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SHOES OF IRON, AND STRENGTH SUFFICIENT: A NEW YEAR'S PROMISE

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 29TH, 1888.

“And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”— Deuteronomy 33:24-25.

I ONCE heard an old minister say that he thought the blessing of Asher was peculiarly the blessing of ministers; and his eyes twinkled as he added, “At any rate, they are usually blessed with children, and it is a great blessing for them if they are acceptable to their brethren, and if they are so truly anointed that they even dip their foot in oil.” Well, well, I pray that all of us who preach the gospel may enjoy this triplet of blessings in the highest sense. If our quiver is not full of children according to the flesh, yet may we have many born unto God through our ministry. May we be blessed by being made spiritual fathers to very many, who shall be brought by us to receive life, pardon, peace, and holiness, through our Lord Jesus. What is the use of our life if it be not so? To what end have we preached unless we see souls born into the family of grace? My inmost soul longs to see all my hearers born anew: this would be my greatest joy, my highest blessedness.

Ask for me the blessing of Asher — “Let Asher be blessed with children”; and may the Lord make my spiritual offspring to be as the sands upon the sea-shore.

It is a great blessing from the Lord when our speech is sweet to the ears of saints — when we have something to bring forth which our brethren in Christ can accept, and which comes to them with a peculiar preciousness and power, so that they can receive it, and feel that it is thoroughly acceptable to them. We do not wish to be acceptable to the worldly wise, nor to the error-hunters of the day; but we are very anxious to be pleasant to the Lord’s own children — our brethren in Christ. They have a holy taste whereby they discern spiritual meats, and we would bring forth for food that which they will account to be nourishing and savory. Every minister prays to be “acceptable to his brethren.”

And what could we do without the third blessing, namely that of unction? “Let him dip his foot in oil.” Oh, for an anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only upon the head with which we think, but upon the foot with which we move! We would have our daily walk and conversation gracious and useful. We wish that, wherever we go, we may leave behind us the print of divine grace. I was asking concerning a preacher what kind of man he was, and the simple, humble cottager, answered me, “Well, sir, he is this kind of man: if he comes to see you, you know that he has been.” We must not only have oil in the lamps of our public ministry, but oil in the vessels of our private study. We need the holy oil everywhere, upon every garment, even down to our skirts. I know that there are mockers who scoff at the very mention of unction; but I pray that to myself and my brethren the promise may be fulfilled, “He shall dip his foot in oil.” Such a man, anointed with fresh oil, holds an unquestioned office, enjoys an unfailing freshness, and exercises an effectual influence. Wherever he goes you see his footprints, for his foot has been dipped in oil.

Well, now, if these three blessings be good for ministers, they are equally good for all sorts of workers. You in the school, you who visit tract districts, you who manage mothers’ meetings, and you who in any shape or way endeavor to make Christ known, may you have the threefold blessing! The Lord give you many spiritual children: may you be blessed with them, and never be without additions to their number! The Lord make you acceptable to those among whom you labor; and the Lord grant you always to go forth in his strength, anointed with his Spirit!

That is the first part of our text, and I am not going to say any more about it, as the second part is that to which I shall call your especial attention. May the Holy Spirit make the promise exceeding sweet to you, and grant you a full understanding of it. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

There are two things in the text — shoes and strength. We will talk about these two, hoping to possess them both.

I. “THY SHOES SHALL BE IRON AND BRASS.” That is a very great promise, and I fear that I shall not be able to bring out all its meaning in one discourse.

I find that the passage has several translations; and, though I think that which we have now before us is by far the best, yet I cannot help mentioning the others, for I think they are instructive. These interpretations may serve me as divisions in opening up the meaning. I take it as a rule that the Lord’s promises are true in every sense which they will fairly bear. A generous man will allow the widest interpretation of his words, and so will the infinitely gracious God.

This promise meant that Asher should have treasures under his feet — that there should, in fact, be mines of iron and copper within the boundaries of the tribe. Metals enrich nations, and help their advancement in many ways. Tribes that possess minerals are thereby made rich, what ever metals those may be; but such useful metals as iron and copper would prove of the utmost service to the people of that time, if they knew how to use them. Is there any spiritual promise at all in this! Asher is made rich and iron and copper lying beneath his feet. Are saints ever made rich with treasures under their feet? Undoubtedly they are. The Word of God has mines in it. Even the surface of it is rich, and it brings forth food for us; but it is with Scripture as Job saith it is with the earth: “As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.” There are treasures upon the surface of the Word which we may pick up very readily: even the casual reader will find himself able to understand the simplicities and elements of the gospel of God; but the Word of God yields most to the digger. He that can study hard, and press into the inner meaning — he is the man that shall be enriched with riches current in heavenly places. Every Bible student here will know that God has put under his feet great treasures of precious teaching, and he will by meditation sink shafts into

the deep places of revelation. I wish we gave more time to our Bibles. We waste too much time upon the pretentious, poverty-stricken literature of the age; and some, even Christian people, are more taken up with works of fiction than they are with this great Book of everlasting fact. We should prosper much more in heavenly husbandry if we would “dig deep while sluggards sleep.” Remember that God has given to us to have treasures under our feet; but do not so despise his gifts as to leave the mines of revelation unexplored.

You will find these treasures, not only in the Word of God, but everywhere in the providence of God, if you will consider the ways of the Lord, and believe that God is everywhere at work, He that looks for a providence will not be long without seeing one. All events are full of teaching to the man that has but grace and wit to interpret them. “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.” There shall be treasures under your feet if your feet keep to the ways of truth. A rich land is the country along which believers travel to their rest: its stones are iron, and out of its bowels thou mayest dig brass. “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right.”

The Revised Version has it, “Thy bars shall be iron and brass;” and certainly the original text bears that meaning. “Thy bars shall be iron and brass:” there shall be protection around him. The city gates shall be kept fast against the enemy, so as to preserve the citizens. The slaughtering foe shall not be able to intrude, because, instead of the common wooden bar, which might be sufficient in more peaceful times, there shall be given bars of metal, not easily cut in sunder or removed. Herein I see a spiritual blessing for us also. What a mercy it is, when God strengthens our gates and secures the bars thereof, so that, when the enemy comes, he is not able to enter or to molest us! Peace from all assaults, safety under all alarms, shutting in from all attacks — this is a priceless boon. Happy people who have God for their protector! Blessed are they who rest in the sure promises and faithfulness of God, for they may laugh their enemies to scorn. O brethren, how safe are they whose trust is in the living God and in his covenant and promise! Personally I know what this means. I have rested as calmly in the center of the battle as ever I have reposed in the deepest calm: with all against me I am as quiet in soul as when everyone called himself my friend. It is true — “Thy bars shall be iron and brass.”

Still, I like the Old Version best, and the original certainly bears it, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” The Revised Version puts this in the margin He shall have protection for his feet. The chief objection that has been raised to this is that it would be a very unusual thing for shoes to be made of iron and brass. Such a thing is not heard of anywhere else in Scripture, neither is it according to Oriental custom. For that reason I judge that the interpretation is the more likely to be correct, since the protection which God gives to his people is unusual. No other feet shall wear so singular a covering; but those who are made strong in the Lord shall be able to wear shoes of iron, and the Lord shall give them sandals of brass. As Og, the King of Bashan, was of the race of the giants, and “his bedstead was a bedstead of iron,” so shall the Lord’s champions wear shoes of iron. Theirs are no common equipments, for they are no common people. God’s people are a peculiar people, and everything about them is peculiar. Even if the poetry of the passage would not bear to run upon all fours, there is no reason why it should, since it only relates to shoes. We may be quite content to take the notion of iron and brazen shoes with all its strangeness, and even let the strangeness be a commendation of it. You have peculiar difficulties, you are a peculiar people, you traverse a peculiar road, you have a peculiar God to trust in, and you may, therefore, find peculiar consolation in a peculiar promise: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.”

*With shoes of iron and of brass,
O'er burning marl thy feet shall pass,
Tread dragons down, from fear set free;
For as thy day thy strength shall be.*

But what does this mean — “thy shoes shall be iron and brass”? Are there not several meanings? Does it not mean that our feet, tender and unprotected by nature, shall receive protection — protection from God? Our feebleness and necessity shall call upon God’s grace and skill, and he will provide for us, and give to us exactly what we, by reason of our feebleness, so much need.

We want to have shoes of iron and brass, first, to travel with. We are pilgrims. We journey along a road which has not been smoothed by a steam-roller, but remains rough and rugged as the path to an Alpine summit. We push on through a wilderness where there is no way. Sometimes we traverse a dreary road, comparable too a burning sand. At other times sharp trials afflict us as if they cut our feet with flints. Our journey is a maze, a labyrinth: the Lord leads us up and down in the

wilderness, and sometimes we seem further from Canaan than ever. Seldom does our march take us through gardens: often it leads us through deserts. We are always travelling, never long in one stay. Sometimes the fiery cloudy pillar rests for a little, but it is only for a little. “Forward!” is our watchword. We have no abiding city here. We pitch our tent by the wells and palms of Elim, but we strike it in the morning, when the silver bugle sounds, “Up, and away!” and so we march to Marah, or to the place of the fiery serpents. Ever onward; ever forward; ever moving! This is our lot. Be it so. Our equipment betokens it: we have appropriate shoes for this perpetual journey. We are not shod with the skins of beasts, but with metals which will endure all wear and tear. Is it not written, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass”? However long the way, these shoes will last to the end.

Perhaps I address some friend whose way is especially rough. You seem to be more tried than anybody else. You reckon yourself to be more familiar with sorrow than anyone you know: affliction has marked you for its own. I pray you take home this promise to yourself by faith: the Lord saith to thee, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” This special route of yours, which is beset with so many difficulties — your God has prepared you for it. You are shod as none but the Lord’s chosen are shod. If your way is singular, so are your shoes. You shall be able to traverse this thorny road — to journey along it with profit to yourself, and with glory to God. For your travelling days you are well fitted, for your shoes are iron and brass.

*“If the sorrows of thy case
Seem peculiar still to thee,
God has promised needful grace,
‘As thy days, thy strength shall be.’”*

Shoes of iron remind us of military array — they are meant to fight with. Brethren, we are soldiers as well as pilgrims. These shoes are meant for trampling upon enemies. All sorts of deadly things lie in our way, and it is by the help of these shoes that the promise is made good. “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.” Are we not often too much like the young man Jether, who was bidden by his father to slay Zebah and Zalmunna, but he was afraid. We tremble to put our foot upon the neck of the enemy; we fancy that if we should attempt it, we should be guilty of presumption. Let us have done with this false humility, for thus we dishonor the Lord’s promise: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” Better far to say, “Through thee will we

push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.” Thus we may say without fear, for assuredly “The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly.”

“O my soul, thou has trodden down strength,” said the holy woman of old, when the adversaries of Israel had been routed. Thus can our exultant spirits also take up the chant. I also can say, “O my soul, thou has trodden down strength.” Yes, believer, with thy foot thou has crushed thy foe, even as thy Lord, who came on purpose that he might break with his foot, even with his bruised heel, the head of our serpent adversary. Be not afraid, therefore, in the day of conflict, to push onward against the foe. Do not be afraid to seize the victory which Christ has already secured for thee. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass” thou shalt trample down thy foe, and march unharmed to victory.

What a blessing it is when we get self under our feet! We shall have good use for iron shoes if we keep him there. What a mercy it is when you get a sinful habit under your feet! You will need have shoes of brass to keep it there. What a mercy it is when some temptation that you have long struggled with at last falls to the ground, and you can set your foot upon it! You need to have both of your shoes strengthened with iron, and hardened with brass, that you may bruise this spiritual enemy, and crush out its life. Feet shod with sound metal of integrity and firmness will be none too strong in this evil world, where so many, like serpents, are ready to bite at our heels. Only so shod shall we win the victory.

See, the Lord promises that we shall have shoes suitable alike for travelling and for trampling upon enemies!

Next, we have fit shoes for climbing. One interpreter thinks that the sole of the shoe was to be studded with iron or copper nails. Certainly, those who climb would not like to go with the smooth soles which suit us in our parlours and drawing-rooms. There are many instances where a rough tip of iron, or a strong nail in the heel of the shoe, has checked the slipping mountaineer when gliding over a shelving rock, and there he has stayed on the very brink of death. Our spiritual life is an upward climb, with constant danger of a fall. It is a great mercy to have shoes of iron and brass in our spiritual climbings, that should our feet be almost gone, we may find foothold before we are utterly cast down. We ought to climb: the higher our spiritual life the better. It is written of the believer, “He shall dwell on high.” We ought not to be satisfied till we reach the highest places of

knowledge, experience, and practice. High doctrine is glorious doctrine, high experience is blessed experience, high holiness is heavenly living. Many souls always keep in the plains: the simple elements are enough for them; and, thank God, they are enough for salvation and for comfort. But if you want the richest delight and the highest degree of grace, climb the hills and roam among the mysteries of God, the sublimer revelations of his divine will. Especially climb into the doctrines of grace: be not afraid of electing love, of special redemption, of the covenant, and all that is contained in it. Be not afraid to climb high, for if thy feet be dipped in the oil of grace, they shall also be so shod that they shall not slip. Trust in God, and you shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. Your shoes shall be iron and brass, for lofty thought and clear knowledge, if you commit your mind to the instruction of the Lord. Receiving nothing except as you find it in the Word, but in a childlike spirit receiving everything that you find there, you shall stand upon your high places. Your feet shall be like hinds' feet, and your place of abode shall be above the mists and clouds of earth's wretched atmosphere of doubt.

Rise, also, to the highest graces and the noblest virtues. As is the food we feed on, such should our actions be. Let us love, for God is love, and as dear children we must be imitators of him in all gentleness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Climb to the heights of self-denial, the summits of consecration. Be as near heaven as is possible for those who dwell on earth. Have you not the shoes to climb with? Wherefore tarry down below?

I will not press this longer upon you, for I hope that your hearts aspire to climb up where your Lord reveals himself in clearer light; but, lest you should be at all afraid of the climbing as the aged man is afraid of that which is high, I would arouse you to a holy bravery, since God has not given you shoes of iron and brass merely to trip over the plains. He means you to climb; your equipments prove it. Will you be as the children of Ephraim, who, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle? Will you be shod with iron, and melt like wax under a little heat of opposition?

Once more. These shoes are for travelling, for trampling, for climbing; they are also made of iron and brass for perseverance. You would not need such shoes for a little bit of a run — for a trip up the street and back again. Since the Lord has shod you in this fashion, it is a warning to you that the way is long and weary, and the end is not by-and-by. The Lord has

furnished you with shoes that will not wear out. “Old shoes and clouted” were good enough for Gibeonites, but they are not fit for Israelites. The Lord does not mean that you should be arrayed as beggars, or become lame through worn-out shoes. The sacred canticle, in one of its verses, saith, “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter!” The princes of the heavenly household shall be shod according to their rank and this shall be the case at the end of their journey as surely as at the beginning. Whether Israel traversed sand or rock, the camp never halted because the people had become lame; for the Lord had said “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” It is a good pair of shoes that lasts a man for forty years; yet there are some of us who can testify that God’s grace has furnished us with spiritual shoes of that kind. I can speak of nearly that length of time since I knew the Lord, and I bear my unhesitating witness that I have found the grace of God all-sufficient, and his promises most sure and steadfast.

If we are allowed to live till we touch the borders of a century, or if we even fulfill our hundred years, these shoes would never be too old. These are the sort of shoes that Enoch wore; and was it not for more than three hundred years that he walked with God? He was always walking, but his shoes of iron and brass were never worn out. It matters not, dear friend, how severe may be your trials and troubles, or how long may be your pilgrimage through this wilderness, God, who gives these extraordinary shoes, such as no other has ever fashioned, and such as men are not accustomed to wear, has in this provided you against the utmost of endurance, the extremity of suffering. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass” — does not this symbol signify the best, the strongest, the most lasting, and the most fitting provision for a pilgrimage of trial? Thy shoes shall last as long as thou shalt last. Thou shalt find them as good as new when thou art about to lie down on thy last bed, to be gathered to thy fathers. “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.”

I may be addressing some here that are very low in spirit: they fear that they shall not hold on their way, they are ready to halt, yea, ready to lie down in despair. I trust the way will hold you on when you can hardly hold on your way. May you hear the ring of your iron sandals, and be ashamed of cowardice. They should be iron men to whom God has given iron shoes. I would encourage you to go forward in the way, for you are, by God’s grace, made fit for travelling. You are not bare-footed, nor badly shod. You ought to go forward bravely, after your heavenly Father has put such

shoes as these upon your feet. You are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and you may trip lightly on your way; and again I say, though that way should be a very long one, you need not think that your provision for the way will fail you. Even to hoar hairs the Lord will be with you. He has made, and he will bear; even he will carry you. Your last days shall be better than your first days. Yea, you shall go from strength to strength through his abounding and faithful love.

I find great difficulty in speaking tonight, because of some failure of my voice; but the divine promise is so sweet that even when poorly uttered it has a music all its own. For fear my voice should quite fail me, I will hasten on to say a few words upon the second point. We have examined the shoes, now let us consider the strength.

II. "AS THY DAYS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE."

This provision is meant to meet weakness. The words carry a tacit hint to us that we have no strength of our own, but have need of strength from above. Our proud hearts need such a hint; for often we poor creatures begin to rely upon ourselves. Although we are weak as water, we get the notion that our own wit, or our own experience, may now suffice us, though once they might not have done so. But our best powers will not suffice us now, any more than in our youth. If we begin to rest in ourselves it will not be long before we find out our folly. The Lord will not let his people depend upon themselves: they may make the attempt, but, as sure as they are his people, he will empty them from vessel to vessel, and make them know that their fullness dwells in Christ, and not in themselves. Remember that, if you have a sense of weakness, you have only a sense of the truth. You are as weak as you think you are; you certainly do not exaggerate your own helplessness. The Savior has said "Without me, ye can do nothing"; and that is the full extent of what you can do. The Lord promises you strength, which he would have no need to promise you if you had it naturally apart from him. But he promises to give it, and therein he assures you that you need it. Come down from your self-esteem: stoop from the notion of your own natural ability: divest yourself of the foolish idea that you can do anything in and of yourself, and come down to the strong for strength, and ask your Lord to fulfill this promise in your experience, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The strength which is here promised is to abide through days. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Not for today only, but for tomorrow, and

for every day as every day shall come. The longest and the shortest day, the brightest and the darkest day, the wedding and the funeral day, shall each have its strength measured out, till there shall be no more days. The Lord will portion out to his saints their support even as their days follow each other.

*“Days of trial, days of grief,
In succession thou may’st see;
This is still thy sweet relief,
‘As thy day, thy strength shall be.’”*

This strength is to be given daily We shall never have two days’ grace at a time.

*“Day by day the manna fell:
Oh, to learn this lesson well,
‘Day by day’ the promise reads:
Daily strength for daily needs!”*

If I get strength enough to get through this sermon, I shall be satisfied for the present. I do not want strength to get through next Sabbath morning’s sermon till that Sabbath morning comes. If I can weather the present storm, I shall not just now require the strength to outlive the storms of all the year 1889. What should I do with this reserve force if I had it? Where would you store away your extra grace? You would put it in the lumber-room of your pride, where it would breed worms, and become an offense. A storage of what you call “grace” would turn into self-sufficiency. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be”: this secures you a day’s burden and a day’s help, a day’s sorrow and a day’s comfort. After all, what more do we want? If a man has a meal, let him give thanks for it: he does not want two meals at once. If a man has enough for the day, he certainly is not yet in want for tomorrow. He cannot eat tomorrow’s food today; or, if he did, it would injure his health, and be no comfort to him. Let us narrow our vision as to the necessities of daily life, not looking so far ahead as to compress into today more evil than naturally belongs to it; for “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Our strength is to be given to us daily.

And then the text seems to say clearly that it will be given to us proportionately, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” A day of little service, little strength; a day of little suffering, little strength; but in a tremendous day — a day that needs thee to play the Samson — thou shalt have Samson’s strength. A day of deep waters in which thou shalt need to

swim, shall be a day in which thou shalt ride the billows like a sea- bird. Do you not think that this might almost tempt us to wish for days of great trial, in order that we might receive great grace? If we are always to go smoothly, and to receive but little grace in consequence, we shall never rise to the great things of the divine life. We shall be dwarfs, and none shall say, "There were giants in those days." We may not wish to be always children, with boyish tasks and childish duties; it is right we should grow, and that in consequence we should shoulder burdens from which youthful backs are exempt. Who would wish to be always a little child? Great grace will be sent to us to meet our great necessities. And is not that a most desirable thing? I remember that for a long season the Lord was very gracious to me in the matter of funds for the extensive works which I have been called upon to originate and superintend, and I felt very grateful for the ease which I enjoyed; yet it crossed my mind that I was learning less of God than in more trying seasons, and I trembled. Years gone by there were considerable necessities which did not appear to be met at once, and I went with them to God in prayer, and I trusted him, and he supplied my needs in such a wonderful way that I seemed to have the closest intercourse with him. I could most plainly see his hand stretched out to help me. I could see him working for me as gloriously as if he wrought miracles. These were glorious days with me! I cannot tell you what holy wonder often filled my soul when the Lord interposed on behalf of the Orphanage or the College. The record reads so charmingly that unbelievers would never accept it as true. Then God made me by grace like one who steps from the summit of one mountain to another: I stepped across the valleys, leaving the deep places far below. So in my easy seasons I thought to myself, "Everything comes in regularly and abundantly. I am like a little child walking along a smooth lawn. This is but a common, ordinary state of affairs, in which even a man of no faith could pursue his way. I do not see so much of God, though assuredly I ought to see him as clearly now as ever." I did not wish for necessities, but I remembered how the Lord glorified himself in them, and therefore I half desired them. The regular blessing day by day, almost without need of special prayer, does not constrain you to look to God so vividly as when you gaze down into the deep, dark abyss of want, and feel, "If he does not help me now, I shall soon be in dire distress." This forces forth the living prayer." Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." Our great necessities bring God so very near to us, so manifest to our consciousness, that they are an unspeakable blessing. So I did not ask to have a time of need; I hope that I

shall never be so foolish as that; but when I found a time of need hurrying up, as I soon did, I felt a special delight in it — I took pleasure in my necessities. My heart cried,” Now I shall see my Lord; now I shall see him again. Now I shall get a hold of that great arm, and hang upon it, and I shall see how the Lord will deliver me in time of need.” I did thus lay hold upon my Lord again, and I found him still God All-sufficient, for which I bless his name. In proportion as he sends the trial he sends the help. Be not, therefore, afraid of great trial: on the contrary, look for it, and when it comes, say to yourselves, “Now for great grace. Now for a special manifestation of the faithfulness of God.”

