say, "I know I have been very chaste all my life, for the command saith, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' and I have never broken it; I am clean there." Ay, but now hear Christ explain the command, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, then, who amongst us can say that we have not done that? Who is there upon earth, if that be the meaning of the command, who can say, "I am innocent?" If the law of God, as we are told by Scripture, has to deal, not with our outward actions alone, but with our words, and with our thoughts, and with our imaginations—if it is so exceeding broad that it applies to the most secret part of a man, then who of us can plead guiltless before the throne? No, dear brethren, this must be understood by you, and by me, before we can be justified, that we are full of sin. What if I say that we are as full of sin as an egg is full of meat? We are all sin. The imagination and the thought of our heart is evil, and only evil, and that continually. If some of you plume yourselves with the notion that you are righteous, I pray God to pluck those fine feathers off you and make you see yourselves, for if you never see your own nothingness, you will never

understand Christ's all-sufficiency. Unless you are pulled down, Christ will never lift you up. Unless you know yourselves to be lost, you will never care for that Saviour who came "to seek and to save the lost." That is a second discovery, then; that it is important to be just before God, but that on account of the spirituality of God's moral law, and our consequent inability to keep it perfectly, we are very far from standing in that position.

Then there comes another discovery, namely, that consequently *it is utterly impossible for us to hope that we ever can be just before God, on the footing of our own doing*. We must give it up now, as an utterly lost case. The past is past: that can never be by us blotted out, and the present, inasmuch as we are weak through the flesh, is not much better than the past; and the future, notwithstanding all our fond hopes of improvement, will probably be none the better, and so salvation by the works of the law becomes to us a dreary impossibility. The law said, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." I was conversing on one occasion with one of our most illustrious Jewish noblemen, and when I put to him the question—he believed himself to be perfectly righteous, and I believe if any man could be so by his moral conduct, he might have fairly laid claim to it; but when I said to him, "Now, there is your own law for it, 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them': have you continued in all things?" he said, "I have not." "Then," I said, "the curse is upon you: how do you hope to escape from it?" and I found that to be a question for which he, at any rate, had no answer; and it is a question which, when properly understood, no man can answer, except by pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, "He was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing." Unless you and I keep the law of God perfectly, it matters little how near we get to perfection. It is as though God had committed to our trust a perfect crystal vase, and had said, "If you keep that whole, and present it to me, you shall have a reward." But we have cracked it, chipped it; ah! my brethren, the most of us have broken it and smashed it to pieces. But we will suppose that we have only cracked it a little. Yes, but even then we have lost the reward, for the condition was that it should be perfectly whole, and the slightest chip is a violation of the condition upon which the reward would have been given. Never you say that you will not break it farther. Nay, but you have broken it. You have thrown yourselves now out of the list. It sometimes seems hard when you tell people that if they have violated the law in one point, they have broken the whole of it; but it is not so hard as it looks to be, for if I tell a man who is going down a coal-mine on a long chain that, if he shall break one link of the chain, it does not matter, though all the other hundreds or thousands of links may be sound; if there is only one link that is broken, down will descend the basket, and the poor miner be dashed to pieces. Nobody thinks that hard. Everybody recognizes that as being a matter of mechanical law, that the strength of a chain must be measured by its weakest part. And so the strength of our obedience must be gauged by the very point in which it fails. Alas! our obedience has failed, and, through it, no one of us can ever be just before God.

Now, I want to stop a minute, and put the question round the galleries, and below stairs. Have you all got as far as that? It is important to be just before God: we see that we are not so: do we see that we cannot be so? Are we quite convinced that by our own obedience to the law of God, it is hopeless for us to think of standing accepted before the Most High? I pray the Eternal Spirit to convince you all of this, or you will keep on knocking at the door until you are quite sure that God has nailed it up for ever, and you will go scrambling over that Alp, and tumbling down this precipice, until you are convinced that it is impossible for you to climb it, and then you will give up your

desperate endeavour and come to God in God's way, which is quite another way from your own. I trust that we are all convinced of this.

Let us notice one more preliminary discovery. A man, having found out all this, suddenly discovers that, inasmuch as he is not just before God, and cannot be, *he is at the present moment under condemnation*. God is never indifferent towards sin. If, therefore, a man be not in a state in which God can justify him, he is in a state in which God must condemn him. If you are not just before God, you are condemned at this very moment. You are not executed, it is true, but the condemnation has gone forth against you, and the sign that it is so is your unbelief, for "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." How some of you would spring up from your seats tonight if all on a sudden you got the information that you had been condemned by the courts of your country; but when I say that you have been condemned by the Court of Heaven, this glides across your conscience like drops of water or oil over a marble slab. And yet, my hearers, if thou didst but know the meaning of what I am saying—and I pray God the Holy Ghost to make thee know it—it would make thy very bones to quiver! God has condemned thee. Thou art out of Christ. Thou hast broken his law. God has lifted his hand to smite thee, and, though his mercy tarries for awhile, yet days and hours will soon be gone, and then the condemnation shall take the shape of execution, and where will thy soul be then? Now, you must have the sentence of condemnation passed in your own soul, or else you will never be justified, for until we are condemned by ourselves we are not acquitted by God. Again, I pause and say, Dost thou feel this, my dear hearer? If thou dost, instead of despairing, be hopeful. If thou hast the sentence of death within thee, be thankful for it, for now shall life be given thee from the hand of God's grace.

Having occupied, perhaps, too much time over that, we now come more immediately into the text to:—

II. SHOW THE GOSPEL LEARNING WHICH IS TAUGHT TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

That gospel learning I may give you in a few sentences, namely, these: that, inasmuch as through man's sin, the way of obedience is for ever closed, so that we—none of us—can ever pass by it to a true righteousness, God has now determined to deal with men in a way of mercy, to forgive them all their offences, to bestow upon them his love, to receive them graciously, and to love them freely. He has been pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to devise a way by which without injury to his justice, he can yet receive the most undeserving sons of men into his heart, and make them his children, and can bless them with all the blessings which would have been theirs had they perfectly kept God's law, but which now shall come to them as a matter of gift and undeserved grace from himself.

I trust we have learned that; that there is a plan of salvation by grace, and by grace alone; and it is a great thing to know that where grace is, there are no works.

It is a blessed thing never to muddle in your head the doctrine of working, and the doctrine of receiving by grace, for there is an essential and eternal difference between the two. I hope you all know that there can be no mixing of the two. If we are saved by grace, it cannot be by our own merits, but if we depend upon our own merits, then we cannot appeal to the grace of God, since the two things can never be mingled together. It must be all works or else all grace. Now, God's plan of salvation excludes all our works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." It comes to us upon the footing of grace, pure grace alone. And this is God's plan, namely, that, inasmuch as we cannot be saved by our own obedience, we should be saved by Christ's obedience. Jesus, the

Son of God, has appeared in the flesh, has lived a life of obedience to God's law, and in consequence of that obedience, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and our Saviour's life and death make up a complete keeping and honouring of that law which we have broken and dishonoured, and God's plan is this: "I cannot bless you for your own sakes, but I will bless you for his sake; and now, looking at you through him, I can bless you though you deserve it not; I can pass by your undeserving; I can blot out your sins like a cloud, and cast your iniquities into the depths of the sea through what he has done; you have no merits, but he has boundless merits; you are full of sin and must be punished, but he has been punished instead of you, and now I can deal with you." This is the language of God, put into human words, "I can deal with you upon terms of mercy through the merits of my dear Son." This is the way in which the gospel comes to you, then. If you believe in Jesus, that is to say, if you trust him, all the merits of Jesus are your merits, are imputed to you: all the sufferings of Jesus are your sufferings. Everyone of his merits is imputed to you. You stand before God as if you were Christ, because Christ stood before God as if he were you—he in your stead, you in his stead. Substitution! that is the word! Christ the Substitute for sinners: Christ standing for men, and bearing the thunderbolts of the divine opposition to all sin, he "being made sin for us who knew no sin." Man standing in Christ's place, and receiving the sunlight of divine favour, instead of Christ.

And this, I say, is through trusting, or believing. God's way of your getting connection with Christ is through your reliance upon him. "Therefore, being justified"—how? Not by works; that is not the link, but—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ offers to God the substitution: through faith we accept it: and from that moment God accepts us.

Now, I want to come to this, dear friends. Do you know this? Have you been taught this by the Spirit of God? Perhaps you learned it in the Assembly's Catechism when you were but children: you have learned it in the various classes since then, but do you know it in your own soul, and do you know that God's way of salvation is through a simple dependence upon his dear Son? Do you so know it that you have accepted it, and that you are now resting upon Jesus? If so, then thrice happy are you!

But, going further, I have now to dwell for a minute or two upon:—

III. THE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE OF THE TEXT.

We have led you, and I hope the Spirit of God has led you, too, through the preliminary discoveries, and through the great discovery that God can save us through the merits of another, and now let us notice this glorious privilege word by word.

"Being justified." The text tells us that every believing man is at the present moment perfectly justified before God. You know what Adam was in naked innocence in Paradise. Such is every believer. Ay, and more than that. Adam could talk with God because he was pure from sin, and we also have access with boldness unto God our Father because, through Jesus' blood, we are clean. Now, I do not say that this is the privilege of a few eminent saints, but here I look around these pews and see my brethren and sisters—scores and hundreds of them—all of whom are tonight just before God—perfectly so; completely so; so just that they never can be otherwise than just; so just that even in heaven they will be no more acceptable to God than they are here tonight. That is the state into which faith brings a poor, lost, guilty, helpless, good-for-nothing sinner. The man may have been everything that was bad before he believed in Jesus, but as soon as he trusted Christ, the

merits of Christ became his merits, and he stands before God as though he were perfect, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," through the righteousness of Christ.

Note, however, as we have noticed the state of justification, the means whereby we reach it. "Being justified *by faith*." The way of reaching this state of justification is not by tears, nor prayers, nor humblings, nor working, nor Bible-reading, nor church-going, nor chapel-going, nor sacraments, nor priestly absolution, but by *faith*, which faith is a simple and utter dependence and believing in the faithfulness of God, a dependence upon the promise of God, because it is God's promise, and is worthy of dependence. It is a reliance with all our might upon what God has said. This is faith, and every man who possesses this faith is perfectly justified tonight.

I know what the devil will say to you. He will say to you, "You are a sinner!" Tell him you know you are, but that for all that you are justified. He will tell you of the greatness of your sin. Tell him of the greatness of Christ's righteousness. He will tell you of all your mishaps and your backslidings, of your offences and your wanderings. Tell him, and tell your own conscience, that you know all that, but that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that, although your sin be great, Christ is quite able to put it all away. Some of you, it seems to me, do not trust in Christ as sinners. You get a mangle-mangle kind of faith. You trust in Christ as though you thought Christ could do something for you, and you could do the rest. I tell you that while you look to yourselves, you do not know what faith means. You must be convinced that there is nothing good in yourselves; you must know that you are sinners, and that in your hearts you are as big and as black sinners as the very worst and vilest, and you must come to Jesus, and leave your fancied righteousnesses, and your pretended goodnesses behind you, and you must take him for everything, and trust in him. Oh! to feel your sin, and yet to know your righteousness—to have the two together—repentance on account of sin, and yet a glorious confidence in the all-atoning sacrifice! Oh! if you could understand that saying of the spouse, "I am black, but comely"—for that is where we must come—black in myself, as black as hell, and yet comely, fair, lovely, inexpressibly glorious through the righteousness of Jesus.

My dear brethren and sisters, can you feel this? If you cannot feel it, do you believe it? And do you sing in the words of Joseph Hart?:—

"In thy surety thou art free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With thy Saviour's vesture on,
Holy as the holy one."

For so it is: you stand before God as accepted as Christ is accepted: and notwithstanding the inbred sin and corruption of your heart, you are as dear to God as Christ is dear, and as accepted in the righteousness of Christ as Christ is accepted in his own obedience.