Mark, again, that strength will be given to us in all forms. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Our days vary, our trials change; our service varies, too. Our lives are far from being monotonous: they are musical with many notes and tones. Our present state is like chequered work: or, say, as a mosaic of many colors. But the strength that God gives varies with the occasion. He can bestow physical strength, and mental strength, and moral strength, and spiritual strength. He gives strength just where the strength is needed, and of that peculiar kind which the trial demands. We have no need to fear because we feel weak in a certain direction: if we need strength in that special quarter, the strength will come there. “But if I am tried,” says one, “in a certain way, I shall fail.” No, you will not. “As your days, so shall your strength be.” “I am horrified,” says one, “at the thought of having to pass through the ordeal of a surgical operation.” Do not be horrified at it; for though at the present moment you may be quite unfit for the trial, you will be quite ready for it when it comes. Have you never been in great danger and found yourself cool and calm beyond anything you could have expected? It has been so with me, and I have learned from my experience, not to measure what I shall be, in a trying hour, by what I happen to be just now. The Lord will take care to fit us for our future, and, as our days, so shall our strength be.

I find that some persons read this passage thus — when our days grow many, and we come to the end, yet our strength shall be equal to what it was in the days of our youth. We shall, according to this, find our strength continuing as our days continue. It is a cheering meaning, certainly. The children of God do find that, spiritually, their strength is renewed day by day. The outer man decayeth, that is nature: but the inward man is renewed day by day, that is grace. As thy days are, so shall thy strength continue to be. “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall

utterly fail: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Though days come one after another, so shall strength come with them; there shall be such a continuity of perpetual renewal that the heart shall be strong even to the end of life, and the old man shall know no inward decay.

An hour or so ago, I stood by what will certainly be the death-bed of one of our best friends, and I was cheered and comforted when I heard him so blessedly speaking both of the present with its pain, and of the future with its near descent into the vale of death. He said, "I have no doubt as to my eternal bliss. I have had no doubt — no, not a shadow of doubt — of my interest in Christ through my long illness. In fact, I have felt a perfect rest of mind about it all. And," he added, "this is nothing more than ought to be, with us who listen to the glorious gospel, for we live on good spiritual meat. Sound doctrine should make us strong in the Lord. I have not been a hearer of yours for thirty years, and heard of covenant love and faithfulness, to die with a trembling hope. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Thus, dear friends, shall we also be supported, for the brother of whom I speak is a simple-minded man, who makes no pretensions to learning, but is one of our own selves. It will be a great privilege to find that when death's days come — the days of sickness, and decline, and weakness, yet still our strength remains the same. It will be glorious to go from strength to strength, and even in the day of utter physical prostration to find the spirit leaping for joy, in anticipation of the time when it shall be free from the cumbering clay, and shall stretch its wings and fly aloft to yonder world of joy. Yes, as our days our strength shall be.

Come, child of God, be peaceful, be happy in the prospect of the future. Do more, be joyous, and show your joy. You are out of harm's reach, for Christ has you in his hand. You shall never be staggered nor overcome, for the Lord is your strength and your song, and he has become your salvation. This text is a royal banquet for you. Here are fat things full of marrow. Eat abundantly, O beloved. Feel your spirit renewed by the Holy Spirit. Be prepared for whatever is yet to come; for such a word as this, not from me, but from the Lord himself, may gird up your loins for another march towards Canaan; "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

I am sorry, very sorry, for those among you who have no portion and lot in such a promise as this. Whatever you may have in this world, you are very

poor in losing such a promise as this. You are shoeless, or if you have some wooden sabot, it will soon be worn out. You will never be able to travel to heaven in any shoes that mortal men can make for you. You need to go to the great Father, who alone can say, "Put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." I am sorry for you in your present condition, for you have no strength but your own, and that is a poor piece of weakness. You are troubled even now: what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The common footmen of daily life have wearied you: what will you do when you have to contend with horses? O souls, what will you do when you are ushered into the presence of the dread mysteries of another world? O sirs, you are without strength; but is not that a grand verse, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? Ungodly as you are, clutch at such a word as that. "Without strength" as you are, yet lay hold upon the Lord's strength. It is for those who have no strength that Christ came into the world. It is for the ungodly that he laid down his life. Come, and trust him. Let him become your strength and your righteousness from this time forth; and may he manifest himself to you in a special and gracious way; and unto his name shall be praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Psalm 37.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —
686, 89 (PART II), 46 (VERS. 1.)**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED READERS, — To you, one and all, may the New Year be fruitful of blessings. I wish you the text of this sermon as a benediction, so far as it is applicable to you. Specially may your feet be shod with the iron and brass which are promised you, and this will be better than the glass slippers of fortune, or the silver sandals of wealth. For myself, I beg your kind remembrance when you have the ear of "the King." I need restored strength, for I am well, but weak; and for another year of service I need that the right hand of the Lord may be laid upon me, and that he should say to me, "Be strong: fear not." He that has supplied might to our feebleness for so many years will not fail us now. Week by week the loaf will be set before you in this sermon, and we shall together bless the Lord of the feast.

With all the good wishes of the season, in sincerity and truth,

I am, your weekly visitor,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Jan 1st, 1889.

THE FILLING OF EMPTY VESSELS.

NO. 2063

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
JANUARY 13TH, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Even empty vessels; borrow not a few.”-2 Kings 4:3.

IT is needful that we read the whole story:-”Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.”

The best of men may die in poverty: here is the widow of a prophet left in destitution. We must not hastily censure those who leave their families unprovided for: circumstances may have rendered it impossible for the bread-winner to do more than supply the pressing wants of the hour. Yet assuredly it is sad to see the widow of so worthy a man in such straits! A

widow, and the widow of a prophet of the Lord , our concern for her is tender.

Her husband had been among the persecuted, and having been, by oppression, deprived of all that he had, it came to pass that when he died he left his wife and children in distress: from which I gather, that holy men may be in the worst of circumstances, and yet it will be no proof that the Lord has forsaken them. We may not judge a person's character by his position in life. Certainly, poverty is no sign of grace, for there are many who bring themselves to it by their own wickedness; but on the other hand, wealth is no sign of divine favor, for many there be who will have their portion in this life only, and have no inheritance in the life everlasting. As a general rule piety is more often found among the poor than among the rich; and in persecuting times, it is almost of absolute necessity that a clean conscience should involve poverty. Let this encourage any here who are just now very low in circumstances. You are where prophets and saints have been. God can lift you up, and would do so if it were really for your good. Be more concerned to act like a Christian in your present condition than to escape from it. Remember, however poor you are, your Master was poorer, and that whatever else you have not, you still have a share in his love. Seek to be rich in faith if you be poor in all besides. You can honor God much in your present condition, you can learn much in it, you can prove much the divine faithfulness, you can exercise much sympathy towards others; therefore be not impatient. Since other men both greater and better than you have trodden this rough road, bow before the determination of God's providence, and ask for grace to be patient under your affliction.

This sorrowing widow, when she found herself in great poverty, and likely to lose her two sons, went to God in her trouble. She hastened to God's prophet, for that was the way in which broken hearts would then speak to God in special trials; and it was a way with which, as a prophet's widow, she was well acquainted. But now we have another Mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous, and every Christian in trouble should take his burden to his God in Christ Jesus. We readily enough tell our friends and neighbors, and it is natural we should, for the human mind wants sympathy; but faith would teach us that there is no sympathy equal to that of the man Christ Jesus, and there is no power to help equal to that of the heavenly Father. Let us, therefore, never forget to unload our burden at the foot of the cross. We should first tell our troubles to our best friend. We should go to

Jesus first, to Jesus with child-like reliance upon his power to help. The woman went to the prophet. Let us go to our greater prophet, even Jesus, our Lord, without hesitation or delay.

God was pleased to ordain by his servant a way of escape for the poor woman. The little oil that she had in the house was to be multiplied till there should be enough, when sold, to pay her debts with; from which I gather that if in our distress we take our trouble to God he will deliver us. This woman is not a solitary instance: she is one of a great multitude for whom the Lord has wrought graciously. It is the rule of God's providence that his children should cry to him in the day of trouble, and that he should be gracious to them and deliver them. Rest assured that the Lord, who daily provides for the millions of fish in the sea, and the myriads of birds in the air, will not suffer his own children to perish for lack of the things of this life. He cares for a glowworm on a damp bank, and for a fly in a lone wood, and he will never neglect the children of his own house. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me," said one of old, and so may the humblest still say. Whether your trouble be about temporals or spirituals, if you leave that trouble with God, cry to him in prayer, walk in his fear, and trust in his name, sooner or later, in sonic way or other, he must make for you a way of escape. Other friends may fail you; but the Lord God never can. Other promises may turn out to be mere wind, but faithful is he that has promised this to you, and he also will do it. In six troubles he will be with you, and in seven there shall no evil touch you. You shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. How happy might we be if we really and practically believed this, and acted upon it.

Yet the Lord allowed his handmaid to be very sorely pressed. She could not secure delay nor make any fair terms with the hard creditor. He was already in the house, and he would be satisfied with nothing less than both her sons. She was so reduced, that she had nothing in the house but a single pot of oil: what could she do? She had hoped for deliverance, but now the night of utter misery was coming on, and she saw no light. Beloved, it has been the same with many of the Lord's tried ones, and it may be the same with you. The Lord does not promise to rescue us in our time, nor to save us from waiting; rather does he see it to be right to try our faith and patience, for our good and for his own glory. Wherefore, I say to you whose turn seems to conic last, be strong to wait, and do not

dishonor the Lord by unbelief. Waiting in faith is a high form of worship, which, in some respects, excels the adoration of the shining ones above.

But the way in which this woman was delivered was one which proved and exercised and strengthened her faith. She had to go and borrow empty vessels of her neighbors. That was a strange proceeding, empty oil jars would seem to be useless lumber in her house. Her neighbors, also, might make remarks upon her singular conduct. She had to shut the door, that no curious eyes might watch her, and she had then, with full confidence in God, to take her one pot of oil and go on pouring out from it into the empty vessels till they were all filled. Unbelief might have said to her, "That is a wild proceeding! How can you fill these vessels out of that one little jar? There is but very little oil to begin with, and certainly that cannot be enough to fill all these borrowed jars. The prophet has mocked you; he is exposing you to the jests and jeers of all your neighbors." But her faith, when exercised, was equal to the emergency. She did what she was commanded to do: she did it in faith; and the result answered the end. God takes care to deliver his servants in ways that exercise their faith. He would not have them be little in faith, for faith is the wealth of the heavenly life. He desires that the trial of faith should be carried on till faith grows strong, and comes to full assurance. The sycamore fig never ripens into sweetness unless it is bruised, and the same is true of faith. Expect, O tried believer, that God will bring you through, but do not expect him to bring you through in the way that human reason would suggest, for that would provide no development for faith. Be not laying tracks for God:

***"He plants his footsteps in the sea,
Provide no chariots for the Eternal One:
"He rides upon the storm."***

God has a way of his own. He doeth his wonders as he pleaseth. Be you content often to stand still and see the salvation of God. Be you ready to obey him, and that will be far more in accordance with your position as a finite creature than the vain attempt to map out a course for your Creator. Keep you to the obeying, and rest assured he will not be behindhand with the providing.

These are the general lessons which we learn from the history.

Now I intend to take the narrative, and especially the two or three words I have culled out of it, and use it for instructive purposes as the Holy Spirit

shall help me; first, in reference to the grace that is in Christ Jesus: secondly, in reference to the mercy-seat: and thirdly, in reference to the Holy Spirit.

I. There is teaching in this narrative, first of all IN REFERENCE TO THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS. Let me show you this. The woman was to get together empty vessels: these were to be set in her room. All these empty vessels were filled. As long as there were any empty vessels left, the oil kept flowing in till they were all filled to the brim. When they were all filled she asked for one more, but there was not another empty one; and then the oil stayed, but not till then. We will use this as an emblem of spiritual things, and this one verse shall interpret our symbol.

*“Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”*

As long as there is one of God’s people unsaved, as long as there is a seeking, repenting sinner yet unpardoned, there will be found to be merit in the Savior still to flow out, till every vessel that needs to be filled with mercy shall be filled, and that to the very brim.

Now in this case notice first of all what was required. In this miracle all that was required was empty vessels. This is precisely all that Jesus Christ requires of us, that we be to himself and his divine fullness as empty vessels. The grace is with him, not with us; just as the oil was in the woman’s one pot, and not in the empty vessels. Suppose that one of her neighbors had said to herself, when the boy came to borrow the vessels, “Poor woman, she modestly asks for an empty oil jar, but I will send her in a full one to help her.” The lad joyfully accepts the offer, and takes home a jar full of oil. When his mother is pouring out the oil, the boy brings the vessel. She looks at it, and it is full. “My child,” says she, “this is of no use to me; it is full, and we cannot fill again what is full already.” It might have been a great loss to her, for the oil might have been of poor quality, and you may be sure that what the Lord made was the best oil that ever was known. So, if there be one person in this world who is by nature full of merit; if there be a man in the world that does not want mercy, that has enough natural goodness to save him, why Christ cannot do anything for him, and he cannot be of any use as a receiver of grace. As long as the man

is full of himself, there is no room for Jesus Christ. It is well said by our hymn,

***“None are excluded hence
But those who do themselves exclude.”***

Our own supposed fullness shuts us out from receiving Christ’s fullness. It must be so. You will remember the story of the ploughman and Mr. Hervey. The ploughman asked Mr. Hervey what he thought was the greatest hindrance to men’s salvation. Mr. Hervey replied, “Sinful self.” “No,” said the ploughman, “I think righteous self is a greater hindrance to men’s salvation than sinful self. They that are sinful will come to Christ for pardon, but they that think they are righteous never will.” The full oil jar can hold no more. A deserving sinner (if such a person could exist) would be of no use to the Savior, and the Savior could be of no use to him.

Another jar is brought, and the boy, as he looks into it, finds that his mother’s oil does not flow into it. She is holding the miraculous jar over the vessel, just as she did with the rest, but the oil does not flow. “What aileth this vessel, my child?” saith she. And they begin to shake it. There is some oil left at the bottom. The neighbor thought who sent it, “Well, I won’t pour it all out. Poor souls! it will be a good thing for them if I leave a little in it.” The mother says to the boy, “The oil won’t run in because there is some oil in the jar already; turn it out, my son, turn out the last drop, for I was bidden to use empty vessels, and this is not empty, and nothing can be done with it.” When that is done, the oil begins to flow freely, till the pot is full to the brim. Now, as long as there is anything good left in any of you, upon which you place your trust, the grace of our Lord Jesus will not run into you. Empty vessels! Remember this. Emptiness is eligibility. Want of natural goodness proves your need of God’s grace, and that need is your capacity to receive.

Some will say, “Truly, I have no good works in the past; but then, I have good resolves for the future. I am going to be what I should be.” Are these resolutions formed in your own strength? These also will impede the inflow of the heavenly oil. It is when we are without strength that salvation comes to us. Ah, friend! if you can save yourself, Christ will not save you. Again I remind you that you must be emptied of self in all forms ere grace can fill you.

“No,” saith one, “I don’t trust altogether to my good resolutions, but I am going to pledge myself to this, and make a bond to the other, and that will help me.” My Lord Jesus does not want your help. Abstain, resolve, repent, advance, do what you will; but do not join these poor things to his great salvation. Give up once for all depending upon what you have done, even when you have done all: as an unprofitable servant quit all claims of wage and appeal to mercy only. Dismiss the proud notion of containing anything in yourself which comes of your fallen nature, and yet can be acceptable with God. Do you think there is some good thing in you, some strength, something that you can do, or be, that will help Jesus Christ? I do assure you nothing can check the flow of grace like an uprise of such a notion. Empty buckets are fittest for the well of grace: these shall be filled while the full ones stand idle at the well’s mouth.

But there is another oil jar that is empty, quite empty. Smell it; there is not a trace of oil. It is long since it had anything in it. You put your finger round the rim, but nothing adheres to it. It is dry, very dry, it is long since there was any oil there. See! As soon as the woman begins to hold the pot over it, the oil runs into the empty jar; and it fills to the brim, large as it is. O poor soul, if thou feelest to-night that thou art a lost, ruined, empty, undone sinner, that is just what Jesus wants! There is a full Christ for empty sinners, but none for those who are full of themselves. If you are so empty as to have no trace of good about you, Jesus will not therefore leave you unblest. If you are saying, “But I don’t feel as I should; I don’t think as I should; I don’t weep as I should,” this only proves how empty you are; and into all this natural emptiness of yours the superabounding grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will flow till it fills you, and overflows to his praise. Oh, that by an act of faith you would receive what Jesus so freely gives to as many as will receive him! That is all the empty sinner has to do: “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” All that the Savior wants of us is our need of being saved, and our acceptance of his salvation. Come along with you! O Lord, I pray thee bring them under the silent but copious flow of the holy oil, even now.

Now, observe what followed. In this miracle, as soon as the empty vessels were brought, the oil flowed till they were full, of whatever size they might be. One neighbor lent a little jar, another a large one; but they were all filled. So, when a sinner receives of Jesus, he shall receive all the grace he wants till he is full. “Ye are complete in him.” “Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” O soul, if you believe in Jesus you shall find

in him grace to pardon you, grace to change your nature, grace to keep that nature changed, grace to preserve you till you are perfect, grace to help you till you are brought home to glory. Christ freely gives everything a sinner wants between the gates of hell and the gates of paradise. He does not half fill, but he makes the soul to say, "My cup runneth over." He is no half Savior: he is a perfect Redeemer from the ruin of the Fall. O thou empty, needy sinner, come and take a full and all-sufficient Savior, and be blessed for ever!

What was the space in which the miracle endured. How long did this oil continue to flow? That is a point worth noticing. It flowed as long as any empty vessel could be brought; and the command was, "borrow not a few." I know to-night how many souls Christ will bless. He will bless as many souls as are empty, and are placed beneath the flow of his divine grace. That he filleth the hungry with good things is always the rule; and the other rule is equally sure-the rich he sendeth empty away. We know how long Christ will continue to save sinners. It is as long as any needy sinner comes to him to be saved. If there were no sinners on earth there would be no room for the Savior on earth. If there were no guilty ones, there would be no need for his pardoning blood; if there were no filthy ones, there would be no need of the fountain in which they might be cleansed; but as long as there exists an empty, penniless, poverty-stricken soul, that longs and yearns after a precious Christ, there is a precious Christ for that poor, longing, needy soul. I feel inclined to cry with the woman in the narrative, "Bring me yet another vessel." There are many here whom Christ has filled with his grace-glory be to his name for it! But is there not yet another vessel before me? Oh, it is sweet preaching to the sinner who is made to feel he is a sinner. There is no such successful preaching in the world. We might be content to preach till midnight if we knew we preached to those who greatly needed a Savior, and were longing for him, for such hearts are like the wax that is ready for the seal. When you want Jesus, you shall have Jesus; and the deeper your needs become, the more ready will you be to accept the finished salvation which he freely gives to all who need it. "Bring me yet a vessel." Don't tell me, "There is not a vessel more," for I am sure there must be many more. Our Lord has not come to the end of the vessels yet; there are many more to be filled. We do not live in an age when all the elect are gathered in, when all the redeemed are brought home. There are plenty of empty vessels still about. I

pray that they may be brought to the fullness of our Redeemer, and be filled to the brim.

I have used a very simple method of preaching the gospel in thus talking; but, simple as it is, there are a great many who will not understand it. Let me just rehearse it again. You have broken God's law, and you are lost. The only way in which you can get forgiveness is through the merit of Jesus, and that he will freely give you if you simply come and confess your sin, and take him to be your all in all. Adore his mercy, magnify his love, accept his grace, yield to the working of his Holy Spirit, and you are saved. Be you an empty vessel beneath the outflowing of a full Christ. Do not try to be a full one, nor a half full one; but be you an empty vessel, and Christ will fill you. He will not miss one of you that is empty, for his desire is to bless you. He delights in it: he longs for it. Do you be dead, and let him be your life. Be you the beggar, and let him be your riches. Be you sick, and let him be your health. Be you lost, and let him be your Savior. Be you nothing, and let him be your all in all. This, indeed, is faith, to sink the creature in the Creator; to sink self in a Savior; to be lost in ourselves, and to be saved in his righteousness, Oh, that I could lead your hearts into the truth, that we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. Come, empty pitcher, stand beneath the flowing fountain, and it will surely fill you. Do you understand me? The Lord make you to prove that you do so by your practical compliance with my exhortation.

II. I shall further use the text in another way, IN REFERENCE TO ANSWERS TO PRAYER. My conviction is, brethren, that we do not pray enough. I do not, by this remark, measure our prayers by time, but I mean that we do not ask enough of God. We are not straitened in him, but we are often straitened in ourselves. The prophet's advice to the woman was, "Borrow empty vessels"-notice the next word-"borrow not a few." It was needful thus to urge her to large things. Covetous men need restraining, but in asking of the Lord, our hearts need enlarging. This godly widow had the blessing now at her disposal to increase or diminish. If she borrowed few vessels, she would have but little oil; if she borrowed many vessels they should all be filled, and she should have much oil. She was herself to measure out what she should have; and I believe that you and I, in the matter of spiritual blessings from God, have more to do with the measurement of our mercies than we think. We make our blessings little, because our prayers are little.

I will take two points-prayers about ourselves, and prayers about others.

Concerning ourselves. Brethren, some have never brought their sins and prevalent temptations before God. One man has a hasty temper, which he says he cannot overcome. He must overcome it, if he is to be saved from sin; and what he should do is to treat his wretched temper like an empty vessel, and bring it before the Lord. He needs that his temper should be cured; let him bring it to the Healer, whose cooling touch can remove this fever. I say again, his quick temper is an empty vessel for him to set before the giver of all grace, that he may fill it with sweetness and meekness. I know one whom I trust is a child of God; but, alas! he has been carried away by folly, and has dishonored the Christian name; so that now he is in deep despair, and thinks he never can be saved. I fear his despair is only another form of rebellion against divine love. If he could have faith to bring his peculiar temptation before God as well as every other, it would be overcome for him. There is no sin which the grace of God cannot subdue in us. We must not say that such and such a sin is constitutional, and, therefore, we cannot overcome it; it must be overcome, and the grace of God can do it. Bring you this empty vessel, and set it down where Jesus can come into contact with it.

Perhaps, with some of you, your special trial is not so much a sin as a lack of spiritual attainment. You are still only babes in Christ. You hear of some that have gained high degrees of grace, that have become matrons in the church, or champions in Israel. My dear friends, do not suppose that these attainments are beyond your reach. Do you want them? Would they not be honorable to God, and a blessing to you? Well, then, ask for them. Set these empty vessels beneath the dropping of the divine oil, and you shall have these boons granted to you. In the matter of grace, he is poor that will be poor; but he that desires to be rich, and has faith in God, may be rich. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Oh, if we do not get from God's fullness great supplies, it is because we are not greatly receptive nor greatly expectant; but if, like this woman, we get many empty vessels, we shall have them all filled!

Suppose she had brought a number of empty vessels into the house, but she had not used them, and the oil had stayed. She would have been a very foolish woman. But are not many of us quite as foolish? We have a great many cares, cares about our boys and girls, cares about our business, cares about household concerns; but we do not bring these cares to God: we feel

as if they were too little to mention to him. This is so absurd that I will have no more to do with such a sinful silence. Let us tell it all to Jesus; or else the case stands thus-You have your empty vessels, and you will not bring them to be filled. Why will you be so wickedly foolish? When the Lord bids you cast your care upon him, for he careth for you, why not cast it there? Why will you carry your sin, your need, your care? These cares are different sets of empty vessels for the grace of God to fill. Oh, why, my brethren, why have we not larger desires and broader expectations, that according to our faith it may be done unto us? The angel of mercy sometimes flies around the tents of God's people, and he bears with him a cornucopia full of the precious blessing that maketh rich. Oftentimes he stays at a tent, hovering on soft wings, while the sleeper rests: he looks around the tent, but does not see a single empty vessel into which to pour the benediction, and he goes on his way. By-and-by he lights on another tent, where, before the dwellers went to sleep, they set out in their evening prayer a number of empty vessels. He takes his horn of plenteous mercy, and he fills one vessel, and then another; and when they wake, they are surprised with the rich grace which has abounded towards them, Some have feeble wishes, small desires, slender prayers-hardly any prayers at all-and "they have not, because they ask not." Others have large desires, earnest prayers, great faith, large expectations, and God gives them according to their faith, and they are enriched. Oh, for many empty vessels to be set forth in this church, both night and day, that God's mercy may abound in the congregation!

The same is true with regard to prayers for others. We ought to treat others as if they were empty vessels for us to use, so as to glorify God in their salvation. I wish you would take me, and treat me as an empty vessel, and pray that I may be filled with heaven's own oil. It is of no use hoping to get good out of a ministry if you do not pray for it. As a rule, I believe congregations get out of a minister what they put into him; that is to say, if they pray much for him, God will give him much blessing for them. Those persons who come up to the house of God, and take their seats, and expect their souls to be filled, when they have never prayed that God will help the minister, and bless the sermon, may not expect to be visited with grace. Pray for all ministers, and all workers for Christ; make them like empty vessels, and ask the Lord to fill them.

Christian people should do the same with their children and relatives. If our children are not converted, is it not, in some cases, the fact that we have

not prayed for them as we should? We have not brought them before God in supplication, and if they remain unconverted and worldly, how can we wonder? Let us not leave the empty vessels unfilled. Come, friends, think of the unconverted at home. You have still some unsaved ones, mention them again and again in prayer by name, and cease not to pray; for Christ's grace ceases not to flow, and the efficacy of prayer is not stayed. Do not cease to pray till all the family is converted, till there is not another vessel left. Let us do the same with our neighbors. Are we sufficiently earnest before God with regard to them? Might we not expect to see a great change in London, if the districts wherein we dwell were oftener on our hearts in prayer? You have heard of the great revival which followed Jonathan Edwards' marvellous sermon upon "Sinners in the hand of an angry God." That sermon was marvellous in its effects. The power of that sermon may be traced to this fact, that a number of Christian people had met together some days before, and prayed, that God would send a blessing with the minister who was to preach on that occasion. Their prayer put power into Jonathan Edwards' sermon, and so sinners were converted. If we were to take up villages, and hamlets, and towns, and pray for them with earnest, believing faith, God might prosper instrumentalities that are now unblessed, and ministers who are now sowing seed that never springs up, might have to tell of a joyful harvest. They might not know the reason; but those who prevailed with God would be able to solve the riddle. Prayer to the Most High would be a quiet setting of the empty vessel under the running oil, and without noise it would be filled. Let us see what we can do in this matter. Do you hesitate? When you have the keys of heaven at your girdle; will you not use them? When God puts the whole treasury of his grace into the keeping of our faith, shall we let that grace be unused for want of earnestness? When he says to us, "There is carte-blanche for you; ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you," shall we not open our mouths widely? If the Lord promises that when two agree as touching anything concerning his kingdom, he will grant it to us; why let us agree at once. What! will you not fill up these cheques which God has signed, and left blank for you? Will you fill them up for pence, or for trifling sums, when the infinite exchequer of God is laid open to you? O saints of God, be not straitened in yourselves, since God does not straiten you! Bring in the empty vessels, and bring in not a few.

III. Once more. I shall use the text in a third way of application IN REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. There was a time in certain churches, when, if there were a few converted to God, say thirty or forty at a time, the older friends would hold up their hands, not in astonishment exactly, but in utter unbelief; for they thought some undue influence or improper excitement must have been present to bring out such a crowd. I recollect having to deal with those who would say, "We had one baptism in ten years, under the solid doctrinal teaching of our former pastor. We had a sound divine, and we were sound ourselves (and sound asleep, too!); but see what a hurry we are now in! There have been twenty persons professing to be converted in one month!" The good brethren have added, "We hope you will be very cautious. Don't receive them too fast. There is a deal of excitement abroad, and we must be judicious and watchful, for when the excitement passes away a terrible reaction may set in!" One good old lady I know of used to say sarcastically that she hoped the church would take care that the back door was easy to open, for she was quite sure that if so many came in at the front, there would be a good number who would soon have to be turned out at the back. I am half afraid that she hoped it would be so to justify her criticisms. When there were only two or three in a twelvemonth, our friends ascribed the work to the Holy Spirit: anything little was of the Holy Spirit. But if the number of converts rose to thirty or forty, and especially if it came to three hundred, that was mere excitement. When the minister had to ransack the congregation to find a few who could be drawn into the church to make his work look decent, that was the Holy Spirit; but when converts came pouring in by hundreds, oh, then everyone was frightened lest it should be fleshly excitement! Dear brethren, is not this absurd? Do not these people act on the very reverse principle of the prophet's widow. They say, "Bring very few vessels, vessels very few. Suppose some of them should not be filled! There is oil enough for one or two: do not bring more, for fear of failure in such cases. If we see the oil filling hundreds of vessels, then we say it cannot be oil, it must be some vile imitation- of it. We cannot expect it can all be good oil if so many vessels are filled with it." The fact is, there are some who do not believe the Holy Spirit to be great, nor yet to be good. They have an idea that he is not God after all; for if they believed him to be God, surely they would expect him to do great things in this world, and they would look to see another Pentecost, in which thousands would cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Instead of thinking that the period of revival through which we may have passed was anything in its

greatness beyond what the Holy Spirit was likely to do, I believe, brethren, it was insignificant compared with what the Holy Spirit is able and willing to accomplish. If we should live to see a genuine revival of the best kind, we should see greater things than these. I hope that when the Holy Ghost comes with power, and works with his truth-as he will when we fully believe in him and obey him-we shall then hear sermons preached which shall be the means of conversion of a whole Tabernacle full at once. I hope to hear that in every chapel-in every place of worship in London-the Word of God has had free course, and has been glorified. I hope to hear of places crowded first with one congregation, and then with another, which had been waiting to come in. I hope that thousands will be in hot haste to find the Savior. Why not? You are settling down to think that this congregation is very great and very wonderful; and so indeed it is. Where else will you see these thousands constantly assembled? I trust the day will come when hundreds of houses like this shall be crowded from floor to ceiling, and the cry shall be heard from tens of thousands, "Come over and help us, and tell us what the blood of Christ can do for us." God grant this not in England only. We must not fancy that the heathen are to be converted at the slow pace they have been. The population of heathendom has increased at a far greater rate than the number of converts to Christianity. When the increase does come, it will come in a different style from this-in a Godlike way. Shall a nation be born at once? Perhaps it shall be so? Why not? The Spirit of God is not straitened; and when faith comes back to the church, and she brings her many empty vessels, then the Spirit of God that is in her shall graciously multiply his divine work, and all the empty nations shall be filled. England, the United States, France, Prussia, Russia, Italy, Spain, Hindostan, China, Arabia, shall all be filled to the brim with the outpouring of God's eternal Spirit, and myriads shall be saved by the precious blood of Jesus.

I would encourage my brother and sister workers here to look for great things, and go to work vigorously, because they have an omnipotent God behind them. Brethren, push forward, undeterred by discouragement. You do not know, my dear sister, what you can do; but make a bold attempt. Your tiny spark may set a county on a blaze. My dear young brother, you do not know what you can accomplish; put it to the test in all earnestness, and you will be surprised at yourself. The Lord can make use of poor nothings to achieve glorious purposes. It is not your strength, it is his strength that is to do the work. That strength can lay hold on you, and do

such exploits as shall make the world to shake beneath what seemed to be your feebleness, but what shall turn out to be divine strength. Have faith in God, believe him to be true, and omnipotent, and we shall see greater things than these. Alas, we fail because we do not believe! If the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth? I fear me he would discover, but here and there, a grain of mustard seed. May he grant to many of us that heroic faith, which, believing in God, thinks nothing of difficulties, and does not believe in impossibilities, but does the right, and preaches the truth, and expects God to bless it above what we can ask or even think. May God bless you, and may the first part of my subject be last in your recollection; if you are empty vessels, come to Christ and be filled. May he fill you with his grace to-night for his mercy sake! Amen, and Amen.

DEAR FRIENDS,-I cannot write a letter to go with the sermon to-day, for I am too full of pain to command my thoughts: but I send this painful line. I was getting on admirably; but last Sunday afternoon I slipped upon a marble staircase, and fell a considerable distance. I thought I had escaped with the loss of two teeth, and a bruised knee: but the knee is a more serious business than I thought. I am a close prisoner, and my pain is by no means a trifle. Please ask that I may have a full share of patience, and praise God that it is not worse. I hope soon to be restored, not only to health, but also to my beloved people and my happy work. At present I am helpless and much bruised. Even this is among the "all things" which work together for good.

Yours most heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

MENTONE, JAN. 3RD, 1889.

ESSENTIAL POINTS IN PRAYER.

NO. 2064

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
JANUARY 20TH, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEB. 10TH, 1887.

“The Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”- 1 Kings 9:2, 3.

BELOVED friends, it was an exceedingly encouraging thing to Solomon that the Lord should appear to him before the beginning of his great work of building the temple. See in the third chapter of this First Book of the Kings, at the fifth verse, “In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.” Some of us remember how the Lord was with us at the beginning of our life-work, when we started as young men and women newly converted, full of zeal and earnestness, determined to do something for the Lord. How we sought his face!-with what simplicity, with what tenderness of heart, with what dependence upon him and diffidence as to ourselves! We remember, as HE remembers, the love of our espousals-those early days. I cannot forget when the Lord appeared unto me in Gibeon at the first. Truly there are things about the lives of Christian men that would not have been possible if God had not appeared to them at the beginning. If he had not strengthened and tutored them, and given them wisdom beyond what they possess in

themselves; if he had not inspirited them; if he had not infused life into them, they had not done what they have already done. It is a priceless blessing to begin with God, and not to lay a stone of the temple of our life-work till the Lord has appeared unto us. I do not know, however, but that it is an equal, perhaps a superior, blessing for the Lord to appear to us after a certain work is done; even as in this case: "The Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon." Solomon had now finished the temple, and he needed another visit from on high. There is great joy in completing a work; and yet there is, to some minds, a great drop, when the once engrossing service ceases to keep the mind upon the stretch. You run up hill, and you have gained the summit; there is no more climbing, for the present, and then you almost wish that you had to struggle again. A work like that of Solomon lasting for seven years must have become a delight to him: to see the house growing, and to mark all the stages of its beauty. And so it is with any special and notable work which we are called to do early in life. We get wedded to it, we are glad to see it grow under our hand; and when at last that particular portion of our service is finished, we feel a kind of loss. We have grown used to the pull upon the collar, we have almost leaned upon it, and we feel a difference when we are at the top of the hill. Personally I never feel exhilaration at a success, but a certain sinking of heart when the tug of war is over. We see the like in the story of God's greater servants; we note it specially in Elias when he had performed his mighty work on Carmel, and slain the prophets of Baal: he felt an exultation in his spirit for a while, and he ran before the chariot of the king in the joy of his soul; but there came a reaction afterwards of a very painful kind. The case of Solomon is not parallel; and yet I should think that it might have been and probably was so with Solomon, that he was in a condition of special need when the temple was finished. He may have been in peril of pride, if not of depression: in either case it was a remarkable season, and its need must have been remarkable also; "and so the Lord appeared unto Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him in Gibeon."

Brethren, we want renewed appearances, fresh manifestations, new visitations from on high; and I commend to those of you who are getting on in life, that while you thank God for the past, and look back with joy to his visits to you in your early days, you now seek and ask for a second visitation of the Most High; not that I do not think that you have visitations from God full often, and walk in the light of his countenance; but still,

though the ocean is often at flood-twice every day-yet it has its spring-tides. The sun shines whether we see it or not, right though our winter's fog, and yet it has its summer brightness. If we walk with God constantly, yet are there seasons when he opens to us the very secret of his heart, and manifests himself to us, not only as he does not unto the world, but as he does not at all times to his own favored ones. All days in a palace are not days of banqueting, and all days with God are not so clear and glorious as certain special Sabbaths of the soul in which the Lord unveils his glory. Happy are we if we have once beheld his face; but happier still if he again comes to us in fullness of favor.

I think that we should be seeking those second appearances: we should be crying to God most pleadingly that he would speak to us a second time. We do not want a re-conversion, as some assert. I hope that we do not; if the Lord has kept us, as we should be, steadfast in his fear, we are already possessors of what some call "the higher life." This we have many of us enjoyed from the very first hour of our spiritual life. We do not need to be converted again; yet we do want that again over our heads the windows of heaven should be opened, that again a Pentecost should be given, and that we should renew our youth like the eagles, to run without weariness, and walk without fainting. The Lord fulfill to everyone of his people to-night his blessing upon Solomon! "The Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon."

Now, what the Lord spoke upon in the commencement of his interview with Solomon concerned his prayer; and as the Lord answered that prayer, and here, in this second appearance, recapitulated the points of it, we may be sure that there was much about that prayer which would make it a model for us. We shall do well to pray after the manner which successful pleaders have followed. In this case we will follow the Lord's own description of an accepted prayer. I shall use the text to that end briefly in two or three ways.

I. First, OUR PROPER PLACE IN PRAYER.

The Lord said, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me."

There is the place to pray-"before me": that is to say, before the Lord.

Let us talk a little about this matter.

*“Where’er we seek HIM he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

But we should take care that the place is hallowed by our prayer being deliberately and reverently presented before God.

This place is not always found. The Pharisee went up to the temple to pray, and yet, evidently, he did not pray “before God”; so that even in the most holy courts he did not find the place desired. In his own esteem he prayed; but, in his going home to his house without justification, there was evidence that he either had not prayed at all, or that he had not prayed before God. It is not because you pass these portals, and come into these pews, that therefore you are before God. Nay, and if you were to seek the shrines which have been most eminently regarded in the church; if you stood by the site of Jerusalem, if you sought out that little skull-like hill called “Calvary,” and prayed there, or if you went to Olivet, and bowed your knee in Gethsemane, you might not therefore be before God. The nearer the church, sometimes, the farther from God; and in the very center of it, in the midst of the assembly where prayer is wont to be made, you may not be “before God” at all. Praying before God is a more spiritual business than is to be performed by turning to the east or to the west, or bowing the knee, or entering within walls hallowed for ages. Alas! it is easy enough to pray, and not to pray before God. And it is not so easy—it is indeed a thing not to be done except by the power of the Spirit—to “enter into that which is within the vail.” and to stand before the mercy seat, all blood-besprinkled, consciously and really in the presence of the Invisible, to fulfill that precept, “Ye people, pour out your hearts before him.” “Before him” is the place for the soul’s outpouring, and blessed are they that know it and find it!

This blessed place “before God” can be found in public prayer. Solomon’s prayer before God was offered in the midst of a great multitude. The priests stood in their places, and the Levites kept their due order. The people were gathered together, and all the armies of the tribes of Israel stood in the streets of the holy city when Solomon bowed his knee and cried mightily unto his God. It is evident that he was enabled, that day, not to pray to please the people, nor that they might note his eloquent language and be gratified with the appropriate performance; but he was inspired to pray before the Lord.

Ah, brethren! those of us who have to conduct your devotions strive hard that we may be seen of God in secret when heard of men in public; and I am sure that we never pray so rightly or so usefully for you as when we only remember you in a very inferior sense, but seem to be surrounded as with a cloud, enclosed within the secret place of the Most High, even when we stand supplicating aloud for you in the public assembly of God's people. The same is true of each of you: it is wrong for you, in a prayer-meeting, to pray with a view to an individual of importance, or with the remembrance of those present whose respect you would like to obtain. The mercy-seat is no place for the exhibition of your abilities. More evil still is it to take the opportunity of making personal remarks about others. I have heard of oblique hints having been given in prayer. I am sorry to say that I have even heard of remarks which have been so directly critical and offensive, that one knew what the brother was at, and lamented it. Such a proceeding is altogether objectionable and irreverent. We do not even pray in prayer-meetings to correct doctrinal errors, nor to teach a body of divinity, nor to make remarks upon the errors of certain brethren, nor to impeach them before the Most High. These things should be earnest matters of supplication, but not of a sort of indirect preaching and scolding in prayer. It is conduct worthy of the accuser of the brethren to turn a prayer into an opportunity of finding fault with others. Our prayer must be "before God," or else it is not an acceptable prayer; and if eye and memory and thought can be shut to the presence of everybody else, except in that minor sense, in which we must remember them in sympathy, then it is in the presence of God that we truly pray; and that, I say, may be done in public, if grace be given. For this we have need to pray, "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."

But prayer before God can just as well-perhaps more readily-be offered in private, though I am not sure that it is not easily missed even there. You are in your room, where you are accustomed to pray. Do you not find yourself upon your knees repeating goodly words, while your heart is wandering? May you not confess that often the prayer, which has been a matter of habit, has been said as much before the walls of your room, or before the bedpost, as before God? You have not realized his presence: you have not spoken distinctly and directly to him. Although you have observed the Savior's canon, and have shut to the door, and nobody else has been there, so that you have not prayed in the presence of others; yet you have mainly prayed in your own presence, and God has to your inmost

soul been far away. It is poor work merely to talk piously to yourself. "I pour out my soul in me," says David. There is not much that comes of pouring your heart into your heart, praying your soul into your own soul: it is neither an emptying of self, nor a filling with God: it does but stir up what had been quite as well left as dregs at the bottom. Better far is the course prescribed in that hallowed precept, "Ye people, pour out your heart before him:" turn them bottom upwards, let all run out before God, and so let room be left for something better and more divine. Pouring out your soul within yourself does not come to much; and yet often that is about what our prayer amounts to—a recapitulation of wants, without a grasp of divine supplies, a bemoaning of weakness without a reception of strength; a consciousness of nothingness, but not a plunging into all-sufficiency. Brethren, the main point of supplication is neither to pray in the presence of others, nor yet, first of all, in your own presence, but to present your prayer "before God."

Now, it is clear that this means that the prayer is to be directed to God. "Well," says one, "I know that." I know you do: and yet, my brother, you too often forget it. Like a playful boy, you get your bow and arrows and shoot them anywhere. The way to pray is to take in hand the aforesaid bow and arrows, and—you think I am going to say, shoot with them with all your might; but I am not in such haste. Wait a bit! Yes, draw the string, and fit the arrow to it, but wait, wait! Wait till you have your eye fixed on the target! Wait till you see distinctly the center of the mark! What can be the use of shooting if you have not something to shoot at? Wait, then, till you know what you are going to do. You want to strike the white, to pierce the center of the target. Be sure, then, that you get it well into your eye! Imitate David, who says, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." He has fixed the arrow, drawn the bow, and taken deliberate aim, now is the time for the next act; he lets the arrow fly. How well directed! See! he has made a center! He caught the mark with his eye, and therefore he has struck it with his arrow. Oh to pray with a distinct object! Indefinite praying is a waste of breath. It will never do to begin praying, neck or nothing, because the time has come for it. We must think, "I am about to ask of God what I want: I am to speak to the great King of kings, from whom all grace must come: it is to him that my prayer must be directed. What, then, shall I ask at his hands?" Does anybody here suppose that the repeating of certain words out of a book, or of his own making, has any virtue in it? Some seem, by their frequent repetitions of that

blessed model of prayer, the Lord's Prayer, to think that there is a magical charm in that sacred arrangement of words; but, I tell you solemnly, you might as well repeat that perfect prayer backwards as forwards, if your heart is not in it. If your very heart is not in it, and if your soul is not looking Godwards, you profane your Lord's words, and are guilty of all the greater sin because of their excellence. Make not praying a piece of witchcraft, and your supplications an imitation of the abracadabra of the wizard; else it is vain superstition, and not acceptable supplication. Pray thou distinctly with all thy wits about thee to thy God. Speak thou to him.