Have we got so far? That is the point on which I want to enquire this evening. Have you got as far as to know at this moment that it is through faith we are justified? If so, I shall conduct you just one step farther, namely, to observe—and this is coming back, whilst it is also going forward—that "we are justified by faith *through our Lord Jesus Christ*." There is the foundation: there is the mainspring. There is the tree that bears the fruit. We are justified by faith, but not by faith of itself. Faith in itself is a precious grace, but it cannot in itself justify us. It is "*through our Lord Jesus Christ*." Simple as the observation is, I must venture to repeat it tonight, because it is hard for us to keep it in mind. But remember that faith is not the work of the Spirit within, but the work of Christ upon the tree. That upon which I must rest as my meritorious hope is not the blessed fact

that I am now an heir of heaven, but the still more blessed fact that the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me. My dear brethren, when all is fair weather within, there is such a temptation to say, "Well, now, it is all right with me, for I feel this, and I feel that." Very good these evidences are in their places, but evidences, you get equally clear evidences that you are not perfect; when you have to say, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" you will find that, instead of your beautiful evidences, you will have to fly to the cross. There was a time when I, too, could take a great deal of comfort in what I believe is the Spirit of God's work in my soul I do thank God for it, and bless him for it now but I trust I have learned to walk where poor Jack the huckster walked:—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Brethren, it is down on the ground that we must live. We must build upon the rock itself. On the top of some mountains men sometimes build heaps of timber, so as to get a little higher. Well, now, some of these rickety platforms, you know, get shaky, but when you get right down on the mountain itself, that never shakes, and you are perfectly secure there. So sometimes we get building up our rickety platforms of our experience and our good works—all very well in their way, but then they shake in the storm. Depend upon it, that the soul that clings to the rock, notwithstanding all that the Holy Spirit has done for it, and having nothing then to depend upon, more than the poor dying robber had when, without a single good work, he had to hang on the dying Christ alone—oh! believe me, that soul is in the safest place to live in, Jesus, for a poor sinner when he is torn from his cups and his sins, and none but Jesus for the aged saint when he stays himself upon his bed to bear his last testimony:—

"Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling."

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now, to crown all, there is here the precious, precious privilege which such men enjoy—"we have *peace with God*." I know that this may seem a trifle to thoughtless people, but not to those who think. I cannot say that I sympathize with those people who shut their eyes to the beauties of nature. I have heard of good men travelling through fine scenery, and shutting their eyes for fear they should see. I always open mine as wide as ever I can, because I think I can see God in all the works of his hands, and what God has taken the trouble to make I think I ought to take the trouble to look at. Surely there must be something to see in a man's works if he be a wise man; and there must be something worth seeing in the works of God, who is all-wise. Now, it is a delightful thing to say, when you look upon a landscape, lit up with sunlight and shaded with cloud, "Well, my Father made all this; I never saw him, but I do delight in the work of his hands; he made all this, and I am perfectly at peace with him." Then as you are standing there, a storm comes on. Big drops begin to fall. There is thunder in the distance. It begins to peal louder and louder. Presently there comes a lightning's flash. Now, those who are not at peace with God may go and flee away, but those who are perfectly at peace with him may stand there and say, "Well, it is my Father who is doing all this; that is his voice; the voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty." I love to hear my Father's voice. I never am so happy as in a tremendous storm, and when the lightning flash comes, I think—Well, it is only the flashing of my Father's eye: now, God is abroad: he seemed as if he had left the world before, but now he comes riding on the wings of the wind; let me go and meet him. I am not afraid! Suppose you are out at sea in a storm. You are justified by faith, and you say,

"Well, let the waves roar; let them clap their hands: my Father holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, why should I be afraid?" Let me say to you that it is worth something to believe that God can put us in a calm state of mind when "earth is all in arms abroad." It is just so with the believer when temporal troubles come. There comes crash after crash until it seems as though every house of business would come down. Nothing is certain. Man has lost confidence and reliance in his fellow-man. Everything is going to the bad. But the Christian says, "God is at the helm; the whole business of business is managed by the great King: let the sons of earth do as they will, but:—

"He everywhere hath sway,

And all things serve his might."

It is something to feel that my Father cannot do me a bad turn. Even if he should use his rod upon me, it will do me good, and I will thank him for it, for I am at perfect peace with him.

And then to come to die, and to feel, "I am going to God, and I am glad to go, for I am not going like a prisoner to a judge, but like a wife espoused goes to her husband, like a child home from school to the parents' arms. Oh! it is something to die with a sense of peace with God! Surely every thoughtful man will feel that. Now, if you trust Christ, you shall be justified by faith. Being justified, your heart shall feel that perfect peace is brought into it, so that you shall meet your Father's will with perfect equanimity, let it be what it may. Come life, come death, it shall not matter to you, for all is right between God and your souls.

Oh! I wish it were so with all present! It may be so if God the Spirit bring you to rest in Jesus. Nay, it shall be so, my dear friend; it shall be so with you tonight; though you never thought it would be when you came in here, yet you see it all now. It is simply believing, simply trusting. Oh! believe him! Trust him, and it shall be the joy of your soul to have a peace with God which, as the world did not give you, so the world shall never take away, but you shall have it for ever and ever. God grant it to each one of us! Amen.

Sharing Christ's Life

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

On Lord's-day Evening, December 1st, 1867.

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also."—John 14:19.

THIS WAS, and is, the mark of the true believer, that he see Jesus. When Jesus was here among men, the world saw him in a certain sense, but yet in truth it did not see him at all. The world's eye saw the outside of Christ—the flesh of the man Christ, but the true Christ the ungodly eye could not discern. They could not perceive those wonderful attributes of character, those delightful graces and charms, which made up the true spiritual Christ. They saw but the husk, and not the kernel; they saw the quartz of the golden nugget, but not the pure gold which that quartz contained. They saw but the external man; the real, spiritual Christ they could not see. But unto as many as God had chosen, Christ manifested himself as he did not unto the world. There were some to whom he said, "The world seeth me not, but ye see me." Some there were whose eyes were anointed with the heavenly eye-salve, so that they saw in the "the man Christ Jesus," the God, the glorious Saviour, the King of kings, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

The blind world said of him that he was a root out of a dry ground, and when they saw him there was no beauty in him that they should desire him; he was despised and rejected of men. But these men saw him as God over all blessed for ever, descending to tabernacle among men, and to take upon himself man's imperfect nature, that so he might redeem him from all iniquity and save him.

Now, to this hour, this is the mark of the true Christian: this is to be of the elect: this is the very badge and symbol of the faithful—they see Jesus. They look beyond the clouds. Other men see the cloud and the darkness, and they wist not what it is; but these men with more than eagle eye pierce through the clouds of mere sensual impressions, and they see the glory that was always his, even the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Beloved, have you ever seen Jesus with the eye of faith? Have you ever perceived the glory of his person, and the beauty of his character? Have you so perceived Jesus as to trust in him? Have you been so enamoured of him as to have yielded yourselves to be his servants for ever? Do you take up his cross? Do you avow yourselves to be his followers, come what may? If so, then are ye saved; but if ye see not Christ with your spirit, neither do ye know him, nor shall ye enjoy a portion with him.

Blessed be God, there is this to be said, that he who has once seen Christ shall always see him. The eye may sometimes gather dimness, but the light shall yet return. Where Christ hath opened a blind eye, blindness comes not back again. He take the cataract totally away. He does not give a transient gleam of spiritual sight, and then permit the soul to go back into the darkness of its grave;

but the sight which he gives is the sight of things eternal, a sight which shall strengthen and grow until at the last, when death shall take away every barrier which parts us from the unseen world, we shall know even as we are known, and see even as we are seen. To see Jesus! 'Tis heaven begun! And heaven consummated is but to see Jesus, no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face—still it is to see Jesus, to behold the King in his beauty. This, I say, is the sum and substance of life eternal, and it is true life here below.

And now our Lord, speaking of those who had seen him, seen him truly and in spiritual recognition, talks to them concerning life. Sometimes it is ours to speak to you of death, not necessarily with gloom, for it is to the Christian illuminated with rays of heavenly light; but here and now we desire to speak of life, the best and divinest life; we will forget the raven with its dusky wing, and see only the tender, gentle dove, bearing for each one of us the olive-branch of peace and victory.

We shall speak of life—life of the highest possible degree: not the life which gladdens our eyes in the sunlight when we behold the flowers of the field opening their cups: this is vegetable life. Nor the life of the young lambs as they frisk, and caper, and dance for very gladness in the spring sunbeams. This is but animal life. Nor even the life that enables men to think and speak upon common themes of interest, and perform the ordinary duties of their different calling: this is but mental and social life. We reach to something higher still—spiritual life, life in Christ Jesus; a life twice created; a life which is grafted, and is an advance upon the first life which we have when we are born, surpassing far the life of the flesh, because that shall by-and-bye expire; but this is a life which springs from incorruptible seed, and which liveth and abideth for ever.

The text, in talking to us about life, gives us, first *the assurance that Jesus lives*; it *promises us that his people shall live*; and it clearly states that *there is a link of connection between the two things—that because Jesus lives, his people shall live also*. First, then:—

I. JESUS LIVES.

He always lived. There never was a time when he was not. "Before the hills were brought forth I was there," saith he. The eternal Wisdom of God is from everlasting. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God. The same was in the beginning with God." The life, however, which we think is intended in the text, is not his divine life, his life as Deity, but his life as man, his life as Mediator between God and man. In that life he lives. We needed not to be assured of his divine life: but seeing that, as a Mediator he died, it was necessary to assure us that as a Mediator he descended into the tomb; it is well for us to be assured that as a Mediator he rose again from his grave, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, no more to bleed and die.

Jesus Christ at this time lives *in his proper manhood*. He lives as to his soul: his human soul is as it was on earth. He lives as to his human body. He is a man before the throne; and I have no doubt that he wears the symbol, of course, mightily glorified, of his sufferings.

"Looks like a Lamb that had been slain.

And wears his priesthood still."

That very Christ, who did once as a babe lie upon his mother's breast, and who afterwards trod the waves of Gennesaret: who, after his resurrection, ate a piece of broiled fish and of honeycomb—that very Christ is now before the eternal throne. In very soul and body the man Christ Jesus is there. He lives.

He lives a real life. We are so very apt to mystify and becloud everything, and to suppose that Christ lives by his influence only, or lives by his Spirit. Brethren, *he* lives, the very man that died, as surely as he bled upon the tree, and in his own proper person, from five actual wounds poured out the warm life-torrents of his heart, so surely does he actually live at this present moment in the midst of unnumbered hearts that sound his praise—the delightful object of the vision of the myriads of spirits who continually adore him. He actually lives; he really and truly lives, as he lived here below.

He lives, also, actively—not in some wondrous sleep of quiet and sacred repose. He is as busy now as he was when here. He proposed to himself when he went away a certain work. "I go to prepare a place for you," said he. He is preparing that place for us still. He intercedes, also, daily for his people. Oh! if your faith is strong enough, even now you can see him distinctly standing before the throne of God, pleading his glorious merits. I think I see him now as clearly as ever the Jews saw Aaron when he stood with his breast-plate on before the mercy-seat, for remember, the Jew never did see Aaron at all there, for the curtain was dropped, and Aaron was within the veil, and therefore, the Jew could only see him in his fancy. But I say I see him as clearly as that, for I see my Lord, not by fancy, but by faith. There, where the veil is rent, so that he is not hidden from my soul's gaze. I see him with my name and yours upon his breast, pleading before God.

Why, gaze awhile and you may think you see him now. Just as the Jew saw Aaron, waving the censer, standing between the living and the dead, and staying the plague, even so is Christ standing at this hour between the living and the dead, and so moving the whole Deity to spare the guilty yet a little longer, whilst he makes intercession for them that they may live. And then comes his higher intercession for them that they may live. And then comes his higher intercession for his elect, of whom he says, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world." He lives, then, an actual life, of which you and I reap the daily fruits. Not a life of slumber and stillness, but an active, busy life, by which he continually dispenses gifts to us.

For this reason it is well to remind you, that, therefore, Jesus can only live as a man in one place. When we speak of Christ being found in every assembly of his people, we understand that of his presence in his Godhead and by his Holy Spirit, who rules on earth in this dispensation of the Spirit. But the man Christ can be but in one place, and he is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is absurd, it is horrible both to faith and to reason, to say the Christ's body is eaten, and that his blood is drunk in tens of thousands of places wherever priests choose to offer what they call "the mass." A "mass" of profanity, indeed, it is! Our Lord Jesus Christ, as to his real, positive, corporeal presence, is not here. As to his flesh and his blood, he is not, and cannot be, here. He will be here one day, when he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, but in his real person, he is now where his saints are—before the throne, whence by-and-bye he will descend. Meanwhile, his spiritual presence is our joy and our gladness, but his corporeal presence—a doctrine which our faith grasps and lays hold of—his corporeal presence is before the throne of God, and there he lives in proper flesh and blood as the Son of Man.

Brethren and sisters, listen to a brief sketch of the biography of Christ's life in glory. When the holy women and godly men wrapped him in spices, and laid him in the tomb, Jesus was dead. There for parts of three days and nights he tarried. He saw no corruption, but yet he was in the place of corruption. No worm could assail that holy thing which no sin had tainted, and yet he laid in the

place where death seemed sovereign. A while he slept, and the Church mourned, but blessed was the day when, at the first rosy dawn of the light, the Saviour rose.

Then could he say, "I live." His body, instinct with life, rose from its slumber, and began at once to put off the grave-clothes. He unwound the winding-sheets and the fine white linen, and laid them carefully down, and left them there, for you and me, that we might have our bed well sheeted when we come to lie in it at the last.

As for the napkin, he unwound it, and laid it by itself, as though that were for us who are living, to wipe our eyes when our dear ones are taken away, since we have no cause to sorrow as they do who have no hope. And when this was done, an angel rolled away the stone, and forth came the Saviour—glorious, no doubt, but so much like other men that Mary "supposed him to have been the gardener," so that there could have been no very supernatural splendour surrounding his person. He revealed himself to many of his disciples—sometimes to as many as five hundred at once. He ate with them; he drank with them; he was a man among men with them, till, when forty days had passed, he gathered them all at Olivet, the mountain from which he had so often addressed them, and took his final leave. While he was blessing them, his hands outstretched in benediction, a cloud received him out of their sight. And since then he hath sat down at the right hand of God, expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. He is tarrying there yet a little while longer. When the fulness of time shall come—if I may go on with his biography—he will come again. "This same Jesus," said the angels, "which is taken up from you heaven, shall so come in a like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." He will, therefore, come in proper person a second time, without a sin offering, unto salvation. Then will he gather his saints together who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. Then shall they reign with him. Then shall the earth be covered with his glory. All nations shall bow before him, and all people shall call him blessed. And then shall come the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all. But Christ shall still live, for he hath received a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, without beginning of days, or end of years—a priest for ever. When suns and moons shall grow dim with age, and the round world shall all dissolve, like the morning hoar-frost, and time shall be rolled up like a vesture, and all the ages shall have been trodden out like sparks beneath the foot of the Eternal God, then shall Jesus Christ live on still, world without end. Thus have we spoken concerning Christ as living. But now, in the next place:—

II. LIFE IS PROMISED TO CHRIST'S PEOPLE.

This does not mean their natural existence. That they have received from Adam, and, through their sin, it has become a curse to them, rather than a blessing. Should they remain unpardoned, the fact of continued existence will become to them the dreadful of calamities, since it must be an existence in God's holy abhorrence of sin for ever; driven from every glimpse or hope of forgiveness.

The life which comes to us through Christ is of this sort—I trust you know it in your own hearts—it is *life spiritual, given to us in regeneration*. When the Holy Spirit quickens a dead soul, that dead soul then receives the life of Christ. No man is alive unto God spiritually, except through Christ. Because Christ lives, we live. When a dead soul gets into living contact with the living Saviour by the power of the Spirit, then it is that spiritual life begins. The very first evidence of spiritual life is trusting in Jesus, which shows that the first symptom is alliance to Christ, the cause of the life must be somewhere here, namely, union with Christ. One of the very first outward signs is prayer—prayer to Christ, and that, again, rises from the fact that Christ gives us of his life, and then that life goes back again to him. Brethren, if you seek the life of other souls, and desire to see

them brought to God, preach Christ to them. Do you not see, "Because I live, ye shall live"? Then no sinner ever will live spiritually apart from Christ. Though you and I cannot quicken them, yet we can preach the gospel to them, and faith cometh by hearing, and where faith is, there life is. It is no use trying to raise the dead by preaching the law to them. That is only covering them up fairly with a lie in their right hand; but preach of dying love and of rising power, to tell of pardons bought with blood, and to declare that Christ died a substitute for sinners—this is the hopeful way of bringing life to the dead. IT is by such instrumentality that souls are brought to life eternal. Because Christ is alive, his elect in due time receive spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit, and, although once they were dead in sin, they begin to live unto righteousness.

Further, *this spiritual life is preserved in us by Christ still living*. "Because I continue to live, ye shall continue to live also." The text clearly means that: it bears that paraphrase. Oh! dear friends! when we once get spiritual life into us, what a thousand enemies there are who try to put it out! Many and many a time has it seemed to go hard with my soul as to whether I really had a spark of life within my spirit. Temptation after temptation have I endured until it appeared as if I must yield my hold on Christ and give up my hope. There has been conflict upon conflict, and struggle upon struggle, until at last the enemy has got his foot upon the neck, and my whole being has trembled, and had it not been for Christ's promise, "Because I live, ye shall live also," it might have gone harder with me, and I might have despaired, and given up all hope, and laid down to die. The assurance, then, that the spiritual life of the Christian must be maintained because Christ lives, was the only power to get me the victory. Let it teach us, then, this practical lesson. Whenever our spiritual life is very weak, and we want it to grow stronger, let us get to the living Christ for the supply of his strength. When you feel you are ready to die spiritually, go to the Saviour for revived life. The text is like a hand that points us to the storehouse. You who are in the desert, there is a secret spring under your feet, and you know not where it is; this is the mysterious finger which points you to the spot. Contemplate Christ; believe in Christ; draw yourselves by faith nearer and nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ, and so shall your life receive a divine impetus which it has not known for many a day. "Because I live, ye shall live also."

And further, brethren, *we get from Christ an educated life*. Any man may be spiritually alive, and yet he may not know much about the higher life. There is in spiritual life a scale of degree. One man is just alive unto God; another man may be vigorous; another may be rapturously consecrated. I hope you and I will anxiously desire to get the highest form of spiritual life that is known. We do not wish to be beggars in the kingdom of Christ, but, if we can, to take our place in the House of Peers, to be princes through Jesus Christ. We need not be poor; Christ is willing to enrich us. We are not straitened in him; we are straitened in ourselves. Now, Christ gives the promise, "Because I live," saith he, "the highest life, far above all principalities and powers, ye shall live also this higher life with me." You may have it; you may obtain it, but brethren, if you want to get it, never go to Moses for it; never go to yourselves for it. Do not seek to school yourselves by rules, and regulations, and resolutions, or by a morbid asceticism, such as some men delight in; but go the living Saviour, and in the living liberty which you will enjoy in communion with him, your soul will take unto itself wings, and mount into a clearer atmosphere: your spirit will be braced to a higher degree of robust devotion: you will draw nearer to heaven, because you have got nearer to Christ, who is the Lord of heaven. "Because I live, ye shall have life: ye shall have that life continued, and ye shall have that life yet more abundantly: I am come, not only that ye may have life, but more abundantly." There are your Master's words; plead them before your Master's throne.

And now, brethren, we will go a little further. We will suppose that you are well acquainted with these forms of life, and now there comes a jerk, as it were. You are travelling along the iron road of the railway, and there comes a sudden jerk, and you stop. What is it? It is the thought of death. Well, but Jesus tells us here that that is of no consequence. It is an item in the great world of life that to you who are in him is scarcely worth consideration, because the text over-rides that, and swallows it up, as it is written "death is swallowed up in victory": it is made as though it did not exist. "Because I live, ye shall live also." Your continued life of happiness, of holiness, of spirituality, of consecration, and of obedience—which, indeed is your only life worth having—is guaranteed to you in the text. Death cannot interfere with it, not even by the space of a single second—nay, I tell you not even by the space of the ticking of a clock. What, a Christian die? "Because I live, ye shall live also," is never suspended. There is not time for it to be suspended in. Do you know what death really is? Does it take long to die? I have heard of men who have been said to be weeks in dying. Not so; they were weeks living; the dying occupied no space; that was done at once, and immediately. And so with the believer. To him death is so slight a jerk that he still keeps on upon the same line. He still lives, only there is this difference, that it is as though the railway had hitherto been running through a tunnel, and he now comes out of it into the open plain. His life below was the train in the tunnel, but when he dies, as we call it, there is a jerk, and then it comes right out of the tunnel into the fair, open, champaign country of heaven, where all is clear and bright, where all the birds are singing, and the darkness is over, and the mist and fogs are gone, and his soul is for ever blessed. "Because I live a life that cannot be suspended," Christ seems to say, "ye shall live also." At the bottom of every man's heart there is, I suppose, a fear of ceasing to be. Some infidels seem to find comfort in the thought of being annihilated, but that thought is, perhaps, the most abhorrent that ever crossed the human mind. There is a something which makes us hope we are, and shrink with loathing from the idea of being annihilated. Now, at that point comes in our text, and it says, "What! Annihilated! You who believe in Jesus cannot be: you shall live also, live with that higher life which you have received—a life of beauty, a life of excellence, of holiness, and of God-likeness: that new life implanted within you shall never be suspended." Nay, never by the space of a single tick, for "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Further, brethren, our text is such a wide one that we have a hold of the fact that we are to continue to live as to our spirits and our souls. The text beneath its sheltering wings, like a hen gathering her brood, gathers many precious truths, and the next one is that *this very body of ours is to live, too*. It must take its time for that. It must abide in the earth, whereon it has dwelt. It is so decreed that there it should lie, unless Christ should come before that time. But concerning this very body, there is no decree of annihilation. It will smoulder away. It may be taken up by the spade of the careless sexton, and scattered to the winds of heaven may all the atoms of the body be. But there is a life-germ within it which no human power can destroy, and over which the divine eye perpetually watches; and when that mysterious and long-expected sound of the angelic trump shall ring o'er land and sea, through heaven and earth, and the graves shall all be opened, then shall my soul find my body yet again—fashioned after a more beautiful form; more fit for the spirit than aforesaid; more elastic; altogether free from weakness; no longer such as shall be subject to pain, to sickness, to accident, to decay, to ultimate corruption; but a spiritual body, raised in power, in glory, and in immortality; not raised in the likeness of the first Adam in the garden, but in the likeness of the second Adam in the everlasting Paradise of God. Courage, my eyes, courage! Ye shall be closed for a while, but ye shall not be so for ever, for ye, even ye, shall strike the strings of those celestial harps that pour

forth his praise. Courage, all ye members of my body, which have been sanctified to be members of Christ, and made to be parts of the Holy Spirit's temple! Ye shall all take your part in the grand triumphal entry of Christ, when he shall descend to take possession of his kingdom. "Though worms destroy this body yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not another." So go to thy bed in the earth, poor body, and sleep there awhile. Bathe thyself like her who bathed herself in spices to make herself ready for the King, so go and get thyself prepared to meet thy Lord. Put off thy word-day dress, and put on thy Sabbath garments, thy bridal array, and then shalt thou come to the King and see him in his beauty, and crown him with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the days of his espousals. Yea, because he lives in the body which he bore, his body shall live again, also.

And so, beloved, the text amounts to this, that in body and soul, the Christian shall be immortal, like his Master. When our reign on earth—whether it shall last a thousand years, or a thousand ages—(we know not what the Word of God intends)—but when that glorified state on earth, which I do most assuredly believe in, shall be over, and it shall be said:—

"Now Jehovah's banner's furled,
Sheathed his sword because 'tis done";

when the drama of the mediatorial reign shall all be closed, and we shall dwell under the immediate sovereignty of God once again, then, beloved, every believer shall be with Christ, eternally glorified, for here stand the irrevocable decree and the divine mandate of creation's Lord, who is also the redeeming Lamb, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Reel, ye pillars of earth! Be shaken, ye arches of the starry heavens! Pass away, O Time, and you ye rolling worlds, dissolve into your native nothingness! But the believer must live on, because Jesus lives, and until the Lord's Christ can bow his head, till he who hath immortality can expire, till God himself can cease to be, no soul that believed in Jesus can lose the life incorruptible which God's own Spirit hath put within it.

I want to sing, brethren, rather than to talk with you. These are words and thoughts fit for some ancient bard, or for the spirit of some inspired prophet sent from heaven. I do but lisp where even seraphs might find their loudest songs fail in the them. Let your hearts mount! Let your souls exult! Let your spirits be glad! Do you

"Long for evening to undress,
That you may rest with God,"

and enter into his heaven? Long for the evening of death, when your toil shall be over, and the hour of your bliss shall have come. I shall have no time, I fear, for the third and last point, and, therefore, must only give a few hints of what I would have said.