And hence it becomes needful that we should endeavor in prayer to realize the presence of God. It shall be well put in this way: thou hast prayed well if thou hast spoken to God as a man speaketh to his friend. If thou art as sure that God is there as that thou art there, and perhaps somewhat more sure; if thou art in him, and he in thee, and if thou talkest to him as to one whom thou canst not see, but whom thou canst perceive better than by sight, thou hast prayed well. If thou speakest to him as to one whom thou canst not feel with thy hand, but canst feel with all thy nature, with something better than fingers and hands, perceiving that he is, and knowing that he is hearing thee, and will reward thy diligent seeking, this is praying before God, pleading before a living God, with one who feels and will be moved by what thou feelest, to one who speaks, and will hearken to what thou speakest. Thou art to commune with one who is not like thy fellow-men, who may let thee plead and remain like a block, unmoved by thy pathetic requests; but to a living God, a tender God, sensitive to all the sensations of thy soul. Oh, to come before the living and acting God! Not before a God, lame and impotent; nor before the new God, who is impersonal and dead, but before the true God-God in Christ Jesus! If we did but realize who he is to whom we speak- God, very nigh to us in the person of the Only Begotten, who has taken our nature upon himself, what praying ours would be! And that is the right sort of praying. Oh, that the God of truth may be able, in speaking to each of us, to speak concerning, "Thy prayer and thy supplication which thou hast prayed before me"! Lord, help us to pass through the outer courts, and to enter into thy inner court and speak with thee. Lord, deliver us from staying in the words, but bring thou us into the spirit of prayer; bring thou us near thyself.

If there are any here that have never prayed, let their prayer at this time be to one who is close to them, ready to hear them. Do not ask, "What shall I say?" Say to God what you wish to say. What is your desire to-night?

Would you be saved? Beg him to save you. Would you be forgiven? Ask forgiveness. "The words," say you, "tell me the words." Nay, you need no words. If you have none, look, look to him. Let your heart think out its desires. There is music without words: and there is prayer without words. The soul of prayer is being before God, and desiring before God, who hears without sounds, and understands without expressions. Open your heart; look to him; and ask him to read what you cannot read. Beg him of his great mercy to give you, not even according to your own sense of your requirements, but according to the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus. You are praying before God when you have realized his presence. The Lord does not require from you that you should express yourself in words. He reads what is there with an omniscient glance, what is written on your heart. To know that he does so, and to plead in that spirit, is prayer before God.

II. I will change the run of our thought for a little while, to notice, with much earnestness, OUR GREAT DESIDERATUM IN PRAYER. It is that which God said that he had given to Solomon. "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication."

I have often had occasion to remark, that the wise men of modern times, whose principal characteristic is, that they think so much of themselves, and so very little of anybody else, tell us that prayer is an excellent exercise, good and comforting, and useful; but that we are not to suppose that it has any effect upon God whatever. We enquire of them, "Would you have us go on praying after the information you have given?" "Oh, yes," they say, "Oh yes, of course it is a pious exercise, a proper and edifying thing. Go on praying, but do not think that God hears." Brethren, it is evident that they think us idiots. Evidently they consider praying men to be born fools. If it be certain that prayer has no effect upon God, my brother, I would just as lief whistle when I rise in the morning as pray, and I would as soon close my eyes at night in dumb silence as run over a set of ineffectual words. There could be no good in prayer if it should be proved that it never went beyond the room in which it was uttered. When it ceases to be accepted by the Lord, and honored by his response, we shall abandon it, of course. If there is neither hearing, nor answering, we shall have reduced ourselves to the level of the worshippers of Baal, if we continue to cry; and we have not come to that yet. We are obliged to you wise men for your compliments; but we shall not follow your absurd advice! Your pretty praises of our devotion as a pleasing and instructive exercise are quite lost

upon us, since they involve a covert insult. You may take back your compliments, if you please; for our opinion of your wisdom is almost equal to your opinion of ours.

But, brethren, what we desire in prayer is really to be heard. If I pray, I pray not to the winds, nor to the waves, but to God; and if he does not hear me, I have lost my breath.

The first thing the soul desires in prayer is audience with God. If the Lord do not hear us, we have gained nothing. And what an honor it is, if you come to think of it, to have audience with God! The frail, feeble, undeserving creature is permitted to stand in the august presence of the God of the whole earth, and the Lord regards that poor creature as if there were nothing else for him to observe, and bends his ear and his heart to listen to that creature's cry. It is necessary to a living prayer—to feel that we are speaking to God, and that God is hearing us.

You notice, that generally, in the Psalms, David says very little about God's answering; but he always speaks about God's hearing, and he asks that he would hear. That he should deign to hear us is quite enough, quite enough from such a God as he is. If I can get my petition placed in his hand, I am fully satisfied. If I can pour my desire into his ear, and he has once observed it, all further fear is removed. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things, and you may rest perfectly content; for, in coming into his presence, you have done according to his command, and therefore his promise holds good to you. The first thing wanted, then, is that the Lord should hear.

But we want more than that: we want that he should accept. It were a painful thing to be permitted to speak to a great friend, and then for him to stand austere and stern, and say, "I have heard what you have to say. Go your way." We ask not this of God. We beg him kindly and graciously to accept our poor confessions, petitions, supplications, and adorations; and if he does but look and smile, if he does but say one word into our soul which implies, "I have accepted thy prayer," what a joy it is! To have brought an offering which the Lord has accepted, this is the sweetness and delight of supplication!

Still, there is a third thing which we want, which God gave to Solomon, and that was an answer. He asked the Lord to hallow the house, and the Lord did hallow the house. And as to you and me in prayer, while there are

some things which we must always pray for with a great deal of diffidence, evermore saying emphatically, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt;” yet are there certain other boons which we are encouraged to pray for with importunity, being resolved to have them. Those are spiritual blessings, covenant blessings, distinctly promised, and evidently necessary: these we may ask for without any question, using a sacred importunity, and refusing to let the angel go unless he blesses us. On matters promised by God in his Word we may come again and again;—knocking at the Lord’s door until he awakes and gives us the loaves that we seek for our hungry and fainting friend. Oh, for more holy boldness! Oh, for more assured confidence! We have need to believe that we have the petitions that we ask of him. We must ask in faith, nothing wavering, or we may not expect to receive anything of the Lord.

Oh, yes, we long to be heard and answered; and we cannot be satisfied to pray unless we perceive that prayer is effective in the courts above, That is our desideratum in prayer.

III. This makes me mention, thirdly, OUR ASSURANCE or ANSWER TO PRAYER. Can we have an assurance that God has heard and answered prayer? Solomon had it. The Lord said unto him, “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me.” Does the Lord ever say that to us? I think so. Let us consider how he does so.

I think that he says it to us very often in our usual faith. I hope that I speak for many of you when I say that we constantly pray believingly. It is habitual with me to expect God to answer me. I go to him very simply, and ask for what I want; and, if I did not have that which I humbly sought for, I should be greatly surprised. When I do have it, I reckon it as a matter of course, for the Lord has promised to answer prayer, and it is certain that he will keep his promise. I am speaking now about the daily mercies, and the daily trials, and the ordinary events of life: in these matters God is sure to answer prayer, and our faith, in its ordinary operation, is, to our hearts, the voice of God, saying, “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication.”

But sometimes you require strong confidence. You have to solicit some extraordinary blessing. You get to a place like that to which Jacob came, when common prayer was not sufficient. When Esau was coming to meet him with an armed force, he must have a night’s prayer: he must gather up all his courage at Jabbok, he must wrestle with the angel and win the divine blessing. At such times, it is a stronger faith than usual, brought into

exercise, by necessity, which assures the soul of the blessing. "According to thy faith be it unto thee." If we can trust God-for that is the thing-we shall have the thing we seek. Faith is not saying, "I know that I have it," when you really have it not. That would be telling yourself a lie. Here is a man who says, "Believe that you are sanctified, and you are in a moment sanctified." But you are not. You may believe a lie in believing that, and be, perhaps, less sanctified than you were before you believed it, and ten times more proud, and thus far more under the influence of Satan. To believe in God that he will sanctify me, and that he is sanctifying me, is a very different thing from believing that I am already sanctified. I believe that God will supply my needs, but I do not believe that I have got the Bank of England in my pocket. If I did believe it, I should not find it there when I put my hand to feel for it. Faith is not believing fanatically, but believing the truth. There is a wonderful difference between believing what your fancy says, and believing what God has distinctly promised. Faith and fancy are two very different things. God keep us from the falsehood of folly, and lead us into the truth of wisdom! I will believe anything, however monstrous it may appear, if God says it. I will believe nothing, however desirable, merely because my own fancy imagines it, or because your heated brain suggests it. Strong faith often brings with it a conviction within the soul which nothing can shake; a conviction most sure, and yet most reasonable, since it is inspired by the Spirit of God who bears witness only to the truth, and not to dreams. To the man's inner consciousness it is as though he heard the voice of God, saying, "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication."

Sometimes this comes in the form of a comfortable persuasion. Have you never known what it is to leave off prayer when you are in the middle of it, and say, "I am heard: I am heard"? Have you not felt that you needed not to cry any longer, for you had gained your suit, and must rather begin to praise than continue to pray? When a man goes to a bank with a cheque, and he gets the money, he does not stand loafing about the counter: he goes off about his business. And oftentimes before God, he that is prepared to be a long time in prayer if it should be necessary, feels that he must be brief in petition and long in thanksgiving. He rises from his knees with the persuasion, "I need not ask any more: I am heard;" and he goes about his business, to do something more needful and seasonable than praying; for it is always better to serve God in a pressing practical duty than it is to continue to pray when prayer has no longer any reasonableness in it, seeing

that you are already heard. If God has given you the blessing, why ask for it any further? “The Lord says to Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward;” and that going forward was a better thing than praying, now that praying had had its day. So there comes a comfortable assurance at times that it is even so, and you go your way rejoicing. This inward persuasion is no fanatical imagining, nor excitement of the brain, but a work of the Holy Spirit, which none can imitate, and only the receiver can understand.

The Lord also gives to his people a manifest preparation for the blessing. He prepares them to receive it. Their expectation is raised, so that they begin to look out for the blessing, and make room for it; and when it is so, you may be sure that it is coming. God never brought you to a well, and put a bucket and rope in your way, without intending to fill that bucket when you let it down. When the thirsty soil has opened all its mouths to drink in the rain of heaven that rain always comes. When the ears of wheat are ready for the sun to ripen them, the heat of harvest is near. When a man of God so looks for the wind of the Spirit that he spreads the sails of hope, the breeze is sure to blow. Brother, it is want of preparation in you that hinders the blessing. “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” But when the Lord has given you an evident preparation for the blessing, the blessing is already on the way, the shadow of it is resting upon you. In that preparation the Lord virtually says: “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication.”

Actual observation also breeds in us a solid confidence that our suit is succeeding. Sometimes God gives us an assurance that he has heard our prayer when he makes us look back and observe the past. How he has answered us! He changes not; he hears us still. O sirs, I have no patience with those who say that God does not hear prayer, for my daily experience proves the fact. I would not lie even under the notion of honoring God; but I will speak what I know. Throughout life it has been my habit to wait upon God about many things, and especially about extraordinary necessities which have arisen out of the demands of the great institutions committed to me. I shall not stay to tell the stories of the Lord’s supplies in answer to prayer. Some of you know them in a measure; but, in very truth, the Lord has heard my prayers as distinctly as if he had rent the heavens, and put out his right hand filled with good. Many of you could bear similar witness, could you not? The fact that the Lord has heard us in the past

speaks in our souls, and fills us with the assurance that he will hear us yet again. Memory emphasizes the voice of the Lord, which saith, "I have heard thy prayer; I have heard thy supplication, therefore trust me with all thine heart. Have I not always heard thy prayer? When did I refuse thee? My beloved one, when did I reject thee? Have I not always hearkened to thee? In the hour of thy distress, have I not delivered thee? In the times of thy need, have I not supplied thee? I have heard thy prayer. Go in peace. Weep no more. Let not thy soul be troubled. All is well, for I am on the throne of grace, and my face is towards thee."

IV. Now I have come to the end of what I had to say, with this one sole exception. Let me speak of OUR SPECIAL APPLICATION OF PRAYER. In the case of Solomon prayer turned in one direction, and in that direction I want to turn it now. You learn what Solomon's prayer was when you hear how God fulfilled it. God said to him, "I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, and put my name there for ever, and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually." Last night the members of this church met in their annual church meeting,* and we had great joy and thankfulness for all the mercy which God has made to pass before us. I have just completed thirty-three years of ministry here-the third of a century-with unbroken blessing. We can say that all these years have passed with no division and no strife among us, with nothing but perpetual benedictions from the Lord God of our salvation. Blessed be his name!

Our prayer is again that the Lord himself would hallow this house which we have built. We ask this in no superstitious way. Bricks and mortar and iron and stone are nothing to us. The qualities of holiness do not adhere to material substances, but to hearts and to souls and acts; yet we ask our Lord to hallow this Tabernacle with his presence still more and more. If that were gone, Ichabod would be our bitter cry! The glory would indeed have departed. We want our Lord to hallow it by his favorable regard, that when we worship he will accept our worship, and hear our prayers and our praises. We want him to hallow it by his working among us in many more conversions. It was a joyous time to me when I saw the enquirer come who was number ten thousand: that is long ago, and we have reached a far higher number now, but all is the work of our gracious God. We shall never bring in another true convert unless we have God's presence! O Lord Jesus, we would constrain thee saying, "Abide with us." The Lord bless his people in this house of prayer in the breaking of bread, in the ordinance of baptism, in the proclamation of the gospel, and in all their

gatherings together. O Lord, we pray thee hallow this house. We do pray it from our inmost souls. You that have found our services to be hallowed to you in days that are past cannot bear the idea of failure and famine in the future. May the Lord say to us to-night, "I have hallowed this house which thou hast built."

We want that he should hallow it next in this way: "to put my name there for ever." "For ever." As long as there shall be any such house, or need of such a house, may his name be here. My venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, whom I never saw, I have been informed, was wont to pray for a certain successor of his whom he seemed always to have in his mind's thoughts. He frequently prayed for the man whom the Lord would send among the people of his care after his own decease. In a letter that I have seen, which he wrote to a friend, I cannot but somehow see myself; as in the glimmer of the firelight he saw the person who would follow him, and carry on his work. After sixty years of service in this church, as the old man grew older, he used to be praying about this successor more and more. I think that I may begin to pray after his example, that as long as there shall be the need for a house of God, the name of God may be honored in this Tabernacle, and may faithful men proclaim his salvation in the power of the Holy Ghost. Shall there stand here one day a man that denies the Deity of my Lord? God forbid! ["Amen."] Shall there be found here one that shall preach modern thought, and give up the old, old gospel? God forbid! ["Amen."] Let the house be wrapped in flames, and every ash be blown away by the winds, sooner than that any shall preach from this pulpit any other gospel than that ye have received. ["Amen." "Amen."] I thank you for those loud Amens. May God himself say, Amen. May the name of our covenant God be set here for ever, and no other name.

And, then, Solomon prayed also, and God heard him, that the eye of the Lord might be there. That was Solomon's prayer, and God greatly improved upon it, for he said that his eye and his heart should be there perpetually. Thus the Lord hears our prayers in a better sense than that in which we offer them. We pray that his eye may be upon us, and he adds, "It shall be so, and with my eye my heart also shall be there." Oh, that the eye of the Lord might be upon this house, and upon this church, to watch over it, to keep it from all harm! But may his heart also be with us, to fill us with his divine life and love, and to make us know his inner self! Oh for the love of God to be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost! May we

know that God's feelings of affection and delight are towards us! This shall be our joy unspeakable.

Now, brothers and sisters, who happen to be worshipping with us on this occasion, but are not members with us, I entreat you kindly to pray for this house and this church. I would, in return, pray for your place of worship, and for the church to which you belong. You will, however, readily forgive us if we think, just now, after our thirty-three years, of this particular church and its interests. We must praise the Lord for all his mercy towards us. Grace personally received must be personally acknowledged. You see, we are at home, and we must think of our own home. I can truly sing,

*“Here my best friends, my kindred dwell,
Here God my Savior reigns.”*

“I dwell among my own people,” said the Shunammite; and there is no joy like it for a Christian minister and a Christian church member-to feel that he dwells among his own people, and is happy with them. To be driven from church to church, as some are, is a wretched business. To be like others, changing their views as often as the moon; happy nowhere, miserable everywhere, agreeing with nobody, not even with themselves, is a poor business. Persons of that kind, I hope, will not join this church just yet, or, if they do, may the Lord convert them as they come in. As for us, we love each other, and our united prayer is that the eye and the heart of God may be with us and all his people perpetually. The Lord bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

* Feb. 9, 1887. Add two years of mercy to the record, and the same reflections will hold good. Oh, that we may now receive a second blessing, and learn how opportune is the subject to the occasion of the pastor's anticipated return to a renewed period of personal ministry!

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,-My injuries are far greater than I supposed. It will take some time before foot, mouth, head, and nerves can be right again. What a mercy that I was not smashed quite up! The angels did their work well, for another stone would have brought me to mine end.

Through what a stupor I have passed! Yet in a day or two I shall be none the worse. I am overcome with gratitude. May I be spared to keep my own footing to the end, and let the down-graders know how terrible is a fall from the high places of the Lord's truth!

Yours very truly,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Jan. 12th, 1889.

OUR GREAT SHEPHERD FINDING THE SHEEP.

NO. 2065

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
JANUARY 27TH, 1889,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 25TH, 1888.

*“Until he find it ¹/₄ And when he hath found it And when he cometh home.” —
Luke 15:4, 5, 6.*

THE love of Jesus, the Great Shepherd, is very *practical* and active. There is a sheep lost, and the Lord regrets it; but his love does not spend itself in regrets; he arises, and goes forth to seek and to save that which was lost. The love of Jesus Christ is love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. The love of Jesus is *prurient*. He does not wait until the sheep is willing to return, or until it makes some attempt to come back; but no sooner is its lost estate known to the Shepherd than he starts off, that he may find that which was lost. The love of Jesus to the lost sheep is *pre-eminent*. He leaves the ninety-and-nine in their pasturage; and for a while forgets them, that all his heart, his eye, his strength may be given to the one that has gone astray. O sweet love of Christ, so practical, so pre-eminent, so pre-eminent! Let us ask for grace that we may imitate it, especially those of us who are called to be shepherds of men.

Among God's people most of the saints have a charge to watch over. However little the flock may be, even if it be restricted to our own family, or to the little class that gathers about us on the Sabbath, yet we are all our brother's keeper in some measure. Let us learn the love of Christ, that we

may be wise in shepherdry. Let us not talk about our friends, and say we love them; but let us show it by earnest, personal, speedy endeavors to do them good. Let us not wait until we see some goodness in them — until they seek after instruction. But “Oh, come, let us go and find them, In the paths of death they roam.” And long before they have a thought of coming home, let us be on their track, eager to grasp them, if by any means we may save some. Oh, to have in our hearts such love of souls that it engrosses us so that we forget earthly needs, and only remember this yet higher necessity! It is a good house, said St. Bernard, in which Martha has to complain of Mary — where gracious pursuits put other work in the background. It is a choice crime that men should even grow lax about their lower business for a while, that they may devote their chief energy to the saving of the lost sheep.

Let that stand as an introduction. May we see the love of Jesus, as Bernard saw it, and we shall have had sermon enough.

In my text there are three periods to which I call your attention.

I. Christ, the Good Shepherd, first seeks the lost sheep “UNTIL HE FIND IT.” Just put a mark under those words. That is our first head — “Until he find it.” It is a long reach “Until he find it.”

I like the expression. The Lord Jesus did not come down to earth to make an attempt to find men, but he came to do it, and he did it. He tarried here, seeking the lost sheep till he found it: he never gave over till his work was done. At this hour, in his work of grace amongst his chosen, he does not make an attempt at their salvation, and suffer defeat; but he keeps at soul-seeking work until he find it.

Look at the seeking shepherd: he is looking for the sheep. Notice his anxious countenance “until he find it.” We read that after he found it he rejoiced; but there is no rejoicing until he find it. He is all excitement, quick of ear to catch the faintest sound, for it may be the bleating of his lost sheep. His eyes are like the eyes of eagles. He saw something stir in the bracken yonder, and he will be there in a bound or two; he is so eager. No: it was a mistake. It was not the sheep; perhaps it was some frightened fox. He climbs a cairn, and from the top of it he looks all around. I was about to say that he looks with ears and eyes together. He puts his whole soul into the organs of watchfulness, if peradventure he may discern the sheep. Is there a smile on his face? All, no! not “until he find it.” His whole soul is in

his eyes and ears until he find it. This is a faint yet true picture of that Great Shepherd who came here to seek his flock. So the evangelists have drawn him in their pen-and-ink sketches of him — always watchful; spending night and day, in prayers, and tears, and entreaties; never more to have a joy until he find the lost one. Then, when he did find a single sheep, finding his meat and his drink in it, and becoming refreshed from the fact that he has so far accomplished his beloved work. The great Shepherd is all energy, care, and concentration of thought concerning his sheep, “until he find it.”

There is no hesitating with Jesus. The sheep is lost, and the news is brought to the shepherd; he girds his loose robe about him, and is on the way. He knows within a little which way that stray sheep will go, and he is on its track at once, though he knows that he must mark that track with his blood. See the blessed shepherd pressing on: there is no pausing nor resting “until he find it.” He has made up his mind that no sheep of his shall be lost, and he flies over hill and dale after the wanderer until he find it.

If you look into that shepherd’s face, there is no trace of anger there. He does not say, “Oh, that I should be worried with this silly sheep thus going *astray!*” No thought is there but that of anxious love. It is all love, and nothing else but love, before he finds and until he finds it; and you may be sure that careful tenderness will be in full action after he has found it. He is looking with anxious eye of love. “As I live,” saith the Lord, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he should turn unto me and live.” “Until he find it” there will be no thought of anxiety, but a fullness of pitying care for the lost sheep.

And, mark, there is no giving up. That sheep has wandered now for many hours. The sun has risen, and the sun has set; or, at least it is just going down; but as long as the shepherd can see, and the sheep is still alive, he will pursue it “until he find it.” He has been disappointed a great many times; and when he thought that he should have found it, he has missed it; but still, he will never give it up. He is impelled onward by irresistible love, and he must continue his weary search until he find it. It was precisely so with our Lord Jesus Christ. When he came after you and after me, we ran from him, but he pursued us: we hid from him, but he discovered us: he had almost grasped us, but so long as we eluded him he still pursued with love unwearied until he found us. Oh, if he had given up after the first ten years — if he had ceased to care for some of us after fifty different

occasions in which we had choked conscience and quenched the Spirit, then we should have been lost. But he would not be turned away. If he determines to save, he continues to pursue the rambling sheep until he find it. He cannot, he must not, he will not, cease from the work of seeking and of finding till he find it. I wish to-night that the time were come with some here that it should be said, "The Savior did pursue such and such a one until he found him — found him in the Tabernacle, and ended all his wanderings there — found him standing in yonder gallery, and ended all his wanderings at the 'foot of the cross.'" God grant that it may be so! but whether it be so with you or not, be ye sure of this — that the Lord Jesus has in hundreds and thousands of cases pursued sinners with unflagging mercy, leaping to them over hills of sin, and following them till he has found them. We are now his for ever and ever, for he who has found us will never lose us. Blessed be his name!

Learn this lesson before I pass on. If ever you are seeking the conversion of any man follow him up until you find him. Do not be discouraged. Put up with a great many rebuffs and rebukes: you Will have him yet. He is surest to succeed who cannot be put off from his aim. From some it will be necessary to receive a great deal that is most discouraging. Receive it, and say nothing about it; only whisper to yourself, "I might well have put the Great Shepherd off from caring for me, and yet was not so turned aside. If he persevered with me even to the death, I may well persevere as long as I live in seeking and finding a soul. I have heard of wives who have pleaded with God for their husbands twenty years; and yet have seen them converted after all. There are instances in this place in which indefatigable love has followed up ungodly relatives until they have at last been saved by sovereign grace. Persevere with loving entreaties! Till you bury your unsaved ones, do not consider them dead; and do not bury them spiritually till they are dead really. Some are easily baffled. They have written the death-warrant of their friend by ceasing to pray for him, and yet that death-warrant will never be written in the records of heaven, for their friend will be brought to the Savior's feet.

"Until he find it." Now nail your colors to the mast. "Until he find it." Go out, ye under-shepherds for Christ. Wear this motto on your right hand. "Until I find it." Live or die, or work or suffer, whether the time be short or long, or the way be smooth or rough, let each one of you be bound to seek a soul "until he find it." You will find it then, even as Christ found you. There I leave that first point.

II. And now we come to the second — “AND WHEN HE HATH FOUND IT.” When he has found it, what does he do then? Well, first, *takes fast hold*. “He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.” So when he has found it, the first thing is to get a tight grip of it. See him: he has got close up to the sheep. The poor thing is spent, and yet may have strength enough to get away, therefore the shepherd takes good care that he shall not. He grasps his legs and holds him tight. That is what the Lord Jesus does when at last he gets a man broken down under a sense of sin, spent and worn out as to further resistance of divine mercy. Our Lord gets such a grip of the rebel that he will never get away any more. I remember when he laid hold of me. He has never lost his grasp even to this day. But, oh, it was a grasp! Nothing ever gripped my fickle mind like the hand of Christ. When the divine hand, which fixed the foundations of the earth, had fixed itself on me, my wanderings were ended once for all.

The next thing after the fast hold was *the gracious lift*. He lifted this poor sheep up and put it on his shoulders, and there it was with all its weight, carried by powerful shoulders. That is what the Savior does for poor weary sinners. He carries the weight of their sin, nay the weight of themselves. He takes us just as we are, and instead of driving us back by his law, he carries us home by his love. Instead of urging us to go home, he becomes the great burden-bearer of his redeemed, and bears them on his shoulders. And now you have before you one of the loveliest of portraits that ever imagination can sketch — that great crowned Shepherd of the sheep, King of kings and Lord of lords, bearing on his shoulders, as a burden he delights to carry, the sheep that had gone astray. Oh, I pray God that you may lie on those broad shoulders if you never have been so favored. The shoulders of omnipotence bearing up our weakness — the mighty Savior bearing us and all our sin and all our care, and our whole being upon the shoulders of his strength — this is a sight for angels.

And as he thus carries the weight, observe that *the distance is removed*. We read in the next verse, “When he cometh home,” but there is nothing said about the road; for somehow our Master has the knack of being at home at once. The sinner may weary himself by twenty years of sin, but in five minutes that may all be gone. It may have taken you fifty years to make yourself such a hell-deserving sinner as you are, but it will not take Jesus fifty ticks of the clock to wash you and make you whiter than snow, and to get you back into the great Father’s house. Truth to tell, the Shepherd’s redeeming work is done already.

*“How dreadful was the hour,
When God our wanderings laid,
And did at once his vengeance pour
Upon our Shepherd’s head!*

*“How glorious was the grace,
When Christ sustained the stroke!
His life and blood the Shepherd pays,
A ransom for the flock.”*

By that redeeming process he brought us near to God.

There is no weary journey back for Shepherd or sheep. He grasps the sheep; he puts it on his shoulders, and they are both back at the fold.

But the particular point I want you to notice is when the great Shepherd gets this burden on his back. We read, “When he hath found it he layeth it upon his shoulders” — with great anxiety? Look to see whether it is so. Nothing of the sort. But is it not, “He layeth it on his shoulders with great weariness”? No. See! See! “He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing — *rejoicing*.” He does not remember all the weariness that he has had to suffer. He does not think of the folly of his sheep in having lost good pasture, in having involved itself in so much danger, and in costing him so much labor. Not a word is mentioned of it. “He layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.” He says to himself, “I am glad to carry this burden: happy to carry my lost sheep home.” And oh! I do love to picture to myself at this moment the joy in the heart of the blessed Christ. “For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.” And now, whenever he gets a lost sheep to carry back — he rejoices. His heart leaps within him. All anxiety is gone. Fullness of delight is upon him. “He layeth it upon his shoulders rejoicing.” I wonder whether the sheep could see that the Shepherd rejoiced. I do not suppose that it could; but it could feel it. There are two ways, you know, of handling a sheep, and the sheep very soon knows which expresses pleasure on its owner’s part; at any rate, I am sure that a dog knows well enough what your movements mean. If you speak angrily to a sheep, and throw it upon your shoulder with indignation, that is one thing; but if you have not a word to say, except it be, “Poor thing, I am glad I have found you,” and you cast it on your shoulders rejoicing, why, sheep as it is, it knows the difference. At any rate, I know that Christ has a way of saving us: oh, so gently, so lovingly, so gleefully, that he makes us happy in being saved. There is a way of turning a penny

into stone or into gold according to the way in which you give it to a poor man. You can fling it at him as if he were a dog, and he will be about as grateful to you as a dog, or not so much. But there is a way in which you can say, "I am sorry for your needs. This is all I can afford you now. Take it, and do what you can with it." Given with a brotherly look, it will be gratefully received, and made the most of. There is much in the manner, as well as in the matter of a gift. The mannerism of Christ is grandly gracious: he saves us rejoicingly. It is a matter of thanksgiving to him when he gets hold of his lost sheep, and gets it on his shoulders. It makes me glad to think that it is so. We are not saved by a grudging Christ, who seems as if he were weary of us, and must save us out of hand, to get rid of us. He does not act with us as some rude surgeon might do who says, "I will attend to you directly, but I have plenty else to do, and you *gratis* patients are a trouble." Nor does he roughly set the bone. No; Jesus comes, and, as with a lady's dainty hand, he molds the dislocated joint; and when he sets it, there is bliss even about the method of the setting. We look into his face, and we see that he puts his tenderest sympathy into each movement. You know the different ways which workmen have. Some kind of work a man is soon sick of. The principle of division of labor is a very admirable one for the production of results upon a large scale; but it is a miserable business for the workman to have to do the same thing over and over again, all day long, as if he were an automaton. Get a man at work at a statue — an artist whose whole soul is in his chisel, who knows that there is a bright spirit within that block of marble, and who means to chip off all that hides the lovely image from his sight. See how he works! No man does a thing well who does it sorrowfully. The best work that can be, is done by the happy, joyful workman; and so it is with Christ. He does not save souls as of necessity — as though he would rather do something else if he might; but his very heart is in it, he rejoices to do it, and therefore he does it thoroughly, and he communicates his joy to us in the doing of it.

Now, learn a lesson before I go away to the third point. "When he hath found it." Suppose that any of you should very soon meet with a poor troubled sinner, anxious to come to Christ. When you have found him, let me recommend you to imitate the Master's example: get a tight grip of him. Do not let him slip. Get a hold of him; and then, if he is in trouble, take all that trouble upon yourself. Try whether you cannot get him upon your shoulders. Imitate your Master in that way. Try to bear all his burden for him, as Christ bore yours. Conduct him to the Christ who is the true

burden-bearer; and all the while be very happy about it. I do not think we ought to go and talk to young converts in a dreadfully solemn tone, as though it would be something horrible to find a Savior. They will never come again, you may depend upon it. They will give you a wide berth. But just go, and in a joyful spirit say, "I am so glad to find you caring about your soul." The best thing that can happen to a soul-seeker is to meet with a troubled conscience; show that you think so. "But," say you, "I have not the time." Always have time, even in the middle of the night, to see a poor conscience-stricken sinner. But perhaps you are very weary, or not well. If I were weary I should not be weary any longer when I came across a lost sheep; and if I were ill, I would get well on purpose to see after a sin-sick sinner. Talk in that way, with sweet and pleasant encouragement, for this is the way to help your brother sinner to the Savior.

My time has gone, but just a few words more on this last point.

III. "WHEN HE COMETH HOME." "When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Some hurried observations. First, *heaven is a home*. "When he cometh home"; and the next verse says that it is heaven. Heaven is a home. Do you not like to think of it under that aspect? It is the home of Jesus; and if it is the home of Jesus can any other home be equal to it? "When he cometh home."

Note, next, that *lost ones are known in heaven*. I give you that thought more from the Greek than from the English hero. "When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep — the lost one." That is how it should run. It is as if the friends knew that one had been lost, and the loss had been deplored: and the shepherd says, "I have found my sheep: you know which one — the lost one." Up there they know which are Christ's sheep, and which are lost. Heaven is nearer earth than some of us dream. How long does it take to get there?

*"One gentle sigh the spirit breaks:
We scarce can say, 'He's gone,'
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne."*

And there are more communications between earth and heaven than some folk dream; for here it is clear that when the shepherd came home he said

to them, "I have found the sheep," the lost one. So they knew all about it. It is evident, again, that they all knew there that the shepherd had gone after the sheep, for he says, "I have found my sheep which was lost." They all knew that he had gone on search, and therefore they could all understand his joy when he came back with the sheep. I believe that they know in heaven when Christ is seeking after anyone. It must be a great satisfaction to some up there who die with an unconverted son, or an unconverted Christ. to know, after a little while, son or daughter is converted to it. I am persuaded they know it. They cannot help knowing it, because they are Christ's friends and neighbors, and, according to the parable, he tells them, and he says to them, "Rejoice with me"; and if he says, "Rejoice with me," why, of course, he tells them why. You don't think that Jesus ever invited a spirit before the throne to rejoice with him, and received for answer, "I cannot do it, for I know no cause for joy." If I had been converted after my mother's death, I can fancy that when Jesus said to all of them, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep, the lost one," my mother would say, "My Lord, I can rejoice more than any of them, for that was my boy, and he is saved at last." Your mother in glory will be twice glorified to-night, John, if you give your heart to Christ; and I pray that you may. Your father, now before the throne, will think that paradise has grown more paradisiac than ever if he hears it whispered down the golden streets that the wanderer has come home.

Notice, next, very briefly, that *Jesus Christ loves other people to rejoice with him*, so that, when he finds a sinner, he has so much love in his heart that his joy runs over, and he cries to others, "Come, friends, come neighbors, come and help me to be glad, for I have saved another soul." Let us catch the blessed infection. If you have just heard of somebody being saved, be glad about it. Though you do not know the person, yet be glad about it, because Jesus is glad.

Notice, next, that *repentance is regarded as coming home*. This sheep was not in heaven. No, but as soon as it had been brought into the fold it is described as repenting; and Jesus and the angels begin to rejoice over it. If a man truly repents, and Christ saves him, it is clear that he never will be lost. A certain old proverb forbids us to count our chickens till they are hatched; and I do not think that angels would do so in the case of immortal souls. If they believed that repenting sinners might afterwards be lost, they would not ring the marriage bells just yet, but they would wait a while to see how things went on. If they can yet perish there is not one convert that

the angels dare rejoice over; for if any child of God might fall away and perish, why not every one of us? If any one falls from grace, I fear I shall. O my brother, do you not fear the same for yourself? “No,” say you, “I don’t think so.” Well, then, you are a proud fellow, and you are the most likely one to desert your Lord. If ever a sheep of Christ’s shall fall away, I shall. I see more of my own tendencies to wander, and more of my own temptations to offend than I do of yours. I would not have the angels rejoice over a man because he repents, if repentance be only a sign of human improvement, and not a token of heavenly love. I would say, “Stop, ye angels; for this man may go back, and perish after all, if, according to the modern gospel Christ loves to-day and hates to-morrow, and a child of God may yet be a child of the devil.” I do not believe a word of such doctrine. I believe that where the Lord begins the good work of grace he will carry it on, and perfect it; and when the Lord has once given to a man to know him, he will see that he is preserved in that knowledge for ever. There is a text that clenches it: “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Now, if they have eternal life, it cannot come to an end; for eternal life *is* eternal, evidently; and if they have eternal life, the Shepherd and his friends may justifiably sing when one single possessor of that eternal life is brought to life and salvation. In the penitent man a work is done that never can be undone; and he is put where he never can be lost. Yes,

*“I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure.
Are the glorified spirits in heaven.*

Sing away, angels! There is something to sing about now; and we will join with you in blessing and praising the unchanging God for ever and for ever. Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Luke 15.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 421, 257, 378.

OUR PLACE; AT JESUS' FEET.

NO. 2066

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 8TH, 1879.

“At his feet.”-Luke 7:38.

THE Easterns pay more attention to posture than we do. They are demonstrative, and express by outward signs much which we do not express, or express less energetically. In their courts certain positions must be taken up by courtiers. Oriental monarchs are approached in positions which indicate the greatness of the king and the submissiveness of the petitioner. So, in their worship, the Easterns abound in postures significant of the humility which should be felt in the presence of God. The most of us think very little indeed of outward postures, perhaps we do not even think enough of them. Inasmuch as in devotion we think little of the position of the body, let us pay all the more attention to the posture of the soul; and if it seems to us to be a matter of indifference whether a man prays standing as Abraham did, or sitting as David did, or kneeling as Elias did; yet let us take care that the posture of the soul is carefully observed. One of the best positions in which our heart can be found is at Jesus' feet. Here we may fall, or here we may sit, and follow excellent examples to our exceeding benefit.

The first thing that is necessary to spiritual life at all, is to recognize the presence of Jesus, and to come into relationship with him. To look at him is salvation. As to look at the brazen serpent was healing, so to look at Jesus Christ brings life eternal to the soul. After we have come to look at Jesus, and so there is a connecting link between us and him through which salvation comes to us, we are described as being in various positions with regard to our Lord. We are on his heart. Just as the priest of old carried the

names of the twelve tribes, so doth Jesus carry all his people on his heart; and that is where we are at this time. There are favored times when, like John also, we are on his bosom. We feel his heart beating with true affection to us. We not only believe his love, but there is a kind of sense—which I may not call sense either, for it belongs not to the grosser forms of sensation, but there is a kind of spiritual sensitiveness which causes us to feel that Jesus loves us. We seem to say, “God is love, I know, I feel”; for in our very hearts the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Then are we raised to his bosom; and it is a blessed posture to be in.

*“Oh, that we could with holy John
For ever lean our heads upon
The bosom of our Lord”!*

We are described, also, as being in the hand of Christ. All his saints are in his hand. He gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, for he says “none shall pluck them out of my hand.” See your position in the hollow of his hand, while in the Father’s hand the hand of Christ is embraced, and he tells us “none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Then, too, we are described as being on his shoulders. Does not the good Shepherd, when he finds the strayed sheep, cast it upon his shoulders and carry it home? When Aaron stood pleading before the Lord he not only carried the names of the tribes upon his breastplate, but he had them in ouches of gold upon his shoulders. Christ carries us on the heart of his love and on the shoulders of his power. Thus are we perfectly safe.

You see, then, where we are; and I do not want you to forget this, while I urge upon all the Lord’s people that they should seek to be “at his feet.” You can keep all the other positions, and this too; for, though that were impossible for the body, it is quite possible for the spirit. The highest delight and the fullest assurance are perfectly consistent with the lowliest reverence. You may rise even to the Master’s lips, until you can say with the spouse, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine”; and yet you may still be lying at his feet, conscious of your unworthiness, and bowed into the very dust under a sense of his love.

We must leave those other positions, and consider the one in our text. And we have only two remarks to make—namely, first, that at his feet is a becoming posture; and, secondly, at his feet is a helpful posture.

I. First, AT HIS FEET IS A BECOMING POSTURE. This is proper because of the majesty of his person. As he is divine, “at his feet” is the creature’s becoming place. Jesus is “God over all, blessed for ever.” Let us exhibit the lowliest reverence whenever we think of him. He comes very near us, and, we sing at the communion-table-

*“His sacred name a common word
On earth he loves to hear;
There is no majesty in him
Which love may not come near.”*

But there is majesty: there is divine majesty. Jesus is our brother, but he is the first born among many brethren. He has a human head, but on that head are many crowns. He wears a nature like our own, but that nature is in union with his Godhead, and we cannot think of him without bowing with lowly adoration before him. The sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars make obeisance to this star of Bethlehem. All the sheaves bow before this Joseph’s sheaf, as it stands upright in the midst, Jesus, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise! All thy mother’s sons shall bow down before thee, for thou art glorious exceedingly. Behold! every tongue shall confess that thou art Lord, and every knee shall bow before thee. Therefore with glad prostration of spirit we bow at thy feet even now.

We may well bow at his feet when we remember the unworthiness of ourselves. We are insignificant creatures. That is saying little. We are sinful creatures. Even though we have been redeemed by his precious blood, and shall never come into condemnation if we are indeed believers, yet we “were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” Undeserved mercy has made us what we are; and if, even now, his grace were withdrawn from us, we are fit fuel for the fires of hell. There is nothing in ourselves of which we can glory; and, when we come near to Jesus, our place is “at his feet.” There may be some-no, I think there cannot be among his people any that would aspire to any higher position than “at his feet” when they think of their sinnership; when they even think of their wanderings since they have known his love, of their shortcomings and coldness of heart towards him. But if there be any that can take a higher place, I know that I cannot. Oh, if I may but sit for ever at his feet, if I may only look up, and bless him, that he loved me and gave himself for me, it shall be everlastingly heaven to my spirit! And do you not say the same? Oh, utter nothingness, thou art something as compared with us; for we are less than nothing! The blank of

nothingness stood not in God's way when he came to create; but in us there was an opposition to the divine will—a something, I say, which was worse than nothing, which resisted our Lord's grace; but he has triumphed, and he has saved us, and now it is ours, with deep humiliation, to lie “at his feet.”

“At his feet,” again, is a place well suited to us, because of his well-beloved claims upon us. As many of us as have been renewed by grace have been rescued from the slavery of Satan, and we have come into the sweet service of Christ, and now it is our great joy to call him Master and Lord. When we are right-minded we make a full submission of everything to him. We place “at his feet” all our time, our talents, our substance. We desire to bring every thought into captivity to his dear sway. Our ambition is that he would rule us entirely. It is a scepter of grace with which Jesus reigns over his trusting people, but it is quite as powerful as the iron scepter. Oh, that he would use it, and crush our lusts with it, and break our sinful desires with it like potter's vessels, till we should be wholly given up to him!

*“In my spirit rule and conquer,
There set up thy eternal throne;
Wean my heart from every creature,
Thee to love, and thee alone.”*

This is the Christian's desire. He would lie joyfully submissive at the Savior's feet, completely subjected by the conquering Lord.

Once more: he is all in all, and we would lie at his feet to find salvation in him, and seek it nowhere else. Perhaps I am speaking to those who long after eternal life, and are crying after salvation. Come, beloved friend, I do not know you, but my Lord does; come and lie at his feet, and cry, “I never will depart until thou speak peace to me.” You are not far from finding peace in Christ when you are satisfied that you cannot find it anywhere else. When you are weaned from every hope except that which is found in Jesus, you will soon have a hope in him. Come, lie prostrate there, and say, “If I perish here, I will perish ‘at his feet.’ “None perish there. Beneath the cross, where the full sacrifice was offered, there I cast myself. I will never stir an inch beyond this. If the eternal thunderbolts can smite the cross, they shall blast me at the self-same time, for here I will stay. At Jesus' feet, I lie, in despair as to all else, but with strong resolve never to go away from him, resolved with him to live or die. This is what I mean, then, by the posture of being at Jesus' feet.