III. THIS LIFE IS LINKED WITH CHRIST'S LIFE.

Immortal, all glorious, promised to true believers, it is bound up with the life of our immortal Lord. Why is this? First, because *Christ leads a justified life*. I scarcely know how to express my meaning. You understand that so long as Jesus was here he lay under the charge of our sins. Whilst he was in the world, his Father had made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. But when he died, his death discharged all the liabilities of his elect. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us was then taken away. When he went to Calvary as our Surety, the sins of all his people were his debts: he had taken them upon himself. But when he rose from the dead in the garden that first Easter morning he had no debts of ours: he had no longer any substitutional engagement or liability. All the debts which he had taken upon himself as our Redeemer he had fully and completely

discharged. No officer can arrest a man for debt who has none, and Christ now lives, therefore, as a justified person. And, brethren, no officer of justice can arrest any of the people for whom Christ paid their debts. How, then, shall death have any dominion over those whose debts are all discharged? How shall they be laid in prison for whom Christ was laid in prison? How shall they suffer death, which is the penalty of sin, for whom Christ has already suffered all the penalties which just ice could have demanded? Because he lives the life of one who has discharged the debts of his people, they must, in justice, live.

Secondly, *Christ lives a representative life*. He is no longer Christ for himself. As the Member of Parliament represents a town, so Jesus Christ represents all the people who are in him, and as long as he lives they live. He is their Covenant Head. As long as Adam stands, his race shall stand; when Adam falls, the human race falls. While, therefore, Christ lives, the Christly ones, who are in him, live through his representation.

In the next place, *Christ lives a perfect life*. Perhaps you do not see how this is a link between his living and your living, but it is, because we are a part of Christ. According to the Word of Scripture, every believer is a member of Christ's body. Now, a man who lives perfectly has not lost his finger, of his arm, or his hand. A man may be alive with many of his limbs taken away, but you can scarcely call him a perfect-living man. But I cannot imagine a maimed Christ. I have never been able to conceive in my soul, of Christ lacking any of his members. Such a thing was never seen on earth. The barbarous cruelty of the Jews could not effect that, and, by the Providence of God, Pilate's officers were not permitted to cause such a thing. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," was the ancient prophecy. They brake the legs of the first and second thief, but when they came to the matchless Lord they saw he was already dead, so they brake not his legs. Even in his earthly body, which was the type of his spiritual body, he must suffer no maiming injury. Therefore, my brethren, because Christ lives as a perfect Christ, everyone that is one with him must live also.

Then, fourthly, *Christ lives a blessed life*—a life of perfect blessedness, and, therefore, we must live also. "Why?" say you. Why, look you: there is a mother here. She is alive: she is in good health, but she is not perfectly happy, for she is a Rachel weeping for her children, and will not be comforted, because they are not. Time will heal her wounds, it is true: for the most affectionate heart cannot be always mourning; but our Lord Jesus Christ in that infinitely affectionate heart of his would not only mourn over one of his children if lost, but he would mourn for ever over it. I cannot conceive of Christ being happy and losing one of his dear children. I cannot conceive Christ to be personally blessed, and yet one of the members of his own person cast into the "outer darkness." Because he lives in perfect happiness, I conceive that all who are dear to him will be round about him. It shall not be said that he lost one of them, nor shall one of the family be missing, but:—

"All the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne,
To bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his wonders known."

And, lastly, *Christ leads a triumphant life*, and, therefore, ye shall live also. You say again, "How is that?" Why, brethren, the triumph of Christ concerns us. This is the triumph of Christ, "Of all those whom thou hast given me, I have lost none" Now, suppose there to be heard a whisper from the infernal pit, "aha! Aha! Thou liest! There is one here whom the Father gave thee, but who thou didst lose"—why, Christ would never be able to speak again by way of triumph! He could never boast any more. Then might he put down his crown. If it were but to happen in that one case,

at any rate, the enemy would have got the advantage over him, and he would not have been the Conqueror all along the line. But, glory be to God! he who trod the winepress with none for his assistant, came forth out of the crimson conflict, having smitten all his foes, and won a complete victory. There shall not be in the whole campaign a single point over which Satan shall be able to boast.

Christ has brought many sons to glory as the Captain of their salvation, and never yet has he failed, and he never shall in any point, neither the least nor the greatest, neither the strongest nor the weakest. This is essential, dear friends. It is essential to the acclamations of heaven, that every soul that believes in Jesus should live for ever. It is essential to the everlasting harmony and to the joy of Christ throughout Eternity, that all who trust in him should be preserved and kept safe, even until the end. Therefore, says the text, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

So I leave this truth with you, only praying that those who have no part in this matter may seek Christ at this very time, and be led by the Spirit to cry mightily to him, and his promise is, "They that seek me early shall find me." Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him whilst he is near."

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Seeking Richly Rewarded

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—Psalm 34:10.

THE young lions are very strong; they are as yet in the freshness of their youth, and yet their strength does not always suffice to keep them supplied. The young lions are very crafty; they understand how to waylay their game and leap upon them with a sudden spring at unawares, and yet, with all their craftiness, they howl for hunger in the wood. The young lions are very bold and furious, very unscrupulous; they are not stayed from any deed of depredation, and yet for all that, free-booters as they are, they sometimes lack, and suffer hunger. These are just the type of many men in the world; they are strong men, they are cunning men, they are thoroughly up to the times—smart, sharp men. If anybody could be well supplied, one would think they should be. Rut how many of them go to bankruptcy and ruin, and, with all their cunning, they are too cunning, and, with all their unscrupulousness, they manage at last full often, to come to an ill end. They do lack and suffer hunger. But here are the people of God—they are regarded as simpletons, such simpletons as to seek the Lord instead of adopting the maxims of universal worldly wisdom namely, "Seek yourself"; they have given up what is called the first law of human nature, namely, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-serving, and have come to seek the Lord, to seek to magnify him. And what comes of their simplicity? "They shall not want any good thing." Notwithstanding their want of power, their want of cunning, and the check which conscience often puts upon them so that they cannot do what others can to enrich themselves, yet for all that, they have a fortune ensured to them: they "shall not want any good thing."

Let us look at this text now, and together consider it thus: first, *the seeking of the Lord which is here intended; and then following upon that, the promise that is given upon such seeking.*

1. THE SEEKING OF THE LORD HERE INTENDED.

We must be particular and very precise about this. The promise is so rich that we wish to win it fully, but we do not wish to be dishonest. We would not take a word of God that does not belong to us, lest we should deceive ourselves, and be guilty of robbing God. We must go carefully and jealously here, and must search ourselves to see if in very deed and truth we are such as really seek the Lord.

Now, the term to "seek the Lord," I may say, *is the description of the life of the Christian.* When he lives as he should, his whole life is seeking the Lord. It is with this he begins. "Behold, he prayeth," that is, he seeks the Lord. He has begun to be conscious of his sin; he is seeking pardon of the Lord. He has begun to be aware of his danger; he is seeking salvation in the Lord. He is now aware of his powerlessness, and he is looking for strength to the Lord. Those deep convictions,

those cries and tears, those repentings and humblings, and, above all, those acts of simple confidence in which he casts himself upon the great atonement made upon Calvary's bloody tree—those are all acts of seeking the Lord. Now, perhaps, some of you have got no farther than this. Well, you shall have your proportion of blessing, according to your strength. You shall have your share in it, little as you are. He will give to his children at the table their portion, as well as to those who have grown to manhood.

After a man has attained unto eternal life by confiding in the Lord Jesus, he then goes on to seek the Lord in quite another way. No wonder; since he has found the Lord, or rather has been found of him, and yet he still presses on to apprehend him of whom he has been already apprehended. He still presses forward, seeking the Lord, and he seeks the Lord thus. He seeks now *to know the Lord's mind*, the Lord's law and will. "Show me what thou wouldest have me to do," saith he. "Lord, I went by my own wit once, and I brought myself into a dark wood: I lost myself: I was at hell's brink, and thou didst save me: now, Lord, guide and direct me: be pleased to teach me: open my lips when I speak: guide my hands when I act: I wait at thy feet, feeling that:—

"For holiness no strength have I;
My strength is at thy feet to lie."

The man now seeks the Lord by daily and constant prayer, seeking that he may be upheld, guided, constrained in paths of righteousness, and restrained from the ways of sin. He becomes a seeker of the Lord after sanctification as once he was after justification. And then he becomes a seeker of the Lord in a further sense. He seeks to enjoy the Lord's love, and his gracious fellowship and communion. He seeks to get near in reverent friendship to his Lord. He now longs to grow up in the likeness of Christ, that his intercourse with the Father and the Son may be more close, more sweet, more continuous. He feels that God is his Father, and that he is no longer at a distance from him in one sense, for he is made nigh by the blood of the cross. Yet sometimes he is oppressed with a sense of his old evil heart of unbelief and in departure from the living God, and he cries out, "Draw me nearer to thyself." In fact, his prayer always is:

"Nearer my God to thee,
Nearer to thee:
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my cry shall be,
Nearer to thee, nearer to thee."

He seeks the Lord's company. He delights to be in God's house, and at God's mercy-seat, and at the foot of the cross, where God reveals himself in all his glory. He is constantly crying for a larger capacity to receive more of God, and the longing of his soul is, "When shall I come and appear before God?" He feels that he never shall be satisfied till he awakes up in the Lord's likeness. Now, all this, which may be private within him, and scarce known to any, operates practically in *an outward seeking of the Lord which makes the man's life to be sublime*. The genuine Christian lives for God. He makes the first object of all that he does the glory of God, the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, the showing forth of his praise, who has brought him out of darkness into marvellous light. He is a young man, an apprentice; he has been converted, and he says, "Now, what can I do while I am in this house to make it better, to make it happier and holier, that men may see what the religion of Jesus is? How can I recommend my Lord and Master to those among whom I dwell—to my master and my mistress, and my fellow-servants?" He becomes a tradesman on his own account, and when he opens that shop-door he says, "I do not mean to trade for myself,

I will make this to be my object, that this shall be God's shop; God has got to keep me; he has promised that he will; therefore, I may take what I want for the daily subsistence of myself and my children; but I will keep the shop for God for all that, and if he prospers me, I will give him of my substance; but whatever comes of it, I will so trade across my counter, so keep those books, and manage those bills, that I will let the world see what a Christian trader is, and I will seek thus to recommend my Lord and my God, and my object shall be to make him famous."

He seeks the Lord on Sundays. He desires at the Sunday-school, or the preaching-station, or anywhere he may serve, to be glorifying God. But he equally seeks him on Mondays and other weekdays, for he believes there is a way of turning over calicoes, weighing pounds of tea, ploughing acres of land, driving a cart, or whatever else he may be called to do, by which he can honour God, and cause others to honour him.

Now, I say very solemnly—I hope I am mistaken in what I say but I fear I am not—I am afraid there are many professors who would tell a lie if they said that they sought God always in their business, for though they are the members of a church, and you would not find them out in anything seriously inconsistent, yet their whole life is inconsistent because for a Christian to live for anything but the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent. It is inconsistent to the very root and core, to the tenour and aim, the supreme object of life, altogether inconsistent. A man has a right to live, to bring up his family, to educate them and see them comfortably settled in life; but that ought to be only for God's glory. That, he, acting as a father, is expected to do—for if a man careth not for his own household, he is worse than a heathen man and a publican—that God may be glorified by his doing his duty. But when I see some people putting by their thousands, and getting rich for no sort of reason that I know of, except that people may say, "How much did he leave behind him?" how can I believe that those professors, as they take the sacramental cup, are doing anything but drinking condemnation unto themselves? When I see some Christian men who profess to be living for nothing, but to be respectable, and to be known, and honoured, and noticed, but never seem to care about the souls of men, nor about Christ's glory, never shedding a tear over a dying sinner, nor heaving a sigh over this huge and wicked city which is like a millstone upon the neck of some of us, like a nightmare perpetually upon our hearts—when I see these men so cold, so indifferent, so wrapped up in themselves, what can I think but that their religion is but a cloak, a painted pageantry, for them to go to hell in, which shall be discovered at the last, and be a theme for the laughter of the fiends. Oh! may God grant that we may all be able truly to say, "I seek the Lord; I am sure, I am certain that I seek him," for if we can feel that that is true, then we can take the promise of the text; if not, we may not touch it. If we, as professing Christians, fire not at top and bottom, in heart, and soul, and spirit, and in all that we do, really seeking the glory of God, the promise does not belong to us; but if we can from our very souls declare, "Notwithstanding a thousand infirmities, yet, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee, and that I seek thine honour," then this is true of us, and no one of us shall want any good thing.