But now recollect, dear friends, that at Jesus' feet is the position which the very brightest of the saints delight to take up. When John was in the Isle of Patmos, and saw his Master whom he loved, he did not essay to place his head upon his bosom. Remember his words: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Now if such a one as John the Divine lay there, that is a high enough place for you and for me. "At his feet." Oh, let us get there! Down, down, down, high looks! Proud thoughts, down with you! Legal hopes, self-confidence, down with you! Away, away, with everything that lifts up man; and may Christ alone be exalted while we lie at his feet; for if we do not bow willingly, we shall have to come to it by a humbling experience. The Lord hath put all things under his feet; let us put ourselves "at his feet." If we will not accept him now to be our Master and Lord, we shall be flung into the winepress of the wrath of God, and then shall he trample upon us in his wrath and crush us in his sore displeasure. God save us from such a doom, and may we rejoice to be at his feet.

II. Now we shall attend to our second observation. We have shown, I think, that it is a becoming posture; but now, secondly, IT IS A VERY HELPFUL POSTURE.

Turn to my text and see that it is a very helpful posture for a weeping penitent. "Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping." It helps us to repent. Do not go and stand at Moses' feet. You will never repent there. To stand at the foot of Sinai and tremble may have its uses; but gospel repentance does not spring from legal terror. Gracious tears are wept at Jesus' feet. Oh, if thou wouldst have thy heart broken till the rock shall gush with rivers of repentance, stand at Jesus' feet. Stand there now. If thou wouldst have a tender heart, think of the Beloved who died for thee! Think of how those feet were pierced. This woman could not see that, for it was not then done; but thou canst see it, and mark where the nail has bored each blessed foot.

"At his feet" is the best place for a penitent, for it helps faith; for as you look down at those dear feet, and think, "He is God, and he became a man to suffer in my stead, and those dear feet were pierced that my heart might be delivered from death," you will find faith spring up in your soul at the sight of the great Substitute. Such faith will bring with it pardon. Standing at his feet, you will find him turn his head, and say to you what he said to

the woman, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Repentance, apart from Christ, will need to be repented of. Repentance at Christ's feet is the only repentance worth having. When thou dost weep for sin, so that thou canst not see Christ through thy tears, away with them. Unbelieving tears are not such as God delights in. But it is a sweet, sweet thing to taste a salt repentance, and then to taste the honey of a honeyed pardon: to have the soul smarting, and then to have it rejoicing too, because it stands at Jesus' feet.

And let me say to all weeping penitents-Get ye away to Jesus' feet, because it is there your love will flow, and there you will begin to think of doing something for him who will blot out your sin. Did not this woman unbind the luxuriant tresses of her head to make a towel? Did she not, instead of ewer and basin, use the fountains of her eyes, nay, the fountains of her heart, with which to bathe his feet? And then for ointment she brake the alabaster box, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed again those dear, dear feet of him who had brought salvation to her. O penitents, I pray you stand not outside in the cold porch with Moses, but come indoors, where Jesus welcomes you; and stand at his feet, and he will give you that blessed repentance after a godly sort, which shall bring you an answer of peace, and shall nourish life in your soul.

"At his feet," then, is a helpful posture to the weeping penitent.

Now you have got your Bibles open at Luke's seventh chapter, turn over to the eighth chapter and the thirty-fifth verse. You know the story of the man that had a legion of devils in him who used to cut himself, and who lived among the tombs. Now we read, "They went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus."

At Jesus' feet is the best place for a new convert. What a state of mind and body this poor man must have been in who was possessed of devils that carried him over hedge and ditch and field and flood, he knew not whither! Men bound him with chains, but like another Samson, he snapped them. He tore himself with flints and knives and thorns. Poor wretch! he rested not day nor night; but ever with his dolorous cry he made night hideous, so that they that passed by the cemeteries startled, feeling that they had come near the gates of hell. A whole legion of devils dwelt within this poor wretch; and when Christ cast all the devils out of him, he must have been spent and exhausted, just as after a delirium there seems no life left. He

wanted rest. Where was he to get it? He sat at Jesus' feet. Do you know why he rested there? It was because he felt the devil could not press on to Jesus' feet. He felt quite sure the devil would never enter into his body again while he sat at Jesus' feet. Why, no; the devils had been afraid of Jesus, and had gone into the swine, and rushed into the sea, to escape from him. While he sat at the feet of that great One who had rescued him from so terrible a fate, he seemed to feel, "I am safe here." At Jesus' feet he plucked up courage; and gathered strength! With his new clothes on (he had not worn any for many a day), and his tangled hair combed out again, and his poor face, that had been covered with filth, all cleansed again, I can hardly imagine the pleasurable sensation and the happiness that he felt, except I remember how I have sometimes felt myself, after sharp pains and long diseases, when I have come forth to breathe the air again, free from pain. Convalescence is very sweet, and fairly pictures how souls feel when they get Christ at last. "He has saved me, but, oh! I am weary, I am weary. I will sit at his feet." And as we sit at his feet, we feel all weariness pass away.

"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." We see a new heaven and a new earth, and we are made completely new creatures, and where should we sit but at his feet who makes all things new? You that have found Christ, and now greatly need rest, do not try to find rest anywhere but in him. Come, and sit "at his feet." Have no more cries, no more fears, no more doubts, no more despairs. Christ has saved you. Sit still and remember what he has done, and what he is doing. Sit still and look up at his dear face, and say, "Blessed be the altogether lovely one who plucked me out of the jaws of hell, and delivered me from between the teeth of the dragon." O dear friends, there is no rest like resting at Jesus' feet!

***"Here it is I find my heaven
While upon the cross I gaze."***

Now, turn with your finger a little farther to the forty-first verse of the same chapter and you will find out that "at Jesus' feet" is a very helpful posture for a pleading intercessor-for one who is himself saved, and is pleading for others. "Behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."

Many of us know what it is to intercede with God for others; but there is no interceding that is so efficacious as that which is done at Jesus' feet. When your heart breaks-when you feel that you do not deserve the mercy that you are seeking for-when, like Abraham, you cry, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes," it is then that you prevail. Lie "at his feet." But do not lie there as if it were somebody else's feet. Let it be Jesus' feet, the feet of your dear Lord, who came to save you. Lie there, and say, "Lord, save my daughter. Lord, save my wife," or, "Lord, have mercy upon my wandering, wilful boy, and save him, for thy mercy's sake." Plead with your whole soul. Plead importunately; but do not plead despairingly.

If you are at Jesus' feet, you are near to the fountain of help. You are near to him who tenderly loves you, one who would not have had feet if he had not loved mankind, for he took his body upon him out of love, and his feet are a part of his frame. Oh, to realize the presence of Christ when we pray, for if not we pray out into the open common, or across the cruel sea. I like praying right into the Mediator's ear. It is grand praying when Jesus is near, and you speak to him as a man speaketh to his friend. Thus do I pray now. "Lord, have mercy upon my congregation. Save the people. Lord, have mercy upon those whom I have prayed for many a time, who still are not renewed in heart." We always prevail when we pray so? When I know that I have gained Christ's ear I look out for the answer as confidently as I expect an answer to a letter that I send by post. Some of our prayers do not go that way for want of our believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but when we believe that he will hear us, he does hear us. So, Jairus, if your daughter is sick, pray for her, but do it "at Jesus' feet." You have an ungodly relative, and you have prayed often, but perhaps you have not prayed at Jesus' feet, and I urge you now to try that hallowed place.

This fourth time will you turn a little farther, to Luke 10:39? "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word"; so that "at Jesus' feet" is the fitting place for a willing learner. A lowly sense of our own ignorance so that we do not dare to sit higher than "at his feet," but a believing confidence in his infinite wisdom so that we do sit "at his feet" to learn of him-this is suitable. How much better scholars we should be if we tried to learn at Jesus' feet! Some even of the Lord's people are a deal too knowing. Many a boy at school does not learn anything of an excellent master, for he is conceited: he knows nothing, and he teaches

himself. I am afraid we are like that scholar. We know nothing, and we teach ourselves. We have prejudices-opinions of what truth ought to be. This is evil. But, oh, it is very sweet to feel, "I do not know anything. I come, and take the Bible, and ask it to photograph itself upon my heart"! Some minds are like stained glass windows; they shut out much of the light, and the little light that does struggle through, they color after their own manner. It is well to be plain glass, so that the Lord's light, with all its color and delicacy of shade, may come in just as it comes from heaven, with nothing gathered from ourselves. Beloved, I pray the Lord to free us all from prejudice, from self-conceit, and from opinions which originate with others.

We must learn at Jesus' feet; not at the feet of man, when man goes away from Christ. At times the Lord may send a man whom he teaches, and what we gather from him may be God's own voice to us. Still we must always be ready to discriminate between what the man says of himself, and what he says in his Master's name; for there is a grave difference. "At Jesus' feet" we must take up our seat. Dear young men, that are beginning to study theology, and that wish to become teachers of others, do not give yourselves up to any system, and say, "I follow this doctor, or that." John Wesley is not our master; but Jesus Christ. John Calvin is not our Master, but Jesus Christ. It does not signify how great and good these men were: they were worthy of the love of all the church of God, but we call them not Rabbi. We may follow the man as far as the man follows Christ, but not an inch farther. We must sit at Jesus' feet, humble, teachable, child-like, confidently believing what Jesus says, but having no "know" of our own-taking it all from him.

But my time fails me, and so I must take you to the last instance that I will give you in Luke. Look at Luke 17:and the sixteenth verse-the chapter which I read to you. We find that the Samaritan who had been healed fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. Well, then, that position is most helpful to every grateful worshipper. I think I see the angels and the blood-bought ones commencing one of their celestial chorales. The eye of my imagination is almost smitten with blindness as I gaze upon the scene. They are all brighter than the sun, and the whole company shines with the light of more than a thousandfold midday. Hear them as they commence the rapturous strain! Their notes how sweet, how seraphic, as they praise the eternal Father and the glorious Lamb of God and worship! We hear the song. How it swells! Harken to the soft touches of the harpers harping

with their harps! Do you note how the singers and the players of instruments seem caught up in the ecstasy? But mark! As the song rises they begin to bow. As it rises higher they bow lower, and lower, and lower. Hark! The enthusiastic fervor of their love has made them lift their loudest hallelujah; and lo! they cast their crowns at his sacred feet. The whole company are still lifting up the song to its utmost glory, but anon they fall on their faces, prostrate before the throne. "At his feet" is their loftiest position. Let us imitate them, and making the worship more ecstatic than before, bow before him.

*"Lo, at his feet, with awful joy,
The adoring armies fall!
With joy they shrink to nothing there,
Before the eternal All."*

So let us praise him for all that he has done for us; and, as we praise him, let us sink lower, and lower, and lower, till in ourselves we are nothing and Christ alone lives in us. Let no thought of self, nor wish for self, nor dream of self intrude, but let Jesus be all in all. "At his feet," there shall our heaven be found. When our soul is deepest bathed in grateful praise we shall fall down on our faces and worship the Lamb. The Lord bless you, and keep you at his feet for ever. Amen.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WIND.

NO. 2067

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEB. 2ND, 1888.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”-John 3:8.

OUR Savior’s words are infinite. Some men use a great deal of language to convey a very little meaning; but our Savior compacts boundless instruction into short sentences. If all the preachers in Christendom were to preach from this one verse for the next twelve months, they would still leave much of its teaching undeveloped.

These words remind us of the Holy Spirit. Is it not to be feared that we have lost a great deal of power in our lives, because we have not been sufficiently mindful of the power of the Spirit of God? When our Savior compared the Holy Spirit’s operations to the movements of the winds, did he not show us how absolutely needful they are, how indispensable they are? Imagine a world without winds! Why, we should soon stagnate into death. Without wind, what would be the use of the great highway of the sea? A thousand mischiefs would follow, infinitely more than we could calculate upon, if henceforth the air had no motion, and there were no living, breathing winds. Without the Spirit of God, the scene were infinitely worse. O ship of the church, how couldst thou speed over the sea of time? The trees of the wood would no more clap their hands. Stagnation of progress would take place. The dry bones of the valley would lie unquickened, and even the odors of the rose of Sharon would no more be shed abroad. We must have the Spirit of God. Even as the Sun of Righteousness brings healing beneath his wings, so doth the Holy Spirit

bring all that is living to us all. Let us adore the third Person of the Trinity in Unity, and think of him often with deep reverence in our spirits, so that we never go to work, nor to prayer, nor even to the singing of a hymn, without seeking that he would himself be the life of the holy engagement.

With the view of bringing out the truth about the Spirit of God, I shall first mention certain minor lessons contained in the text; then, the lesson of the mystery of the Holy Spirit; and thirdly, the mystery of the man that is born of the Spirit; for it is not merely said, “so is the work of the Spirit”; but “so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The child of a mystery is himself a mystery.

I. First, there are CERTAIN MINOR LESSONS TO BE TAUGHT HERE. The Spirit of God is like the wind. Note well that his operation is unexpected. The wind bloweth where it listeth, so that thou knowest not what wind to expect. In this land especially, we can never tell what wind will blow to-morrow. A few days ago, it was the south-west, and it brought a rapid thaw; but the next morning it was nearly north, and a frost was upon us. We may well put vanes upon our public buildings, for without them we could never tell from the day of the year or the season of the year, from what quarter the wind would come. I feel thankful when I remember that, like the wind, the Holy Spirit bloweth where he listeth, for I cannot tell where next he may operate. Perhaps to-morrow he may save a prince—it would be an unexpected thing; another day he may save some great backslider, who knoweth? He may graciously work upon the more degraded part of the people, or he may deal with certain of our great merchants, and bring them to his feet. He that knows the work of the Holy Ghost must have learned to expect the unexpected. The last thing expected in Jerusalem was that Saul of Tarsus had been converted; but he was converted; and you may now hope that the most violent opposer of the gospel may become a trophy of its power. And might not that same wind blow on you, who come here simply to be a spectator of em solemnities, willing to hear what the preacher has to say, but not at all desirous to be affected by it? How often have we seen men and women the least likely, the very first to be impressed by this divine power! O heavenly wind, blow where the feeble faith of thy people has scarcely dared to think that thou canst come, and where every influence has operated to shut thee out.

The movement of the Holy Spirit is like the wind, too, because it is inexplicable. Who can tell me why the wind was north-west on Monday, or

why it was east on Friday? There are persons who profess to tell us, that is, they use great words which mean nothing. As a general rule, science signifies bamboozlement, riding upon hypotheses, or mystifying with long words. The explanations of modern savants are often more difficult to understand than the fact which requires the explanation. Now, I cannot tell why the Spirit of God works here or there. Why was England favored with the gospel when other nations, who were in advance of Britain in civilization, were left without it? Why is it that the islands of the sea seem almost always to accept the gospel, while continents are left in darkness? "He giveth no account of his matters": take thou that for thine answer. It is all that he will give thee.

The Holy Spirit moves like the wind for suddenness and freeness. None of us can raise the wind; we use the expression, but the fact is beyond our power. The wind comes without our call or direction. Who shall tell whether to-morrow we shall wake up with a thaw or a sharp frost? The wind springs up just where it likes, and moves just where it pleases; and it is so with the Holy Spirit. I grant you that prayer such as that of Elias can chain the winds and stay the clouds, or unseal the bottles of heaven and bring down the rain: but it is because the Lord wills it so to be. Still, the Spirit is absolutely free, and he moveth as the dew which tarrieth not for men, neither waiteth for the sons of men. If he wills to break forth tomorrow across this country with his divine energy, he cannot be stayed. If, in answer to the prayers of his people, he should be pleased to work in India or in China, as I trust he will, we shall soon see how free is the blessed Spirit to bring glory to God. God may be glorified thereby. The Spirit is like the wind; his movements are not to be accounted for.

And, next, the Holy Spirit is like the wind, because absolutely sovereign. Preachers scarcely like to tell their congregations nowadays that God gives his grace according to his own good pleasure. I learned, when I was a boy, that the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy him for ever; but I hear now, according to the new theology, that the chief end of God is to glorify man and enjoy him for ever. Yet this is the turning of things upside down. The glory of God is still the chief end of the world's existence; and whether men will have it so or not, the Lord has settled it. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" so that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." No voice is more glad than mine to preach the free salvation of God to them that perish; but God has not

sunk his sovereignty in his bounty. Still Jehovah reigneth, and the wind bloweth where it listeth, and not where man wills that it shall blow.

Further, the Spirit of God is comparable to the wind because of the variety of his operations.

The wind doth not blow at all times alike. Soft and mild, it brings us summer heat; rough and rugged, it makes us bind our cloaks about us, for the sharp breath of winter chills us to the bone. The Spirit of God works differently at different times, according to the necessity of the case, and according to his own will; for he bloweth as he listeth as well as where he listeth. Sometimes I have almost trembled to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. I remember a brother praying that we might be filled with the Spirit of God, and I, but very young then, yet ventured to ask him whether he knew what he meant; and he looked at me with astonishment when I added, "Where he comes he is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning." It is a blessing, no doubt, to be filled with the Spirit; but who may abide the day of his coming? Like the Lord Jesus, he is as a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. We might have had the Spirit much more copiously had we been able to bear his wondrous work within us. I know he is a Comforter, but I know also that his fan is in his hand. He is a searcher as well as a healer, a destroyer of evil as well as a creator of good. Thus you see that his working is not always of one kind. One gracious soul has gone out weeping, broken-hearted: the Spirit of God had wounded the heart. Another has gone forth rejoicing in full salvation: it was the Spirit of God. One day the Word of God comes like a hammer and a fire; at another time it droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven upon the parched heart. All these worketh the same Spirit. Judge not, I pray you, so as to deny this humble hope, or that trembling trust to be of the Spirit, for the Spirit worketh all good things. Even in the same individual the Spirit of God works very differently at different times. One day he makes us bound and leap like young harts upon the mountains; and then Naphtali is a hind let loose: the Spirit of God is on him. At another time the true prophet is shut up, and cannot come forth; he is filled with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered, and the word of the Lord is as a pent-up fire in his bones. But the Spirit of God is as much in the silence as in the eloquence—possibly more so, for the flesh may go with the first, but it is the Spirit which worketh in the second. Do not let us judge ourselves to be abandoned by the Spirit of God because after autumn eventides, in which we sat under our own vine and fig tree, we have had wintry nights of darkness, leafless

and fruitless. Know ye not that the Spirit of God is that wind which passeth over the green field when the flowers are all in bloom, and the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass? The withering work of the Holy Spirit is as necessary for our eternal benefit as when the Spirit, at another time, opens the buds of those fair flowers which shed their perfume at the feet of love. Note, then, that like the wind, he varies in his modes of manifestation.

And note, again, the Spirit of God is like the wind because his operation is manifest. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof." Yes, we cannot see the wind, but we can hear it. So may you hear the Spirit of God. When you hear the Scriptures, and read the Word, the Spirit of God speaks to you. It is well to hear the Spirit whisper in the ear of conscience when he presses home the truth, and makes the mind to feel its power. Sweetest of all is it when the newly-opened ear hears the Spirit of God speak to it with its own peculiar, "still small voice." Then it is sweetly true. "Thou hearest the sound thereof." My dear hearers, do you know anything about this? Has the Spirit of God so wrought with thee, that thou hast recognized the sound thereof? It is a manifest work: hast thou felt it?

Yet, in all respects, the work of the Spirit of God remains mysterious and wonderful. Men cannot tell us much about the wind, but when the wind rises to a tornado, and carries everything before it, we see what the wind can do. I would to God that we had a cyclone of the Holy Ghost! What a sweep it would make of a great deal of rotten church building which now stands upright! Many a magnificent pile would fly before it like dust and chaff from the summer's threshing-floor! But the Spirit of God, whether he works so gently that he scarce disturbs the tear that hangs in the eye like a dewdrop on a blade of grass, or whether he comes with such tremendous force that the most stubborn infidelity is swept away before it, in either case is very marvellous, for he is God, and he works after the divine manner. I am half inclined to pause here, and say, "For the rest of our time let us worship, in the presence of this mighty God, who doeth his pleasure, and worketh the will of the Most High for evermore."

II. I must take you on, in the second place, to consider THE GREAT LESSON OF THE MYSTERY WHICH IS TAUGHT US BY THE SYMBOL OR THE WIND, WHICH IS THE TYPE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Now, dear friends concerning the wind, our Savior says, "Thou canst not tell whence it

cometh, and whither it goeth,” and yet we know that it comes from the east, or the south, and passes on its way, and it goeth towards the west. The text cannot mean that we do not know the direction of the wind, or the direction in which the Spirit of God is moving, for we do know that. We know that he is a power that makes for righteousness and for eternal life. But then, we do not know where any wind begins to blow. No one can explain where the north wind commences. The heathen had an idea about the wind rushing out of a cave, or of its being let loose from a bag. We know that this is but a dream. We cannot imagine a place where the wind starts on its journey; and we do not know when the Spirit of God begins to work in any person’s heart, or even in our own. Some persons are troubled because they cannot tell the day of their conversion. Let them not be troubled about that question. Even those who know that on such and such a day they took a decided step, and the light burst in upon their spirit, will find, if they look back, that a great deal of gracious experience went before their decision, to prepare their minds for the final step. We do not know how early the divine processes begin within a soul. Our very parentage has something to do with it; that we were born of such and such godly parents is a part of the arrangement of grace. I do not think you can tell, with regard to yourself, when the first gracious thought was sown in you, when first you lived towards God. You can tell when you first perceived that you believed in God; but there was an experience before that. You cannot put your finger upon such and such a place and say, “Here the east wind began,” nor canst thou say, “Here the Spirit of God began to work on me.”

Neither can we always tell what was the first process. Does a man pray first or believe first? If he pray without faith he will not be heard. Which comes first, repentance or faith? A repentance that has no faith in it is no repentance; a faith that has no repentance with it is no faith. These gracious products are like the spokes of a wheel, they all move at the same time. When the wheel of spiritual life moves we cannot tell which grace in it moves first. The processes of divine grace may, in your case, begin with a soul downcast, and in the case of another person they may begin with a lifting up of holy faith. We cannot tell whence it cometh.