Just a word or two more about this, for one must discriminate thoroughly well before we come to the promise. It is too rich and precious to be bestowed upon the wrong persons, and there are some who hope to get this promise, who feel that they must not take it. We must be among those who seek the Lord heartily, not merely saying that we do, or wishing that we did, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, and in the power of his blessed residence in our souls, we must be panting after God's glory heartily, otherwise I do not see that we can put our hands on the promise without presumption. We must be seeking it honestly, too, for there is a way of seeking God's good and

your own at the same time—I mean having a sinister and selfish motive. We may preach, and not be preaching only for God at all. A man may live in the Sanctuary, in holy engagements from morning until nights and yet may never ardently, intensely seek the Lord. A man may be a great giver to charities, a great attender at prayer-meetings, a great doer of all kinds of Christian work, and yet he may never seek the Lord, but may yet be seeking to have his name known, to be noted as a generous man, or be merely seeking to get merit to himself, or self-complacency to his own conscience. It is a downright honest desire to serve and glorify God while we are here that is meant in the text. If we have got it—and I think we may readily see whether we have or not—then is the word of the Psalmist true to us.

We must seek God's glory heartily, honestly, and we must seek it most obediently. A man cannot say, "I am seeking God's glory," when he knows he is disobeying God's command in what he is doing. How can I say that I am desiring to glorify God by following a pursuit which is sinful, by giving loose to my anger, and speaking rashly; by giving rein to my passions, by indulging my own desires, by being proud and domineering over my fellow-Christians, or by being pliant, fearful, timid after an unholy sort, and not being bold for God and for his truth? No, we must watch ourselves very narrowly and cautiously. We must be very careful of our own spirits. We soon get off the line. Even when we are keeping correct outwardly, we may be getting very inconsistent inwardly by forgetting that the first, last, midst, and sole object of a bloodbought spirit is to live for Christ, and that if saints on earth were what they should be, they would be as constantly God's servants as the angels are in heaven; they would be as much messengers of God in their daily calling as the seraphs are before the eternal throne. Oh! when will the Spirit of God lift us up to anything like this? The most of us are still hunting after things that will melt beneath the sun, or rot beneath the moon. We are gathering up shadows to ourselves; things which have no abiding substance: seeking self, seeking anything rather than the blessed God. Lord! forgive us this sin wherein we have fallen into it, and make us truly such as truly seek the Lord! Now, let us be prepared to behold:—

II. THE PROMISE OF THE REWARD OF SUCH SEEKING.

"They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." That is, *not one of them*. They that first stepped into Bethesda's pool were healed, and no others; but here everybody that steps into this pool is healed; that is to say, everyone that seeks the Lord has this promise—the least, as well as the greatest: the Little-faiths and the Much-afraids as much as the Great-hearts and the Stand-fasts. They that seek the Lord, whether they are chimney-sweeps or princes, whether they are tender children, or seasoned veterans in the Master's great army—they shall want no good thing. "Well, but" somebody says, "there are some of them that are in want." They are in want? Yes, that may be, but they are not in want *of any good thing*. They cannot be. God's word against anything you say, or I say. If they seek the Lord, they shall not, they cannot, they must not want any good thing. "Well, at any rate, they want what appears to be a good thing." That is very likely; the text does not say they shall not be. "Well, but they want what they once found to be a good thing; they want health—is not that a good thing? It was a good thing to them when they had it before, yet they want health; does not that go against the text?" No, it does not in any way whatever. The text means this, that anything which is absolutely good for him, all circumstances being considered, no child of God shall ever want. I met with this statement in a work by that good old Puritan, Mr. Clarkson, which stuck by me when I read it some time ago. I think the words were these, "If it were a good thing for God's people for sin, Satan, sorrow, and affliction to be abolished, Christ would blot them out within five minutes, and if it were a good thing for the seeker of the Lord to have all the kingdoms

of this world put at his feet and for him to be made a prince, Jesus would make him a prince before the sun rose again." If it were absolutely to him, all things being considered, a good thing, he must have it, for Christ would be sure to keep his word. He has said he shall not want it, and he would not let his child want it, whatever it might be, if it were really, absolutely, and in itself, all things considered, a good thing. Now, taking God's Word and walking by faith towards it, what a light it sheds on your history and mine! There are many things for which I wish, and which I sincerely think to be good, but I say at once, "If I have not got them, they are not good, for if they were good, good for me, and I am truly seeking God, I should have them: if they were good things, my heavenly Father would not deny them to me: he has said he would not, and I believe his pledged word." I think sometimes it would be a good thing for me if I had more talents, but if it were a good thing I should have more, I should have them. You think it were a good thing, if you were to have more money. Well, if he saw it to be good, you would have it. "Oh!" say you, "but it would have been a good thing if my poor mother had been spared to me: if she had been alive now, it would have been a good thing, and it would be a good thing certainly for us to be in the position I was five years ago before these terrible panic times came." Well, if it had been a good thing for you to have been there, you would have been there. "I don't see it," says one. Well, do not expect to see it, but believe it. We walk by faith, not by sight. But the text says so. It says not that every man shall have every good thing, but it does say that every man that seeks the Lord shall have every good thing. He shall not want any good thing, be it what it may. "Well, I doubt it," says one. Very well; I do not wonder that you do, for your father Adam doubted it, and that is how the whole race fell. Adam and Eve were In the garden, and they might have felt quite sure that their heavenly Father would not deny them any good thing, but the devil came and whispered, and said to them, "God doth know that in the day you eat of the fruit of that tree you will be as gods; that fruit is very good for you, a wonderfully good thing; never anything like it, and that one good thing God has kept away from you." "Oh!" said Eve, "then I will get it," and down we all fell. The race was ruined through their doubting the promise. If they had continued to seek the Lord, they would not have wanted any good thing. That fruit was not a good thing to them; it might have been good in itself, but it was not good to them, or else God would have given it to them, and their doubting it brought all this terrible sorrow on us. So it will upon you, for let me show you—you say, perhaps, "It would be a very good thing for me to be rich." God has stopped you up many times. You have never prospered when you thought you were going to. You will put out your hand, perhaps, to do a wrong thing to be rich, but if you say, "No, I will work, and toil, and do what I can, but if I am not prospered, it is not a good thing for me to be prospered, and I would not do a wrong thing, if it would bring me all the prosperity that heart could desire," then you will walk uprightly and God will bless you; but if you begin to doubt it and say, "That is a good thing, and my heavenly Father does not give it to me," you will, first of all, get hard and bitter thoughts against your heavenly Father, and then you will get wicked thoughts and wrong desires, and these will lead you to do wrong things, and God's name will be greatly dishonoured thereby. How do you know what is a good thing for you? "Oh! I know," says one. That is just what your child said last Christmas. He was sure it was a good thing for him to have all those sweets: he thought you very hard that you denied them to him, and yet you knew better. You had seen him before so made ill through those very things he now longed for. And your heavenly Father knows, perhaps, that you could not bear to be strong in body; you would never be holy if you had too robust health. He knows you could not endure to be wealthy: you would be proud, vain, perhaps wicked: you do not know how bad you might be if you had this, perhaps. He

has put you in the best place for you. He has given you not only some of the things that are good for you, but all that is good for you, and there is nothing in the world that is really, solidly, abidingly good for you, but you either have it now, or you shall have it ere long. God your Father is dealing with you in perfect wisdom and perfect love, and though your reason may begin to cavil and question, yet, your faith should sit still at his feet, and say "I believe it; I believe it, even though my heart is wrung with sorrow; I am a seeker of God; I do seek his glory, and I shall not want any good thing."

Methinks someone in the congregation might say to me, "Look at the martyrs; did not they seek the Lord above all men?" Truly so, but what were you about to object? "Why, that they wanted many good things; they were in prison, sometimes in cold, and nakedness, and hunger; they were on the rack tormented, many of them went to heaven from the fiery stake." Yes, but they never wanted any good thing. It would not have been a good thing to them as God's martyrs to have suffered less, for now read their history. The more they suffered, the brighter they shine. Rob them of their sufferings, and you strip their crowns of their gems. Who are the brightest before the eternal throne? Those who suffered most below. If their could speak to you now, they would tell you that that noisome dungeon was, because it enabled them to glorify God, a good thing to them. They would tell you that the rack whereon they did sing sweet hymns of praise was a good thing for them, because it enabled them to show forth the patience of the saints, and to have their names written in the book of the peerage of the skies. They would tell you that the fiery stake was a good thing, because from that pulpit they preached Christ after such a fashion as men could never have heard it from cold lips and stammering tongues. Did not the world perceive that the suffering of the saints were good things, for they were the seed of the Church? They helped to spread the truth, and because God would not deny them any good thing he gave them their dungeons, he gave them their racks, he gave them their stakes, and these were the best things they could have had, and with enlarged reason, and with their mental faculties purged, those blessed spirits would now choose again, could they live over again, to have suffered those things. They would choose, were it possible, to have lived the very life, and to have endured all they braved, to have received so glorious a reward as they now enjoy.

"Ah! well, then," says one, "I see I really have not understood a great deal that has happened to me: I have been in obscurity, lost my friends, been despised, felt quite broken down; do you mean to tell me that that has been a good thing?" I do. God has blessed it to you. He will enable you to say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy law." And if you get more grace, you will say it is a good thing, for is it not a good thing for you to be conformed to the likeness of Christ? How can you be if you have no suffering? If you never suffer with him, how can you expect to reign with him? How are you to be made like him in his humiliation, if you never are humbled? Why, methinks every pain that shoots through the frame and thrills the sensitive soul helps us to understand what Christ suffered, and being sanctified, gives us the power to pass through the rent veil, and to be baptized with his baptism, and in our measure to drink of his cup, and, therefore, it becomes a good thing, and our Father gives it us, because his promise is that he will not deny or withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly.

I feel, brethren, as though my text were too full for me to go on with it, there is such a mass in it, and if you will take it home and turn it over at your leisure, you may do with it better than I can, if I attempt wire-drawing and word-spinning. There is the text. It seems to me to speak as plainly as the English tongue can speak. Give yourselves up to God wholly and live for him, and you shall

never want anything that is really good for you; your life shall be the best life for you, all things considered in the light of eternity, that a life could have been. Only mind you keep to this—the seeking of the Lord. There is the point of it. Get out of that, and there may be some promise for you, but certainly not this one. You have got out of the line of the promise; but keep to that and seek the Lord, and your life shall be, even if it be a poverty-stricken one, such a life that if you could have the infinite intelligence of your heavenly Father, you would ordain it to be precisely as it now is. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

Why, how rich this makes the poor! How content this makes the suffering! How grateful this makes the afflicted! How does it make our present state to glow with an unearthly glory! But, brethren, we shall never understand this text fully this side of heaven. There we shall see it in splendour. They that seek the Lord here shall have up yonder all that imagination can picture, all that fancy could conceive, all that desire could create. You shall have more than eye hath seen, or ear hath ever heard. You shall have capacities to receive of the divine fulness, and the fulness of the pleasures that are with God for evermore shall be yours.

But again I come back to that, are you seeking the Lord? That is a question I have asked my own heart many and many a time—Do I seek the Lord's glory in all things? I ask it of you, you young men who are starting in business. Now, you know you can if you like go into business for yourselves; I mean you can make your trade tell for yourselves, and live to yourselves, and the end will be miserable, and the way to it will not be happy. But if God's Spirit shall help you young men and women early in life to give your hearts to Jesus, and to say, "Now, God has made us, we will serve him that made us; Christ has bought us, we will serve him that bought us; the Spirit of God has given us a new life, we will live for this new and quickening Spirit"—then I do not stand here to promise you ease and comfort, for in the world you shall have tribulation, but I do say in God's name that he will not withhold one good thing from you, and that when you come to be with him for ever and ever you will bless him that he did for you the best that could be done even by infinite wisdom and infinite love. You shall have the best life that could be lived, the best mercies that could be given, and the best of all good things shall be yours here and hereafter.

There may be some here, however, who have long passed the days of youth, and up till now have never had a thought of their Maker. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but they have not known God. If you keep a dog, he fawns on you, and follows at your heels. There is scarcely any creature so ignorant but what it knows its keeper. Go to the Zoological Gardens and see if those animals that are most deficient in brain are not still obedient to those that feed them. Yet here is God, good and kind to a man like you, and you have lived to be forty, and have never had an idea of loving and serving God. Are you lower sunk than the brutes? Think of that! But Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners such as you. Repent! May God's Eternal Spirit lead you to repentance of this great sin of having lived in neglect of God, and from henceforth, seeking pardon for the past through the atoning sacrifice, and strength for the future through the Divine Spirit, seek the Lord, and you shall find that you shall not want any good thing. The Lord bring you there, and save and bless you eternally! Amen.