Neither can we always tell the exact means of our receiving the Spirit. You say it was by this minister’s preaching. Be grateful. But before that sermon an unknown person did a deal of ploughing within your heart. How would the one have sown had not the other ploughed? Many a man who thinks he has never done any good will find out at the last great day that he did much

more than he fancied, and that he accomplished an essential part of the work though it remained hidden. "Thou canst not tell whence it cometh."

Equally mysterious is the other point as to "whither it goeth." We know which way the Holy Spirit points, but thou canst not tell whither he goeth, that is to say, what special fashion his work will take in the person who has received it to-night; whether it shall go towards a deeper and deeper sense of sin, and the life shall be most noticeable for its repentance; or whether it shall rise into a higher and a higher view of Christ, and the life shall be noticeable for its joyfulness. Thou canst not tell whither it goeth. How far the grace of God can go in any man it were impossible for us to say. Let none of us begin to measure by ourselves, and say, "Nobody can be holier than I am; nobody can have more grace than I have." Brother, you yourself can obtain ten times as much grace as you now have. You are but a babe yet; you do not know what the stature of a man in Christ may be. The boy converted but a week ago may become a Moffat or a Livingstone. The girl who is now a trembling believer, thou canst not tell what a Mary or Hannah God may make her. Thou canst not tell whither the Spirit goeth. When Martin Luther's father first taught Martin about Christ, and prayed for him, he could not tell how the Spirit of God in him would work, and how the whole world would be the better for the miner's son. "Thou canst not tell whither it goeth." Oh, if some of you get the Spirit of God just now, I cannot guess what it will make of you. There are wonderful possibilities sleeping within the breast of every man who receives the Spirit of God. Should the Spirit work in thee thou wouldest not know thyself in the sanctifying experience of a thousand years' time; and what are a thousand years? Project yourselves beyond the growths of time to that grandest of all growths, when "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Even then you have not reached the end of the divine way. Thou canst not tell whither it goeth. Thou art yet to outstrip the angels. Jesus thy Lord is the First-born, and thou art to be one of the First-born's many brethren. Measureless advancement lies before thee. I have opened the window: look through and contemplate with the eye of faith what yet may come of the entrance of the grace of God into thy heart! Thou canst not tell where the north wind stays its course, nor where the east wind falls asleep? Is there such a place? Thou hast not seen where it begins, nor canst thou guess where it shall end, and yet even when thou art in glory the life which the Spirit imparted to thee here shall be thy life.

III. The last few minutes must be occupied with THE LESSON CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF THE MAN HIMSELF—"So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Spirit-born man is a mysterious person. Only those who are like him can pretend to know him; even they do not know him; and what is more wonderful is, he does not know himself. Perhaps no man is more amazed at him than the godly man himself. He has experienced a change, but he cannot describe it to you; he knows the things in which he is changed, the effects of the Spirit, but how it was wrought he knows not. As no man can tell anything about his first birth, so neither can he describe his second birth: it remains a mysterious operation even to him who has passed through it. "Oh," said one to me, "Sir, either the world's quite altered, or else I am." So, indeed, it is: everything is changed. The world itself is altered, and in some things it seems altered for the worse. We find we are not at home in it, though we used to be. We should not know ourselves if we met ourselves; and when, unfortunately, we do meet ourselves, we fall to quarrelling with ourselves, for we have no greater enemy anywhere than our own selves. It is a strange thing that we should have to say so; but the greatest paradox that can be, is a regenerate man still in a body which remains under corruption. The man is a strange mixture of old and new, nature and grace. While he is himself a mystery to himself, his sorrows are a mystery to other people, and they cannot make out why he is sad. His business prospers, his children are about him, he has good health, and yet he is mourning; and if they hear him say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" they reply, "this is a wretched man, though he ought to be the happiest of beings!" From the best man in the world we hear the deepest sigh that he is not better. The man that thanks God who can give him the victory is the man who groans in the battle. The world does not understand this; it cannot make out how we can fight, and yet be at peace; how we can be torn asunder, yet never torn away from the cross; how we can live by dying, and die every day in order that we may never die at all. The believer's riddle is a very hard one. He is a mystery as to his sorrows and his joys: these are secrets with which the world cannot intermeddle. This is a mysterious business: a man in poverty, rich; a man in affliction, rejoicing; a man alone, yet in the best of company. The unregenerate cannot comprehend this singular person.

The man that lives near to God is a mystery, more or less, at all times. He is not all he desires to be, nor all he hopes to be, but he is far beyond what

he ever expected to be. Strange impulses move him at times, so that he does things which he cannot himself account for. He feels that he is bound to do them, and he does them, and has the warrant of having done rightly in the result of what he does. I am sure that every child of God who walks in the light of his countenance, will understand what I mean when I say, that we are moved in singular ways; so moved, that we ourselves hardly know how; but so moved that Wisdom is justified of all her children.

Strange is the power of the Holy Spirit over the heart of the regenerate; and this is made manifest in the singular changes of which they are the subjects. God's own people know what it is to sound the deeps, and outsoar the heights. Up, up, up, where the callow lightnings first spread their wings, we mount in ecstasy; and then down we go, down into the abysses where sea-monsters have their dens: such strange beings are we when under the highest power. The wind sighing through the trees, or singing amid the cords of an AEolian harp, is not more strange than the experience of a genuine child of God. I know what it is to run before Ahab's chariot with Elijah, and I am afraid I know what it is to faint under the juniper, and need to be awakened that I may partake of food, that I may go forty days in the strength thereof. The Christian man does not understand himself, but his varying experiences go to make up that sickness of self and fondness of Christ which is so desirable.

I will give you two words you cannot explain, just to show the mystery of our manhood. "Spirituality": now, then, turn to your dictionaries, and see whether they define it. You know what it is: you cannot tell me, and I shall not tell you, because I cannot. There is another word—"unction." You know what it is. If you hear a sermon that has none of it you know what the absence of it is; but when an unction rests upon the Word, can you tell me what it is? I cannot tell you; but I pray that I may have that unction myself. Of course, the ungodly make jests upon the expression, because it has no meaning to them. Yet the children of God delight in it.

Do not expect the world to understand you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but, inasmuch as Christ has chosen you out of the world, do not expect that the world will know you. If it knew him not, who was so much better and clearer than you, how should it know you? And you, my dear hearers, who are not born again, to whom all this must seem a foreign language, I do pray you to believe that there is something which you need to understand, and that in order to understand it you must be born again. May the Spirit of God make you feel, experience, and enjoy

this mystery by causing you to know the power of that gracious word, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” If you believe in Jesus, if you look to him, if you trust him; if the Holy Spirit has given you faith, he has begun his work in you, and he will carry it on and perfect it to the praise of his glory for ever. May it be so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,-“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,” and therefore I will not repeat any of the fears which naturally hoot around such a shock as I have received. The doctor says, “You may be well soon of that knee, but do not deceive yourself by trying the brain till it has had a fair chance of recovery.” I know what he means, and I feel I must submit to be away from my delightful work till I can begin again without absolute folly.

The good points of the whole matter are very many. The name of the Lord be prayed for the splendid way in which, in the sorrowful absence of both pastors, all the church has stuck to its work, and the blessing has not ceased. I am cheered and comforted by this; and I am sure that the Lord has some great design of love to answer by the heaped up coals of fire which have burned upon our hearth. He is good; as surely good in the dark as in the sunlight. All is well. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Perhaps by the way of bodily weakness may come increased spiritual strength.

Love unbroken, from your suffering pastor,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Jan. 17th, 1889.

NATHANAEL: OR, THE MAN NEEDED FOR THE DAY.

NO. 2068

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 3RD, 1889

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEP. 20TH, 1885.

“Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”-John 1:47.

THIS morning we had a “behold”—a behold about a new convert. “Behold, he prayeth!” (*“Behold, he prayeth!” Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 1860.*) It seemed to me most suitable to occupy the evening with another “behold”—a behold about another new convert, who is just having his eyes opened to see the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to become his disciple. “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” “When Jesus says “Behold!” we may be sure that there is something worth seeing. A man in whom is no guile is so rare a person nowadays that we ought not to grudge an evening for such a sight. We are always beholden to a man who enables us to see an honest man: such a man is one of the noblest works of God, and will reward our observation. Diogenes looks for an honest man with a lantern; but Jesus finds him.

I shall not go into the full meaning of what “an Israelite indeed” is, but I shall dwell, principally, upon the fact that Nathanael was a man with no guile in him. The Lord Jesus Christ made that discovery; and who so fit to spy out a man in whom was no guile, as the Christ in whom there is no guile? Two guileless men were that day together, for in our Lord Jesus there is neither guilt nor guile. In us there is guilt, but we trust that by

divine grace guile has been cast out of us. It will be so if the Lord does not impute iniquity to us, according to the words of David, “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” The Lord is sure to put all guile out of us when he removes all guilt away from us.

Men generally see what they are; and because Christ is guileless, therefore he spies out the man of guileless heart, and at once commends him and welcomes him, and says, “Behold,” as if delighted and charmed to see him. The Lord Jesus appreciates at a high rate the sincerity which he perceives in Nathanael. I am afraid that a man without guile is not much esteemed by the ordinary run of mankind. He will be wise, however, not to trouble himself about that matter. The approbation of Jesus is better than the approbation of the whole world. They say of a man nowadays who has no guile, “Well, he is a very simple-minded kind of fellow. Exceedingly good, but rather blunt. Quite unsuspecting, and therefore you may readily take him in.” Mark you, there is no reason why a man without guile should be taken in; for while we are harmless as doves we can also be wise as serpents if we are rightly taught; but in the ordinary way, a man that is not crafty and cunning—a man that speaks his mind and practises no policy, and is not acquainted with tricks and shifts—is thought to be a poor creature by the wise and deceitful men of this day. But if Jesus Christ takes delight in a guileless man, the guileless man may be perfectly satisfied with this high measure of acceptance. God grant to each one here present, man or woman, that we all may be found free from guile!

I am going to speak upon the text in two ways. First, here is a happy sign in a seeker of Christ—a man in whom there is no guile. And, secondly, here is a vital point about a believer in Christ—about the man who has passed the stage of seeking, and has become a believer. He must have in his spirit no guile; it is vital to him that it should be sincere and straightforward.

I. Here, first, we clearly see A HAPPY SIGN IN A SEEKER—he is a man in whom is no guile. We were talking, some time ago—a few of us ministers of Christ who have been familiar with the souls of men for years—and I made a remark that seemed to startle my brethren. The remark was this: although I had spoken with thousands of men and women who had been converted, and I had seen persons brought to Christ of every age and of every character, yet I scarcely remembered the conversion of a man who was double-minded, crafty, false, deceitful. I could not even now qualify this

solemn statement, for my memory does not correct it. Of course, God's grace is sovereign, and God chooses whomsoever he wills, and he does not choose according to human merit; but it is very singular that of the ground which is mentioned in the parable, which brought forth fruit to the divine sower, it is said that it was "honest and good ground." By this was not intended any spiritual grace, nor even any moral virtue of high degree, in the condition of the persons who received the gospel; but there was sincerity about the people so described-they were honest, straight, unsophisticated, and free from subtlety and cunning. It is in the honest heart that sowing truth takes root. I have known the drunkard saved. Blessed be God for that! I have seen the swearer have his mouth washed, so that he has spoken sweet and goodly words for the rest of his life. I have known the fornicator, and adulterer, and the harlot, delivered from the Stygian ditch of abominable lust. I have known men guilty of almost every sin delivered from the power of evil; and concerning all these the living evidence of holy conduct has proved their sincerity beyond all question. But I still say that my memory does not bring before me a single person habitually guilty of the double-shuffle, habitually a liar, habitually a cheat, converted to God at all. The insincere, the canting, the hypocritical, the habitually deceptive-I know not of converts from these classes. There may have been such, and I should not wonder if there have been; but I do not happen to have met with them. The most of the converted people I have seen have been straightforward and true after a way. They might curse and swear, they might deny the gospel, they might occasionally lie under strong pressure, or from sheer flippancy; might commit all manner of criminalities; but, as a rule, there they were, and you could see them to be what they were. They were bad fellows enough, but they did not dissemble: they sinned most grievously, but they never pretended to be saints. Such were the men that Christ converted. Such was Paul, of whom we spoke this morning-intensely earnest and honest in all that he did, even when he persecuted the saints of God.

It seems to me, that often in the man who is filled with guile, there is a want of something for the grace of God to work upon. When the creature repents, it is only a skin-deep business: his heart is never wounded. When he believes anything you do not know that he does believe it. His faith is not better than another's unbelief. He begins at once putting another meaning on what he professes to believe: you cannot hold such an eel. If anything comes home to his feelings, he has such a very minute conscience

left that there is no room for conviction to light upon, when it does pay him a visit. He has got into such an habitual condition of cheating that he cheats himself as well as others. He cannot be true and thorough: it is not in him. When the truth shines full upon his face he does not openly pull down the blind to shut out the light; but he talks about how delightful it is, and yet manages to shut his eyes to it. He praises truth, but he does not love it. He is a lover of the gospel in words, but he cunningly spreads abroad sentiments which undermine it. I am sick of such men, and yet they are not hard to find. We have all around us the hollowness which would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect.

There is scarcely anything under heaven so damnable as guile, deceit, and craft. The ingrained deceiver is capable of everything evil, and incapable of anything good. Out of that kind of man the devil manufactures his chief instruments. Traitors like Judas Iscariot are carved out of the ebony of deceit.

I say, again, that it is horribly difficult for any of these people ever to be converted, and it seldom happens that they are. They may get into the church even like Ananias and Sapphira, but they have to be carried as corpses outside of her: such a dishonor are they to the company of God's people.

The man of whom we have great hope is one in whose spirit there is no guile. Now I will show you the sort of man he is. He is one who, when he is spoken to about Christ, has difficulties, but in his difficulties he is honest. Nathanael is told by his friend Philip that he has found the Messiah. Nathanael enquires, "Where did you find him?" Why, he comes from Nazareth! "Well," says he, "but can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Now, when a man will plainly state his objection, his friend can do his best to meet it, and to answer it with some such word as "Come and see." Around us are a number of persons who object to our Lord; but the objections which they mention are not their real objections. Their pretended difficulties are a red-herring, to turn the scent from their real reasons for opposition. Many cavil at Christ because they do not want to give up their sin. They pick up some technical question, some difficulty raised by geology or evolution, or something or other, and they make a fuss and a dust over it, while the real impediment is that they are living an unclean life, and do not want to give up their evil ways. The difficulty is that they are making gain in a wrong way, and to be Christians would not

suit their pockets, for they would have to quit a bad trade, or conduct their business with 'lessened profits. There is where the true difficulty lies; but they do not care to mention the real impediment, and therefore they pretend that they are the victims of some awful mystery, or terrible dogma, which frightens them out of their salvation. We know the bogies and bugbears which these deceivers set up. They deceive themselves more than they deceive anybody else. He is the sincere seeker, who does not play at sham difficulties, but who speaks out at once and tells his friend what the point is that hinders him.

Of the man in whose spirit there is no guile, we may also say that, as a seeker, he is also candid. He is willing to examine. Consequently, like Nathanael when Philip said "Come and see," he does come and see for himself, and he examines on his own account to see if it be so. Oh, if half the people that object to the gospel would but read the Bible for themselves they would not object any longer! Few people nowadays care to read solidly good books; but when they do so, they are usually greatly the better for it. I saw a young brother last Friday, and in answer to the question, "How were you converted?" he said, "It was through reading Luther." I was somewhat surprised, and I said, "Luther? What book of Luther?" "I read Luther on the Galatians." "You did? I am glad to see the man that reads Luther on the Galatians." He was a young man employed in the city, and I admired him for preferring Luther to the wretched novels of the period. "I read it two or three times," said he, "and I saw the difference between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. I saw how man was ruined by his works, and how he must be saved by faith, and I found the Savior while reading that book." I was delighted with the young man, and I feel persuaded that one day we shall hear of him in another capacity. Oh, if people would but read the Bible and books about the Bible which explain the gospel, with the desire to know what the gospel is, they would find him of whom Moses and the prophets did write! Alas! men do not find Jesus, for there is guile in their spirit, and they do not desire to find him. They do not want to know, and so they remain ignorant. They do not want to discover, and so do not discover. In the last great day, when that curtain shall be drawn back which hides from our eyes all souls that are lost-if we are permitted to look into that dreadful place-we shall not find there a soul that ever sincerely cried to God for mercy through Jesus Christ; nor do I think that we shall find one who searched the Scriptures and heard the gospel with the desire to find Christ therein. Hell is filled through that

deceitfulness of the natural heart, which will not let them receive Jesus and his salvation. They blind their own eyes to the light of God. Happy is the pastor to whom enquirers state their difficulties honestly, and who can persuade them to examine the subject about which they are in doubt!

Now, dear friends, a man who is really free from guile in his heart—a downright, upright, straightforward man—is open and ready for the work of God’s Holy Spirit. For instance, such a man is open to conviction. When he reads the Bible or hears a sermon, he says, “I desire to know all about it.” Tell me the truth, however unpleasant it may be. He does not want the preacher to flatter him. Some do, you know. They must have very pretty words spoken about the dignity of human nature, the universal Fatherhood of God, the almost unavoidable character of sin, and the hopeful destiny of universal manhood, or else their proud hearts sneer at the preacher. But the man in whose spirit there is no guile loves best the preacher who uses the surgeon’s knife without partiality, and cuts down to the root of the cancer. “No,” says he, “I did not come here to be fooled and amused. I want to know about that which concerns my soul for life and for death, and to know the truth of it.” Such a man is open to conviction. He has laid aside prejudice; he does not dictate to the minister of God, but he is ready to hear all the truth, and to feel the power of the message if it be indeed from God. He is ready to confess his sin when he finds that he has broken the law of God. When he perceives that the law deals with thoughts, and words, and deeds; when he sees how wide its range is, so as to take in every action of this mortal life, he is ready to bow his head, and say, “I am a sinner. God be merciful to me a sinner.” The man who is crafty and double-minded will not do that: indeed, it is the last thing he cares to do. He begins excusing himself in some fashion or other. He is no worse than other people; he was misled by others; he could not help it, for everybody else did so; he only followed his natural passions, and he could not help his constitutional inclinations. It was his fate to do it. He had intended to do better, but was overcome. These are a few of the forms of the shuffling of guile. If the man were an honest man he would say, “Yes, it is so. I broke the law and did wrong. I am not going to dispute the question. I am forced to plead guilty; and if thou condemn me, O my God, thou wilt do no more than is just.” That is the kind of man who, before long, will find salvation, and enter into peace with God.

This is the man who lies open also to the power of the Holy Spirit in reference to conversion. You have proved to him that he is wrong, and

with his whole heart he desires to turn from evil. Show him his mistake, and he will be eager to redress it. His honest soul will not rest in wrongdoing. Look at the apostle Paul before his conversion. He is a desperate Pharisee and a furious persecutor. He tears along like a wild horse in his mad career of self-righteousness; but he no sooner perceives that Jesus really is the Christ, than he is just as intense in his attempts to make known the glory of Christ as he was before to overthrow his kingdom. He sinned through ignorance and unbelief, and not from malice. If we spoke to honest hearts at all times, we should see plentiful conversions; but, alas! "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Further than this, I believe that a sincere heart, a true heart, is a great guard to a man against pretended plans of salvation. "Come here," says one, "I will prove to you salvation by works." The honest man replies, "That will not suit me; for salvation by works would require that my works should have been perfect throughout life, and mine have not been so. Mine have been imperfect, are still imperfect, and will be imperfect till I die. I cannot stand on the footing of merit for an hour." "Come," says another, "here is salvation by sincerity. Sincere obedience is the patent article by which men are saved. Do your best, and be sincere, and the matter is squared." But the man who is upright in heart answers, "I do not see that, neither can I rest therein." Indeed he ought not to do so; for such a hope is based on a lie. If a man were to take poison sincerely, thinking it to be medicine, it would not cure him, but kill him. If a man most sincerely stands in the way of an express steam-engine and thinks he can stop it, it will "stop him" and his life altogether. The candid, thoughtful mind cannot believe that invention of self. You see, the man whose heart is quite honest, wants something real and solid, and has no desire to arrive at an easy peace by deceitful means. Being truthful himself, he cannot bear a lie; and when somebody offers him a comforting falsehood, he replies, "I cannot be comforted except by truth. I will not let my conscience be stayed and eased, except by that which is legitimate and right. I want to be justly and truly saved, and not merely tempted to believe that I am saved, when I am not." I believe that many persons will never be a prey to priestcraft, or any of the thousand inventions of mankind, because God, in great mercy, has made them men in whose spirits there is no guile; and therefore, they search after that which is true, and have an inward perception of what is truth. They may be mistaken in some things, and will be, for we are all fallible; but a true heart is very like the mariner's needle which is true to its own pole, and therefore

helps a man in his steering. God grant us all to have an instinct for truth, and to be led by its aid to Christ, who is the truth, so that we may truly find him, and be saved by his great salvation.

To be free from guile also helps us to see our need of the Spirit of God; for the right-minded man, who will examine himself carefully, will perceive that what is required of him is more than he can ever give, unaided and unassisted. He will discover that there is that about a Christian's life to which he cannot attain, unless he is born again. He will feel that there is a something about the child of God which he does not possess and cannot imitate, and can only gain by a work of the Spirit of God in the heart.