An Unalterable Law

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission."—Hebrews 9:22.

EVERYWHERE under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle, but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste, and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil, which had been polluted, had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law, which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still, the apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth, under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin, except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass offering, referred to as an alternative, in Leviticus 5:11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow, life must be given. The one exception we have noticed gives emphasis to the statute that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Under the gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead; there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman

born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come,—“Without shedding of blood, there is no remission.” With great simplicity, then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests? I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that:—

I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REMISSION—that is to say, the remission of sins. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Blood has been shed, and there is, therefore, hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God's debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is possible. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin, of which it is possible to repent, is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. “But is there not,” saith one, “a sin which is unto death?” Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have enquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

And *this forgiveness which is possible is*, according to the Scriptures, *complete*; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin, he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin, and have him accountable for the rest; but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed, thou art forgiven—forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, *this is a present pardon*. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die, and, perhaps, then in some mysterious way, in the last few minutes, you may be absolved; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us must be daily and hourly mortified; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God, and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once; it will be given to any of you tonight who accept it—yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven for ever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and

eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this one other remark. *The man who gets this pardon may know he has it.* Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to know that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction, and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as he gives it to me. "Oh!" saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity. "But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such an one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err; it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder, and sing, "Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" When you make anything, it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can comprehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away, for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is his strange work. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission, except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that:—

II. THOUGH THERE BE PARDON OF SIN, IT IS NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD.

That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you *should* be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace; but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea full of penitential tears, there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding, there is no remission. But others suppose that, at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up, and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned, and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished, and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere—yet for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past delinquencies are not condoned

by future good behaviour. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though you should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think that now their prayers and their humblings of soul may, perhaps, effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But oh! dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no deterrent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses, and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who, in order to purge themselves of sin, flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts, wear sackcloth and hair shirts next to their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions, and to allow their body to be filthy, was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet today, in Hindostan, you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrapt thyself in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken my law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to my honour by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honour upon my name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our firstborn for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here for ever must it stand, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah! futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance, in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass, as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin—we fling this text in their faces, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ? We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood—without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that, too much it holds before the sinner's eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I remember one person who was united with this church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon, from Christ crucified! I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is the means of putting away our sin—this, and nothing else. Let us pass on a little further with the same truth:—

III. THIS REMISSION OF SIN IS TO BE FOUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service gave you the marrow of the doctrine. We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice has been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance has leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious Substitute bares his arm, and he says, "Strike, O sword, but strike me, and let my people go." Into the very soul of Jesus the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood, not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his being an eternal Spirit was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man, as it were, within himself, by reason of the

majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings—the tortures he endured in his body—but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, "unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice, as well as mercy, that God should blot out those debts which have been paid. It were unjust—I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my Substitute. If my Surety took my sin, he released me, and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Saviour? Who shall commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my Substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay anything to my charge when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share? This is all very simple, it lies in a nutshell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh! my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting Christ; you stumble at this stumbling-stone; you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look, then, at that passage, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding, which I have briefly endeavoured to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the great Judge. You may labour, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions, and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples; but as the Lord liveth, there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him when your own remedy is revealed by him.

He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it, you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood be on your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the text gives us! "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart:—

"My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin."

Then, your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying, "We would be pardoned now"? Oh! look, look, look, look to the crucified Saviour, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God's atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the centre, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, "If sinners are lost, I have none of their blood upon me." This is the soul-saving doctrine; grip it, and you shall have laid hold of eternal life; reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh! keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith in to the Wurtembergers' heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads, in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again, and again, and again upon this one nail, "The blood is the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood—it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you, if you will but look to him— pardon now, complete pardon; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God, who has gone into the heavens, and who lives today to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which, on Calvary, he poured forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day, when the crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation; and if you reject it, do me this favour, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this, his gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it, that you may be saved. But the rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Saviour, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood to receive honour, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

Fruitless Faith

A Sermon

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Delivered by

C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."—James 2:17.

WHATEVER the statement of James may be, it could never have been his intention to contradict the gospel. It could never be possible that the Holy Spirit would say one thing in one place, and another in another. Statements of Paul and of James must be reconciled, and if they were not, I would be prepared sooner to throw overboard the statement of James than that of Paul. Luther did so, I think, most unjustifiably. If you ask me, then, how I dare to say I would sooner do so, my reply is, I said I would sooner throw over James than Paul for this reason, because, at any rate, we must keep to the Master himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought never to raise any questions about differences of inspiration, since they are all equally inspired, but if such questions could be raised and were allowable, it were wisdom to stick fastest to those who cling closest to Christ. Now the last words of the Lord Jesus, before he was taken up were these, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," and what was this gospel? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To that, then, we must always cling, but Jesus Christ has given a promise of salvation to the baptized believer, and he has said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here it is clear he promises everlasting life to all who believe in him, to all who trust in him. Now from the Master's words we will not stir, but close to his own declaration we will stand. Be assured that the gospel of your salvation as a believer, with a simple confidence in Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, will save your soul, a simple and undiluted reliance upon the life and death, and resurrection, and merit, and person of Jesus Christ, will ensure to you everlasting life. Let nothing move you from this confidence: it hath great recompense of reward. Heaven and earth may pass away, but from this grand fundamental truth not one jot or tittle shall ever be moved. "He that believeth in him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

The fact is, James and Paul are perfectly reconcilable, and they are viewing truth from different standpoints; but whatever James may mean, I am quite confident about what Paul means, and confident about the truth of the two.

A second remark. James never intended, for a moment, nor do any of his words lead us into such a belief, that there can be any merit whatever in any good works of ours. After we have done all, if we could do all, we should only have done what we were bound to do. Surely there is no merit in a man's paying what he owes; no great merit in a servant who has his wages for doing what he is paid for. The question of merit between the creature and his Creator is not to be raised; he has

a right to us; he has the right of creation, the right of preservation, the right of infinite sovereignty, and, whatever he should exact of us, we should require nothing from him in return, and, having sinned as we have all, for us to talk of salvation by merit, by our own works, is worse than vanity; it is an impertinence which God will never endure.

"Talk they of morals, O! thou bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love of thee."

Talk of salvation by works, and Cowper's reply seems apt:—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord."

What James does mean, however, is this, no doubt, in brief and short, that while faith saves, it is faith of a certain kind. No man is saved by persuading himself that he is saved; nobody is saved by believing Jesus Christ died for him. That may be, or may not be, true in the sense in which he understands it. In a certain sense Christ died for all men, but since it is evident that many men are lost, Christ's dying for all men is not at all a ground upon which any man may hope to be saved. Christ died for some men in another sense, in a peculiar and special sense. No man has a right to believe that Christ peculiarly and specially died for him until he has an evidence of it in casting himself upon Christ, and trusting in Jesus, and bringing forth suitable works to evince the reality of his faith. The faith that saves is not a historical faith, not a faith that simply believes a creed and certain facts: I have no doubt devils are very orthodox; I do not know which church they belong to, though there are some in all churches; there was one in Christ's Church when he was on earth, for he said one was filled with devils; and there are some in all churches. Devils believe all the facts of revelation. I do not believe they have a doubt; they have suffered too much from the hand of God to doubt his existence! They have felt too much the terror of his wrath to doubt the righteousness of his government. They are stern believers, but they are not saved; and such a faith, if it be in us, will not, cannot, save us, but will remain to all intents and purposes a dead, inoperative faith. It is a faith which produces works which saves us; the works do not save us; but a faith which does not produce works is a faith that will only deceive, and cannot lead us into heaven. Now this evening we shall first speak a few words upon:—

I. WHAT KIND OF WORKS THEY ARE WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO PROVE OUR FAITH IF IT BE A SAVING FAITH.

The works which are absolutely necessary are, in brief, these: First, there must be *fruits meet for repentance*, works of repentance. It is wrong to tell a man he must repent before he may trust Christ, but it is right to tell him that, having trusted Christ, it is not possible for him to remain impenitent. There never was in this world such a thing as an impenitent believer in Jesus Christ, and there never can be. Faith and repentance are born in a spiritual life together, and they grow up together. The moment a man believes he repents, and while he believes he both believes and repents, and until he shall have done with faith he will not have done with repenting. If thou hast believed, but hast never repented of thy sins, then beware of thy believing. If thou pretendest now to be a child of God, and if thou hast never clothed thyself in dust and ashes; if thou hast never hated the sins which once thou didst love: if thou dost not now hate them, and endeavour to be rid of them, if thou dost not humble thyself before God on account of them, as the Lord liveth, thou knowest nothing about saving faith, for faith puts a distance between us and sin; in a moment it leads us away from the distance between us and Christ; nearer to Christ, we are now far off from sin. But he that loves his sin, thinks little of his sin, goes into it with levity, talks of it sportively, speaks of

sin as though it were a trifle, hath the faith of devils, but the faith of God's elect he never knew. True faith purges the soul, since the man now hunts after sin that he might find out the traitor that lurks within his nature; and though a believer is not perfect, yet the drift of faith is to make him perfect; and if it is faith to be perfected, the believer shall be perfected, and then shall he be caught up to dwell before the throne. Judge yourselves, my hearers. Have you brought forth the fruits of repentance? If not, your faith without them is dead.

Works of secret piety are also essential to true faith. Does a man say I believe that Jesus died for me, and that I hope to be saved, and does he live in a constant neglect of private prayer? Is the Word of God never read? Does he never lift up his eye in secret with "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth"? Has he no secret regard in his heart to the Lord his God, and does he hold no communion with Christ his Saviour, and is there no fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Then how can faith dwell in such a man? As well say that a man is alive when he does not breathe, and in whom the blood does not circulate, as to say that a man is a believer with living faith who does not draw near to God in prayer, that does not live indeed under the awe and fear of the Most High God as ever present, and seeing him in all places. Judge yourselves, ye professors. Are ye neglecting prayer; have ye no secret spiritual life? If so, away with your notion about saving faith. You are not justified by such a faith as that; there is no life in it; it is not a faith that leads to the Lamb and brings salvation; if it were, it would show itself by driving you to your knees, and making you lift up your heart to the Most High.

Another set of works are those which I may call *works of obedience*. When a man trusts in Jesus, he accepts Jesus as his Master. He says, "Show me what thou wouldst have me to do." The Father shows what Christ would have him to do. He does not set up his own will and judgment, but he is obedient to his Master's will. I will not tonight speak of those who know not their Lord's will, who shall be beaten with few stripes, but I do fear me there are some professors who are living in wilful neglect of known Christian duties, and yet suppose themselves to be the partakers of saving faith. Now a duty may be neglected, and yet a man may be saved; but a duty persistently and wilfully neglected, may be the leak that will sink the ship, or the neglect of any one of such duties for the surrender of a true heart to Christ does not go such and such a length and then stop. Christ will save no heart upon terms and conditions; it must be an unconditional surrender to his government if thou wouldst be saved by him. Now some will draw a line here, and some will draw a line there up to this, and say, "I will be Christ's servant"; that is to say, sir, you will be your own master, for that is the English of it; but the true heart that hath really believed saith, "I will make haste, and delay not to keep thy commandments; make straight the path before my feet, for thy commandments are not grievous." "I have delighted in thy commandments more than in fine gold." Now, sons and daughters of sin, professedly, what say you to this? Have you an eye to the Master, as servants keep their eye to their mistress? Do you ever ask yourselves what would Christ have you to do? or do you live habitually in the neglect of Christ's law and will? Do you go to places where Christ would not meet you, and where you would not like to meet with him? Are some of you in the habit of professing maxims and customs, upon which you know your Lord would never set his seal? You say you believe, you have faith in him? Ah! sirs, if it be a living faith, it will be an obedient faith.

Living faith produces what I shall call *separating works*. When a man believes in Jesus, he is not what he was nor will he consort with those who were once his familiars. Our Lord has said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Now Christ was not an ascetic; he ate and drank as other men do so that they even said of him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because

he mingled with the rest of mankind; but was there ever a more unearthly life than the life of Christ? He seems to go through all the world a complete man in all that is necessary to manliness, but his presence is like the presence of a seraph amongst sinners. You can discover at once that he is not of their mould, nor of their spirit, only harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Now such will the believer be if his faith be genuine, but this is a sharp cut to some professors, but not a whit more sharp than the Scripture warrants. If we are of the world, what can we expect but the world's doom in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ? If ye find your pleasure with the world, you shall meet your condemnation with the world; if with the world you live, with the world you shall die, and with the world you shall live again for ever, lost. Where there is no separation there is no grace. If we are conformed to this world, how dare we talk about grace being in our souls; and if there be no distinguishing difference between us and worldlings, what vanity it is, what trifling, what hypocrisy, what a delusion for us to come to the Lord's table, talking about being the Lord's sons, when we are none of his? Faith without the works which denote the difference between a believer and a worldling is a dead, unsaving faith.

Now I have not said that any believer is perfect. I have never thought so, but I have said that if a believer could be a believer altogether, and faith could have her perfect work, he would be perfect, and that in proportion as he is truly a believer, in that proportion he will bring forth fruit that shall magnify God and prove the sincerity of his faith.

One other set of works will be necessary to prove the vitality of his faith, namely, *works of love*. He that loves Christ feels that the love of Christ constraineth him; he endeavours to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ; he longs to win jewels for Christ's crown; he endeavours to extend the boundaries of Christ's and Messiah's kingdom, and I will not give a farthing for the loftiest profession coupled with the most flowing words, that never shows itself in direct deeds of Christian service. If thou lovest Christ, thou canst not help serving him. If thou believest in him, there is such potency in what thou believest, such power in the grace which comes with believing, that thou must serve Christ; and if thou servest him not, thou art not his.

This proof, before we leave it, might be illustrated in various ways. We will just give one. A tree has been planted out into the ground. Now the source of life to that tree is at the root, whether it hath apples on it or not; the apples would not give it life, but the whole of the life of the tree will come from its root. But if that tree stands in the orchard, and when the springtime comes there is no bud, and when the summer comes there is no leafing, and no fruit-bearing, but the next year, and the next, it stands there without bud or blossom, or leaf or fruit, you would say it is dead, and you are correct; it is dead. It is not that the leaves could have made it live, but that the absence of the leaves is a proof that it is dead. So, too, is it with the professor. If he hath life, that life must give fruits; if not fruits, works; if his faith has a root, but if there be no works, then depend upon it the inference that he is spiritually dead is certainly a correct one. When the telegraph cable flashed no message across to America, when they tried to telegraph again and again, but the only result following was dead earth, they felt persuaded that there was a fracture, and well they might; and when there is nothing produced in the life by the supposed grace which we have, and nothing is telegraphed to the world but "dead earth," we may rest assured that the link of connection between the soul and Christ does not exist.

I need not enlarge. We should just put it into that one sentence: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Bring forth, therefore, works meet for repentance." And now we turn to the second point with more brevity:—

II. SOME FACTS THAT BACK UP THE DOCTRINE THAT "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD."

These facts show that it is evident to all observers that many professors of faith without works are not saved. It would be very ludicrous, if it were not very miserable, to think of some who wrap themselves in the conceit that they are saved about whose salvation nobody but themselves can have any question. I remember a professor who used to talk of being justified by faith who was most assured about it, when he contained most beer. Such professors are not at all uncommon, sad is it to say so. They seem at the moment when their condemnation seems written on their very brow to all who know them, to be most confident that they themselves are saved. Now, brethren, if such cases are convincing and you entertain no doubt, but decide in their case, apply the same rule to yourselves, for although you may not plunge into the grosser vices, yet if you make your homes wretched by your selfishness, if you fall into constant habits of vicious temper, if you never strive against these sins, and the grace of God never leads you out of them; if you can live in private sin, and yet pacify your conscience, and remain just as you were before your pretended conversion; when you sit in judgment and pronounce the verdict on others, feel that you pronounce it upon yourself, for surely for one sin that is openly indulged in, which is manifested to you in the dissipation of your fellow-creatures, it is not hard for you to believe that any other sin, if it be constantly indulged and be loved, will do the same to you as it does to him. You know men who have not faith, but have a sort of faith, are not saved. It must be true, or else where were the Saviour's words, "Straight is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that find it"? For this is no straight gate and no narrow way, merely to be orthodox and hold a creed, and say, "I believe Jesus died for me"; but it is a very narrow gate so to believe as to become practically Christ's servants, so to trust as to give up that which Christ hates. Truths which Jesus bids us believe are all truths, which, if believed, must *have an effect upon the daily life*. A man cannot really believe that Jesus Christ has taken away his sin by such sufferings as those of the cross, and yet trifle with sin. A man is a liar who says, "I believe that yonder bleeding Saviour suffered on account of my sins," and yet holds good fellowship with the very sins that put Christ to death. Oh! sirs, a faith in the bleeding Saviour is a faith that craves for vengeance upon every form of sin. The Christian religion makes us believe that we are the sons of God when we trust in Christ. Will a man believe that he is really the Son of God, and then daily and wilfully go and live like a child of the devil? Do you expect to see members of the royal court playing with beggars in the street? When a man believes himself to possess a certain station of life, that belief leads him to a certain carriage and conversation, and when I am led to believe I am elected of God, that I am redeemed by blood, that heaven is secured to me by the covenant of grace, that I am God's priest, made a king in Christ Jesus, I cannot, if I believe, unless I am more monstrous than human nature itself seems capable of being, go back to live after just the same fashion, to run in the same course as others, and live as the sons of Belial live. We see constantly in Scripture, and all the saints affirm it, that faith is linked with grace, and that where faith is the grace of God is; but how can there be the gift of God reigning in the soul, and yet a love of sin and a neglect of holiness? I cannot understand grace which abideth for ever to the inner man; and for this man to give himself up to be a slave of Satan is a thing impossible.

Faith, again, is always *in connection with regeneration*. Now regeneration is making of the old thing new; it is infusing a new nature into a man. The new birth is not a mere reformation, but an entire renovation and revolution: it is making the man a new creation in Christ Jesus. But how a new creature, if he has no repentance, if he has no good works, no private prayer, no charity, no

holiness of any kind, regeneration will be a football for scorn. The new birth would be a thing to be ridiculed, if it did not really produce a hatred of sin, and a love of holiness. That kind of new birth which is dispensed by the Church of Rome, and also by some in the Church of England, is a kind of new birth which ought to excite the derision of all mankind, for children are said to be born again, certified to be born again, made members of Christ and children of God, and afterwards they grow up, in many cases, in most cases, let me say, to forget their baptismal vows, and live in sin as others do. Evidently it has had no effect upon them, but regeneration such as we read of in the Bible changes the nature of man, makes him hate the things he loved, and love the things he hated. This is regeneration: this is regeneration which is worth the seeking: it always comes with faith, and consequently good works must go with faith too. But we pass on to the last matter, which is this:—

III. WHAT OF THOSE MEN THAT HAVE FAITH, AND THAT HAVE NO GOOD WORKS?

Then what about them? Why, this about them, that their supposed faith generally makes them *very careless and indifferent*, and ultimately hardened and depraved men. I dread beyond measure that any one of us should have a name to live when we are dead; for an ordinary sinner who makes no profession may be converted, but it is extremely rare that a sinner who makes a profession of being what he is not is ever converted. It is a miserable thing to find a person discovering that his profession has been a lie. A man sits down, and he says, "Why, I believe," and as he walks he is careful, because he is afraid of what others might say. By and bye, he begins to indulge a little. He says, "This is not of works; I may do this, and yet get forgiveness." Then he goes a little further away. I do not say that perhaps at first he goes to the theatre, but he goes next door to it. He does not get drunk, but he likes jovial company. A little further and he gets confirmed in the belief that he is a saved one, and he gets to much confirmed in that idea that he thinks he can do just as he likes. Having sported on the brink without falling over, he thinks he will try to say, if Satan wants raw material of which to make the worst of men, he generally takes those who profess to be the best, and I have questioned whether such a valuable servant of Satan as Judas was could ever have been made of any other material than an apostate apostle. If he had not lived near to Christ, he never could have become such a traitor as he was. You must have a good knowledge of religion to be a thorough-faced hypocrite, and you must become high in Christ's Church before you can become fit tools for Satan's worst works. Oh! but why do men do this? Oh! what is the use of maintaining such a faith? I think if we do not care to get the vitality of religion, I would never burden myself with the husks of it, for such people get the chains of godliness without getting the comforts of godliness. They dare not do this, they dare not do that; if they do they feel hampered. Why don't they give up professing? and they would be at least free; they would have the sin without the millstone about their neck. Surely there can be no excuse for men who mean to perish coming to cover themselves with a mask of godliness! Why cannot they perish as they are? Why add sin to sin by insulting the Church through the cross of Christ?

When men make a profession of religion, and yet their works do not follow their faith, what about them? Why, this about them. *They have dishonoured the Church*, and, of all others, these are the people that make the world point to the Church and say, "Where is your religion? That is your religion, is it?" So it is when they find a man who professes to be in Christ, and yet walks not as Christ walked. These give the Church her wounds; she receives them in the house of her friends; these make the true ministers of God go to their closets with broken heart, crying out, "Oh! Lord, wherefore hast thou sent us to this people to speak and minister amongst them, that they should

play the hypocrite before thee?" These are they that prevent the coming in of others, for others take knowledge of them, as they think religion is hypocrisy, and they are hindered, and, if not seriously, they get, at any rate, comfort in their sin from the iniquity of these professors. What their judgment will be when Christ appeareth it is not for my tongue to tell; in that day when, with tongue of fire, Christ shall search every heart, and call on all men to receive their judgment, what must be the lot of the base-born professor, who prostituted his profession to his own honour and gain? He sought not the glory of God. What shall be the thunder-bolt that shall pursue his guilty soul in its timorous flight to hell, and what the chains that are reserved in blackness and darkness for ever for those who are wells without water and clouds without rain? I cannot tell, and may God grant that you may never know. Oh! may we all tonight go to Christ to be our complete Saviour in very deed and truth. Then shall we be saved, and then, being saved, we shall seek to serve Christ with heart, and soul, and strength.

Lest I have missed my mark, this one illustration shall suffice, and I have done. There is a vessel drifting. She will soon be on the shore, but a pilot is come on board; he is standing on the deck, and he says to the captain and crew, "I promise and undertake that, if you will solely and alone trust me, I will save thy vessel. Do you promise it; do you believe in me?" They believe in him; they say they believe the pilot can save the vessel, and they trust the vessel implicitly to his care. Now listen to him. "Now," says he, "you at that helm there!" He does not stir. "At the helm there! Can't you hear?" He does not stir! He does not stir! "Well, but, Jack, haven't you confidence in the pilot?" "Oh! yes. Oh! yes, I have faith in him," he says; "he will save the vessel if I have faith in him." "Don't you hear the pilot, as he says have faith in him, and you won't touch the helm?" "Now, you aloft there! Reef that sail." He does not stir, but lets the wind still blow into the sail and drift the vessel on to the coast. "Now then, some of you; look alive, and reef that sail!" But he does not stir! "Why, captain, what shall I do? These fellows won't stir or move a peg." But "Oh!" says the captain; "I have every confidence in you, pilot. I believe you will save the vessel." "Then why don't you attend to the tiller, and all that?" "Oh! no," says he; "I have great confidence in you. I don't mean to do anything." Now when that ship goes down amid the boiling surges, and each man sinks to his doom, I will ask you, had they faith in the pilot? Hadn't they a mimicking, mocking sort of faith, and only that? For if they had been really anxious to have the vessel rescued, and have trusted in the pilot, it would be the pilot that had saved them, and they could never have been saved without him. They would have proved their faith by their works. Their faith would have been made perfect, and the vessel would have been secured.

I call upon every man here to do what Christ bids him. I call upon you, first of all, to prove that you believe in Christ by being baptized. "He that believeth in Christ and is baptized shall be saved." The first proof that you believe in Christ is to be given by yielding to the much despised ordinance of believers' baptism, and then, having done that, going on to the other means of which I have spoken. Oh! I charge you by your soul's salvation neglect nothing Christ commands, however trivial it may seem to your reason. Whatever he saith unto you, do it, for only by a child-like obedience to every bidding of Christ can you expect to have the promise fulfilled, "They that trust in him shall be saved." The Lord bless these words, for His name's sake. Amen.

The Compassion of Jesus

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"He was moved with compassion."—Matthew 9:36.

THIS is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the evangelists themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose, and therefore they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion; a striving of the bowels—a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us—*Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Saviour looked upon certain sights, those who watched him closely perceived that his internal agitation was very great, his emotions were very deep, and then his face betrayed it, his eyes gushed like founts with tears, and you saw that his big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which his eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Saviour's whole life, and I intend thus to apply it to him. If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, "He was moved with compassion." Upon this one point we shall try to insist now, and may God grant that good practical result may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations to *the great transactions of our Saviour's life*; secondly, to *the special instances in which this expression is used by the evangelists*; thirdly, to *the forethought which he took on our behalf*; and fourthly to *the personal testimony which one's own recollections can furnish*. Let us take a rapid survey of:—

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow's wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed; before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid, when as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that his creature man would sin; that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the covenant head as well as the common parent of the entire human family; and that in consequence of that one man's disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become a sinner too. Then, as the Creator knew that his creatures would rebel against him, he saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge his injured law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, ere the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an interposer—one ordained to come and re-head the race, to be a second Adam, a federal Chief; to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam; to be a Surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God's love did light; that their sins should be laid upon him, and that he should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that new covenant.

Yet there was one—and he none other than Jehovah's self—of whom he said, Let all the angels of God worship him, the Son, the well beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, "When he prepared the heavens I was there, when he set a compass upon the face of the depth, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountain of the deep"; then, "I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Word who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was he not moved with compassion when he entered into a covenant with his father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all his chosen—a covenant in which he was to be the sufferer, and they the gainers—in which he was to bear the shame that he might bring them into his own glory? Yes, verily, he was even then moved with compassion, for his delights even then were with the sons of men. Nor did his compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He continued still to pity men. He saw the fall of man; he marked the subtle serpent's mortal sting; he watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden; he observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God's patience had been tried to the uttermost; and then, according as it was written in the volume of the Book that he must appear, Jesus Christ came himself into this stricken world. Came how? O, be astonished, ye angels, that ye were witnesses of it, and ye men that ye beheld it. The Infinite came down to earth in the form of an infant; he who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, condescended to hang upon a woman's breast—the King eternal became a little child. Let Bethlehem tell that he had compassion. There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us. To bring earth up to heaven, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he must bring heaven down to earth. Therefore, in the incarnation, he had compassion, for he took upon himself our infirmities, and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while he tarried *in the world, a man among men*, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, he was constantly moved with compassion; for he felt all the griefs of mankind in himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows: he proved himself a true brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into his eye; a cry made him pause to ask what help he could render. So generous was his soul, that he gave all he had for the help of those that had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but he had no dwelling-place. Stripped even of his garments, he hung upon the cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as he, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find him. He gave up all the comforts of life—he gave his life itself; he gave his very self to prove that he was moved with compassion. Most of all do we see how he was moved with compassion *in his terrible death*. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb ere they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else he would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of his administration. Therefore, the law must be honoured, justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be expiated by suffering. Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the sceptre? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No; Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, he takes upon himself

the uplifted lash, and his shoulders run with gore; he bares his bosom to the furbished sword, and it smites the Shepherd that the sheep may escape. "He looked, and there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, his arm brought salvation." He trod the wine-press alone, and "bore, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Are ye asked what means the crucifixion of a perfect man upon a felon's cross, ye may reply, "He was moved with compassion." "He saved others; himself he could not save." He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat him up. He could save nothing from the general conflagration: he was utterly consumed with love, and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men. And after he had died and slept a little while in the grave, he rose again. He has gone into his glory; he is living *at the right hand of the Father*; but this is just as true of him, "He is moved with compassion." Is proof wanted? Let faith pass within the veil, and let your spirits for a moment stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where stand the harpers tuning their never-ceasing melodies. What see you there conspicuous in the very midst of heaven but One who looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still? What is his occupation there in heaven? He has no bloody sacrifice to offer, for he has perfected for ever those that were set apart. That work is done, but what is he doing now? He is pleading for his people; he is their perpetual Advocate, their continual Intercessor; he never rests until they come to their rest; he never holds his peace for them, but pleads the merit of his blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave him shall be with him where he is. Well indeed does our hymn express it:—

"Now, though he reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well he remembers Calvary,
Nor will his saints forget."

His tender heart pities all the griefs of his dear people. There is not a pang they have but the head feels it, feels it for all the members. Still doth he look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, "He is moved with compassion." Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to:—

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Matthew 20:31: "Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, 'O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.'" Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them, and they seem to have had full conviction that he both could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight.

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction. Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that he is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between him and you, for he is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear him command you to come to him. He is ready to heal you now. The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men—I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance—touched the Saviour's sensibility. And when he heard them say that they did believe he could heal them, he seemed to perceive that they had inward sight, and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too. So at once he put his fingers upon their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O soul, if thou believest Christ can save thee, and if you wilt now

trust in him to save thee, be of good cheer, thou art saved; that faith of thine hath saved thee. The very fact that thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and doth rely upon him, may stand as evidence to thee that thou art forgiven, that thou art saved. There is no let or bar to thy full redemption. Go thy way and rejoice in thy Lord. He hath compassion on thee.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mark 1:41. This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease, when he said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He had full faith in Christ's ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Saviour looked at him, and though he might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt his willingness, he merely said, "I will, be thou clean," and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague. If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, seest thou the leprosy upon thyself, and dost thou say, "I believe he could save me if he would"? Hast thou some lingering doubt about the Saviour's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe thy power. Help thou mine unbelief which lingers round thy willingness." Then little as thy faith is, it shall save thee. Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even thine unbelief, and accept what is faith, and forgive what is unbelief. There is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mark 5:19. It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad, and instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, "Wilt thou torment us before the time?"—and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it; but Christ was moved with compassion, and he bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh! I am so glad of this instance of his being moved with compassion. I do not so much wonder that he has pity on those that believe in him, neither do I so much marvel that he has pity even on weak faith; but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord's sympathy. Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted—not you. You almost shun the thought. Yet it is written, "He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." Well we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon unprepared souls. They have been smitten down with repentance, renewed in heart, and saved from their sins. Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he should ever be an apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor, and changed him into a preacher; so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed. May the Lord have compassion on you tonight. Well may we offer that prayer; for what will be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your doom eternally if you pass out of this world, as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come. He describes the torments of hell. He sees your danger; he warns you; he pities you; he sends his messengers to counsel you; he bids me say to the very chief of sinners, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "Only return unto me and confess thine iniquity, and I will have mercy upon thee," saith the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in thy case.

As I turned over the Greek Concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luke 7:13. It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out—her only son. He was dead, and she was desolate. The widow's only son was to her her sole stay; the succour as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, he was moved with compassion, and he restored her

son. Oh! is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys; you that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears. You weep alone sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, "Oh! that my Absalom were renewed; oh! that Ishmael might live before thee." Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to his own mother, and he will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, he sympathises with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. "He was moved with compassion."

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the Evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because that they were hungry and faint, and in the fulness of his sympathy he multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed them. At the same time he showed his disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. He would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance, and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed: the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds. Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when he saw the number of sick people in the throng, for they made a hospital of his preaching place. Wherever he paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets; he could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow his feelings. And he healed their impotent folk, as if to show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick—that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord, and following his example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious gospel. All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christlike, and they ought to be carried out in his name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital: he is the president of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited his compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them as a guide that showed the path by leading the way; and he looked after their welfare as a Shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls. Surely, brethren and sisters, if you love him, and wish to be like him, you cannot look on this congregation without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without saying, "Whither away these souls? Which road are they travelling? Will they all meet in heaven?" What! live ye in London, move ye about in this great metropolis, and do ye never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame upon you! Ask yourself whether ye have the spirit of Christ at all. In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out here in want of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper. Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with enquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them. I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have any bowels of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good. Oh! never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm. You know the balm. It has healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul. Enough; I must leave this point; I have given you,

I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let me notice:—

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as he knew what would happen while he was away, he has, with blessed forethought, provided for our wants. Well he knew that we should never be able to preserve the truth pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So in tender forethought he has given us the consolidated testimony, *the unchangeable truth in his own Book*; for he was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the gospel; he knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound doctrine from generation to generation; he knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay; while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell out plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, he has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the gospel, you have the old Book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the Book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed Book can reach the heart. Because he knew the people would require this sacred teaching, and could not have it otherwise, he was moved with compassion towards us all, and gave us the blessed Book of inspired God-breathed Scripture.

But then, since he knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, he has sent his ministers forth to do *the work of evangelists*. He raises up men, saved themselves from great sin, trophies of redeeming grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow-men who are revelling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of his the Lord enables to preach his truth, some with more, some with less ability than others; still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm, and in other favoured lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them, and intreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This cometh of Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion, and therefore he sent his servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though he may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has *sent his Spirit*. The Holy Ghost is here. We have not to say:—

"Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove."

He is here. He dwells in his Church, and he moves over the congregation, and he touches men's hearts, and he subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh! this is great mercy when a Prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation. That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, "Go and fetch them one by one till they do come," that is more gracious still. But if he goes himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in—oh! this is more than we could have thought he would have done; but he is moved with compassion, and he does that. Furthermore, brethren, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we should always be full of wants, and therefore he was moved with compassion, and he sets up *the throne of grace*, the mercy-seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain grace to help in time of need. Helped by his Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard. And then, since he knew we could not pray as we ought, he was moved with compassion when he sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray. Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian brother, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it, and has provided for it. He has not left one single

weak point of which we have to say, "There I shall fail, because he will not help there"; but he has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, "You will have an infirmity there: I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there: I will provide for it." And oh! how *his promises meet every case!* Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about his being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick bed without a promise like this, "I will make thy bed in thy sickness?" In the midst of pestilence have not you found a promise that "he shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust?" The Lord's great compassion has met the wants of all his servants to the end. If our children should ever need much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities, and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh! we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children—ay, and of our brethren and sisters, and neighbours—for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such untoward children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and he knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet still he never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but he still continues to show us abounding mercies. Oh! what a guardian Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless his name at all times, and how his praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here: he knew that we should be very forgetful; and he was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when he instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of him. Surely this is another instance of how he is moved with compassion, and not with indignation, towards our weaknesses. And now let me close with:—

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, my brethren and sisters. I do well remember when I was *under conviction of sin*, and smarted bitterly under the rod of God, that when I was most heavy and depressed there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life," yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God's prisoner, and he might yet set me free. I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was at that moment when Jesus revealed himself to me. Had he waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of his. On swift wings of love he came and manifested his dear wounded self to my heart. I looked to him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river. I rejoiced in him. Yes, he was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe; neither would he suffer them to be protracted too long for the spirit of man to fail before him. It is not his wont to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. "He will not quench the smoking flax." Yea, and I do remember since I first saw him and began to love him many *sharp and severe troubles*, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at the last moment; for he was moved with compassion. If he withdrew his face, it was only till my heart broke for him, and then he showed

me the light of his countenance again. If he laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under his chastening he could not bear it, but he put back the rod, and he said, "My child, I will comfort thee." Oh! the comforts that he gives on a sick bed! Oh! the consolations of Christ! when you are very low. If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then; if there be any bowels of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations; for he is moved with compassion. How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to his praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves his compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach, that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat me down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he found the Lord through that very sermon, the shortcoming of which I had deplored. Glory be to Jesus; it was his gentleness that did it. He did not want his servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so he had compassion on him and comforted him. Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half-inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah! how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, he has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of his voice, and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude. When we have been misrepresented, traduced, and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse—I cannot help quoting it now, though I have often quoted it before:—

"If on my face for thy dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since thou rememberest me."

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of his enemies. And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and broken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He hath compassion on you. Nay, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream—he has compassion. He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches thee is thy friend. He yet can help thee. Though thou hast gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not thyself away in blank despair, for he hath compassion. And thou, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoe to thy feet, thou art welcome in the house of God, welcome as the most honoured guest in the assembly of the saints. Let not the weighty grief that overhangs thy soul tempt thee to think that hopeless darkness has settled thy fate and foreclosed thy doom. Though thy sin may have beggared thee, Christ can enrich thee with better riches. He hath compassion. "Ah!" say you, "they will pass me on the stairs; they will give me a broad pathway, and if they see me in the street they will not speak to me—even his disciples will not." Be it so; but better than his disciples, tenderer by far, is Jesus.

Is there a man here, whom to associate with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink?; the holy, harmless, undefiled one will not disdain even him—for this man receiveth sinners—he is a friend of publicans and sinners. He is never happier than when he is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject, and the outcast. He despises not any that confess their sins and seek his mercy. No pride nestles in his dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off his gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from his blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to him now. Now let the silent prayer go up, "My Saviour, have pity upon me; be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery be any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for thy compassion. Oh! save me for thy mercy's sake!" Amen.

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