Brethren, a man whose heart has been made to be true, even though as yet he may not have found Christ, is one of those men who are pretty sure to find him. He is on the outlook for such a Savior as Christ, and therefore he will spy him out when he passes by. To such men I like to tell the story of substitution-how a just God cannot pass by sin without a penalty-how that just God, in the person of his Son, came here on earth and took human nature into connection with his own-how, in that perfect manhood, he took the sins of all who believe in him, and bore them in his own body on the tree, that, by bearing what was due to the dishonored law, he might put away sin, so "that God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth." Why, I have seen true hearts leap at this. They have said, "Yes, that is the secret: that is the solution of the dread problem of my conscience. I see now how righteousness and peace can kiss each other-how an offending sinner can meet his offended God- how they can justly stand on terms of mutual amity and love, the sinner washed in the atoning blood, and God rejoicing in the sinner as he sees him in the righteousness of his dear Son." The truthfulness which God puts into men's hearts seems, somehow, to open wide the doors of the understanding, and the entrances of the entire being, to the glories of the cross of Christ; and Jesus enters-the truth and the life, and takes possession of that honest spirit, and dwells there, to the salvation of the sinner, world without end.

Now, if any man or woman here be resolved to come to Jesus, let him carry out the resolve. Come along with you! The true Savior shuts out no true man. If you mean to pray to-night, pray. If your heart means the prayer, God will hear it. O my hearer, if thou wilt turn from thy sin in real earnest, God will help thee, and enable thee to overcome thy sin. If thou wilt give thyself up to Jesus Christ at once, not in words, but from thy very soul, he will receive thee and save thee. Let there be no trifling, no

mocking God; no stopping to talk with a Christian friend to chat away thy feelings with pious words; but come as thou art, only, come really and truly, and Jesus will meet thee and welcome thee, and say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Those who come thus are always welcomed by him. Come and see for yourself.

II. But now, secondly, I am going to give a picture of A SINCERE MAN AFTER HE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN. It is the sine qua non for a Christian that he should be thoroughly sincere. Of every man who is really a child of God it must be said-or we shall question whether he be a child of God at all-"an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Just let me briefly state how the true Christian's portrait is here painted in life-like colors in the words, "in whom is no guile."

First, the real believer in Christ desires to be what he thinks he is; that is to say, if he judges himself to be converted, he desires to be soundly converted. If he judges himself to be a believer, his desire is that he may not be anything else than a true believer. If upon examination he perceives that he is regenerate, his prayer is that there may be no mistake about it, but that he may be really born again from on high. Some people do not like to be examined on these points, but the genuine Christian loves to be searched and tested. He prays, "Search me, O God." Because searching by his own conscience may not be enough, he asks God himself to search and test him whether he be true or not. It would be an awful thing if you or I should form the comforting conclusion, "I am all right, for I am in the light!" and it should turn out that we are abiding in death and darkness. It would be an awful thing to find out that terrible truth just when we are in the valley of death-shade, and wading through the dread river. Let us find it out at once, if we must find it out at all! Startling as the discovery would be to some of us, yet we would rather know it now than go an inch further; for every inch we go we are further away from the right road, if we are on the wrong track. I heard of one who got into the backwoods, and went travelling on all day long, and at nightfall he discovered that after the most weary plodding he had arrived at the exact place from which he started in the morning. He had been wandering in a circle, and spending his strength for nothing. It is a fearful business, when one is starving, to be, at the same time, losing one's way. We do pray that it may not be so with us. We wish to be what we think ourselves to be. We want to carry out to the full any profession that we may have made: we desire to go beyond it rather than fall short of it.

And, next, every true Christian desires to do what he thinks he does. You will understand me when I say that: when we go upstairs to pray, if we are true Christians we shall want to feel that we do pray; for there may be times when we have not prayed at all, though we have been on our knees, and have repeated very excellent words. When you read the Bible you know well that there is no practical good in getting through a chapter of the Bible any more than a passage of any other book if the heart has not received the teaching of the Holy Spirit. John Bradford vowed that he would never leave off a holy exercise until he felt that his heart had entered into it. He resolved that if he sang, he would sing until he did sing; if he prayed, he would pray until he did pray; if he heard the Word, he would hear it until he did hear it, so as to profit by it. But O dear friends, how easy it is to fall into the hypocritical cant of talking and not doing, doing and half doing, and flattering ourselves that we have done it when, indeed, we have only talked of doing it! Let us be straight and sincere. If you have given alms take heed that you have given alms, and not spent your money in buying for yourself a name for generosity. If you preach the gospel, mind you have preached it, and have not merely played the orator, and aimed at being thought a man of admirable parts. If you have engaged in public prayer, let it never be merely because you were called upon by the leader of the meeting; but let it be a prayer in which you breathe out a burning desire to speak with God. When you plead on behalf of your brethren, do not compel them to think of you; but lead them to the mercy-seat. Let us cultivate a spirit in which there is no guile. If you have had a quarter of an hour for prayer and you have not prayed, rather mark it down as a wasted quarter of an hour than reckon it a season of devotion. It will never answer to keep false accounts with the Lord. If you have been reading the Bible and you really have not read it, and have got nothing out of it, do not say that you have read it—just say, I pretended to do so. That is the honest way. Be very straight with yourself, for he must be a great knave who is willing to cheat his own soul. If you are not very watchful and severe with yourself, you may be giving your heart and your -life credit for things which are but the names of things, and not the things themselves.

The Christian man in whom there is no guile is true to his convictions. This is an age in which convictions are sadly rare, and where they do exist they are singularly sleepy and torpid. I take it, as a Christian man and minister, that I have no right to occupy the pulpit of a congregation if I do not believe those doctrines which I professed to believe when I became the

pastor of the church. I have no right to undermine the basis upon which the church was formed. As a private member of a church, I have no right to be a member of a church whose doctrines I do not accept; indeed, I ought not to regard it as a possibility that I could remain to profess what I do not agree with. I am responsible, as a member of a church, for all that is taught and all that is done by that church in its church capacity; and if I am protesting in my heart, and yet in my proper person continue part and parcel of that church, I am not acting truthfully to God. We want, in this century, a class of men who are endowed with a double portion of conscience to what is generally exhibited by professors; for there are many of them who have got enough conscience to make them miserable and disagreeable, but not enough to make them honestly quit their positions. They have enough conscience to make them feel uncomfortable, but not enough to force them to act bravely for what they believe. Who wants to have a conscience that will only be quiet by being drugged? Trifling with conscience, though common enough, is one of the most deadly sins against a man's self of which he can be guilty. If you are following a trade, and you know that it is evil, quit it. Quit it at once. Quit it before you get comfortable in it; for after a while, by continuance in it, you will become soddened with dishonesty, and you will not be able to see the dishonor of it. I do not doubt that many persons in London, who get their living by the most infamous vices, entered into those infamous ways by degrees. They began with some little divergence from morality, and then turned decidedly into wickedness. It was a very little fault at first, and yet it troubled them; but they soon grew used to it, and they said, "Oh, well, everybody does it." Then they went on a little farther, and a little farther, till they were out of sight of the right road, and had lost all desire to return to it. Sad is that man's case who has lost all power to hear the fog-horn, and yet is nearing a rock. Blessed is that man who will not listen to the common talk about making small nicks in his conscience; for he that makes a little rent, will find that in the wear and tear of life, those little rents soon gape wider and wider. Be to thy conscience true, though it cost thee thine honor or thy life. What if thy barn be empty, and thy purse be taken from thee? What if thy reputation sink? Yet, if thou be true to God and to thyself, thou needest not fear, for thou shalt have the approbation of him who said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

I do not myself like the doing of things for which I have to make an apology. I do not refer to apologies to my fellow-men; for what matters

what people think about us? We need not mind the judgments of erring mortals. But I refer to apologizing to myself and to my God. Every man who respects himself feels that the first thing he has to do is to deserve his own good opinion; and numbers of men and women have not won that good opinion yet. If they were to talk to themselves, they would say to themselves, "Why, you know you are not acting straight. You know you are not doing right. You are mean, and cowardly, and afraid to do right." But they will not give themselves an opportunity of talking to themselves, lest they should be uneasy. He that never likes to be alone, probably knows that when he is alone, he is in bad company; and this fact ought to startle him. Would he be so mightily afraid to commune with his own heart in solitude if he did not suspect something to be rotten within? Never violate your convictions. If you do, you are not one in whom is no guile.

Again, a genuine Christian man is simple in his aims. He is aiming at God's glory; he is aiming at the good of his fellow-men; he is aiming to lead a holy life, That is what he says; and if he be, indeed, a child of God, he is really aiming at these things, and he is not basely taking up with godliness for the sake of gain and reputation. Are not many looking one way, and rowing another, like a boatman? Do you not know Mr. Facing-both-ways, who looks this way and the other way too? He runs with the hounds when there is anything good to be hunted; but he is off with the hare when a little fear surprises him. Trimming is a despicable business. Policy is a diabolical guide, and those who follow it are the worst of men. Such men are common as blackberries, and base as dirt. Oh, be not so! Let your life be laid like a gun that is sighted for the center of the target, and then let it be fired at once, that the bullet may go straight to its place, driven on by all the powder of your energy. God give us to be like thunderbolts hurled from his own hand against all falsehood and sham. Never caring what the consequences may be, so far as we ourselves are concerned, let us be resolved that if the heavens fall we will follow truth, and justice, and righteousness, and leave those whose likings run that way to shift for themselves by trickery and policy.

The Christian man is clear in his aims, and, if he is a true Christian, he is also very clear in his modes of pursuing his aims. Some people have a sort of spiritual or moral squint. If they want to look over there, they turn their eyes up this side of the gallery. They never say plainly and exactly what they mean, but use words in a double and doubtful sense. I abhor this most in a teacher of religion, but it is far too common. Some preachers are great

men at beating the bush. They never go to work as a truthful man would go to work, because they say, "No, I must play my cards." Beware of all that moral card-playing. Hate the idea of playing your cards for this and that. I do not say that you and I might wish with the Roman that we had a window in our breast, that all men might see our thoughts; for he that had a window in his breast would sometimes need to pull down the blind. But I do say this—that if we are walking as Christ would have us walk, we shall so live that our design, and our mode of getting at our design, will bear the test of the judgment of the last great day. I say yet further that he among you who is proposing to do one thing, as his fellow-man judges, but who is really aiming to do another thing, as God knows, is not "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Brethren, in your trade, in your business, in all that you do, be straight as a line. Policy may be a guide for the world, but it should never be the rule of life of church members. O my brother, be true in all things! Do that which will bear the burning heat of the last fire, and the fierce light of the last day, and then thou doest that which thou canst sleep upon on thy death-bed, can recollect in the day of judgment, and remember without fear before thy God. Live unto God. Live as in the sight of God. Live under the command of God. Court his approbation, and care for nothing else. Set thy helm towards the right course, and then fasten it there, and turn not thou aside a half-a-point, God helping thee, all thy days.

Such a man as this need never be afraid. He may live or die without apprehension. He may face any company without a blush. It is a great mercy when you do not get into the way of talking one way to one set of people, and another way to another. I know some professed Christians who are so delightfully sweet and oleaginous, that they try to make things pleasant all round, and therefore never speak out the whole truth in any company, unless it happens to be such as will be agreeable. It is, "Oh, yes, my dear sir"; and though there is something hard said about an absent person they quite agree with it. When they get with that very person it is again, "Yes, my dear sir"; and they join hands with him in tearing up the character of the opposite party. This method of talking is very liable to accidents. A person who acts this double part must always live a very unquiet life, because he does not know when No. 1 and No. 2 may meet, and put their accounts together, and find out his treachery to both parties. Brethren, let no one among you be guilty of such conduct. Always say anything you have against a man straight to his face. When you speak

behind his back, speak as kindly of him as truth permits; you need not do that before his face, for that might seem flattery on your part. To his face you may tell him a few things that do not please him, if it be just to do so; but when he is absent be silent on such themes. Double-facedness often brings a bitter reward in this life. Do not play the double in your conversation, either towards God or man. Be an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Such a person who has lived honestly in the sight of God, trusting alone in the precious blood of Jesus, and not to his own sincerity, need not fear in time or in eternity.

I remember seeing a good, but very timorous woman, whose gracious life was drawing to a close. I was sitting by her bedside, and she seemed to be very low, and filled with fear as to her future state; but at last she was comforted by a word I spoke. Then she said to me, very tremblingly, "I do not think that God will send me amongst the wicked, who did not love him, and did not trust his dear Son, for I never sought their company here. I have always loved the people of God, and I have loved his house, and I have loved his Word, and I have loved holiness, and therefore I think that he will let me go amongst my own people." This was sound reasoning. The true shall go with the true at the last. The man whom God has made to be upright and truthful shall not be driven down to the place where all liars go. He shall keep his own way, and go to his own company. Up there in heaven it is all truth: the God of truth is there, and the Christ of truth is there, and men are there who loved the truth, and who, despite all their imperfections, came to the light that their deeds might be made manifest that they were wrought in God. If you are truthful, you will go with these truthful people. Oh, may God make you so at once!

Remember that there is an absolute necessity that a Christian should possess thoroughbred sincerity, and intense, downright reality. The child of God may have spots on his countenance, but he must not paint his face. It is the hypocrite that paints. There may be a speck here and a speck there upon the countenance of the true believer, but he is sorry that it should be so, and he tries to wash off all such stains; but he never uses the color-box. In this he is the reverse of the world's religious professors. Oh, the multitude of hypocrites that rouge themselves up to their eyes! They are such beauties as Jezebel made herself. You would suppose that they possessed the beauty of holiness; but see them when the paint is off; catch them at home; watch them in their own families; trace them into their secret places, and there you will say, "Can these be the same men?" When

one saw a woman of eighty tricked out like a girl of eighteen, he shouted, "What old hag is this?" So might you say of many a brave professor, "What disgraceful creature is this?" That which we thought was the beauty of grace we find to be the worn and shrivelled countenance of the old man, hidden beneath coats of deceptive colouring. Loathe all this, and be as free from it as you would wish to be free from theft or murder.

O sirs, if any of us are lost, let us at least know that we are so. If we hope that we are saved, God grant that it may be a true hope, and a vital experience. I will speak to you, one and all, the gospel of the grace of God, and I have done. To each one the Word of the Lord saith, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" - saved from hypocrisy, saved from falsehood, saved from guile and guilt - for "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." May God set his seal upon this admonition, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,-Writing at this present I must personally sing of tender, mercy and restoring love. Health is returning; and if I could but gain sufficient strength to stand through a sermon, I would come home at once. Morning by morning my knee becomes just a little better, and therefore I look forward with joyful hope to a return to my pulpit, from which I have been so long absent. If I may be favored to preach on February 17th, I shall be happy indeed.

The last few months have been crowded with more trials than it would be worth while to mention; but in nothing has grace failed to support the struggling heart. More sure than ever am I of the truth of the gospel, the faithfulness of God, and the certainty of his purpose. The Lord lives when comfort dies, and reigns when nature fails. Not a line of his revelation has proved erroneous. There is not a syllable of the inspired Book which has ever started from its place. You may hang the weight of your soul on any one of the words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God. This I have proved by personal experience time out of mind.

Although I am not worthy to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord, I yet most boldly ask the prayers of my fellow-workers that I may not, upon this occasion, be disappointed, but may be allowed to rise from pain and

return to my happy sphere of service. I beg this specially of choice friends, to whose intercessions I already owe so much.

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Jan. 26th, 1889.

MY OWN PERSONAL HOLDFAST.

NO. 2069

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 10TH, 1839,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“My God will hear me.”-Micah 7:7.

OBSERVE that the prophet has no sort of doubt. He insinuates no “if” or “an” or “but” or “peradventure,” but he says it straight out as a fact of which he is infallibly convinced-“My God will hear me.” What a blessed thing it is that the child of God knows and feels that this is true wherever he fails, he will succeed at the throne! If all other friendly ears are closed, his Friend of friends will hear him. Lose your confidence in the power of prayer, and I know not what remains to you. If you are obliged to say, “My God will not hear me”-if that is the language of your unbelieving spirit-the tendon-Achilles is cut, and you cannot stand with confidence, much less run with delight. With faith in prayer you have heaven’s infinite treasures at your disposal; but if you ask waveringly, you find that warning true, “He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” You must know with absolute certainty that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, or you will not be among those whom the Father seeks to worship him. To be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” you must be strong upon your knees. “My God will hear me” is a sentence which you must know by heart.

It is a very wide question, that of God’s hearing the prayer of men, and I should need a considerable time to describe particularly whose prayers the Lord will hear, and what prayers he will hear, and how it is true that he

always hears, whatever his answer may be. But it will be a far better thing if, without debate, you can personally say for yourself, "Let others say what they will, and judge what they please in this matter, I am persuaded by the Spirit of all grace that my God will hear me." If, so far as you yourself are concerned, you have this assurance, your own feet are upon a rock, and you need not trouble about the sand and the mire. This assurance, "My God will hear me," is better than all the aid of mortal men, and a greater wealth than the mines of India could afford you.

I desire to preach, not only from these few words, but also from their connection. The position of the text in the sacred book is highly instructive. May the Author of the book make it so at this time!

I. I shall try to speak, in the first place, UPON THE RESULTS OF CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER IN BELIEVERS. When they can truly say, "My God will hear me," the best consequences will come of it. Think of what will happen to them.

To begin with, in the worst of times God is their resort. In reading the chapter we saw that the times were desperate. The nation had become rotten throughout; "the good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men." Justice was openly sold; bribes were unblushingly taken, and even openly demanded. In business all were dishonest; "the best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." In domestic life there was no trusting friend, or husband, or wife, or son, or daughter. The whole land had become corrupt; and as the prophet surveyed it with tears in his eyes, he could see nothing worth the looking upon, and he cried, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." His conviction that God would hear his prayer was his last comfort, and it led him to close his eyes upon the spectacle of universal crime and look heavenward, and heavenward only. When you have faith in prayer you will, in the cloudy and dark day, find consolation in looking to God, who is the blessed sun from whom a brighter day will come. Instead of being overcome by doubt you will gather up your faith, which else might have been scattered among men, and you will place the whole of it upon God, who still remains true and faithful and holy. Men who have confidence in prayer have perpetual errands at the throne, for they have abundant trials in the wickedness of men, and they look for more abundant mercies from the Lord. If they are in straitened circumstances they run to their Father in heaven to ask that their

daily bread may be given them; and if they enjoy plenty, with equal earnestness they pray that their abundance may be sanctified. In any case the believer has abundant reasons for praying without ceasing. If a man had no confidence in prayer, would he thus resort to God in the worst of times, and in the best of times? Would he seek deliverance from evil things, and the consecration of good things? I think not. We resort to God because he bids us do so. We accept his method of granting blessings and prayer because we conceive prayer to be a part of the divine decree. The same God that ordains to give a certain blessing has also ordained that we shall pray for it. We do not expect to change the will of God, but we believe our prayer to be a part of his will. It is not contrary to predestination for us to pray, but it is itself a part of it. As coming events cast their shadows, so does a coming mercy cast upon our heart a desire to pray. That I should pray is as much the divine purpose as that the asked-for blessing should come to me. The word of the Lord concerning the believer is, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." God's providence is thus like a two-leaved gate; our prayer and God's act work upon the one hinge of the eternal purpose.

Now, if a man had no confidence in prayer, he would not look to God in dark times; he would be searching everywhere else for some lower light which might be available. If the Lord's ear is too high, or he himself is too great, or too remote for our requests to be of any avail, let us go to the creature. We must draw from the cistern if we cannot get at the fountain. What else remains? If an appeal to the highest and the best is absurd, does not common sense direct us to abandon it, and trust in those who will hear us? I know that Scripture says, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm"; and this makes me feel that there must be a power in trusting in God. Brethren, we are in an evil case, if, indeed, prayer is a mere form; but we need not fall into despair, for we are not in such a condition. We need not run to saints, or angels, or friends, for verily there is a God that heareth prayer.

Saints in all ages have turned their eyes to the Lord their God, and I cannot conceive of them as fools; and yet, what more foolish than to look to a God who cannot see the glance of faith, nor hear the voice of supplication, nor in any way practically sympathize with the trust of his worshippers? Beloved, we look to the Lord at all times, because he that made the eye, can certainly see, and he that made the ear, can assuredly hear, and he that

has commanded us to pray, will not fail to regard us. I, for one, for this reason, solemnly declare, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord."

Another blessing which we derive from the certainty that God hears our prayer is that our eyes are led to look to God with hope. Not only do we turn to the Lord because we have no other resort, but because we look to him with joyful expectation. The prophet says, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation." We view our God, not as a forlorn hope, but as the sure source of salvation to us. Many things are taken from us, but hope remains for ever in the box, which is not that of Pandora, but of Jehovah. It is one of the best of our blessings that we "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope." Our God is called "the God of hope." We have hope that God will hear because he is Jehovah, the I AM. We know that he is, and that he is equal to all emergencies, be they what they may. Even in death we say, "Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." When we cannot see any other ground for hope, we find good anchor-hold in the promise of the Lord, so that we cry, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." It is he that hath so often wrought deliverances for his praying people that we look for his mercy as men that watch for the morning. It is no small thing to keep hope alive in the human bosom: it is the direst of calamities when it dies out. Whence the suicide-the plunge into the dark wave, or the crimson gash that lets out a soul? Are not those gates of grim death opened as hope flies away? Whence, that listlessness, that lethargy, that want of energy, that letting things drift to ruin? It is because hope has quitted the helm, and the ship is drawn upon the rocks. Kill hope in a man, and you have killed the man's best self. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but "a wounded spirit who can bear?" Now, a firm conviction that God will hear prayer is a He-buoy to a sinking hope. He will not give all up who believes that his God will hear him. He cannot be driven to desperation while the mercy-seat continues a source of hope, and he remains in possession of his reason. You will hear him argue with himself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Surely, these are two choice blessings-to be enabled to look always to God, and to look towards him evermore with hope; but we go further. A full conviction of the certainty that God will hear our prayers helps us to wait with patience. "I will wait for the God of my salvation." He may not answer me to-day, but he will hear me. To-

morrow may not bring me the expected deliverance, but it will come. Though the vision tarry, I will wait for it; for it shall come, and according to the reckoning of infinite wisdom it really will not tarry. Great is the punctuality of the living God. He never is before his time, but he never is behind. He is not only present when we need him, but we find him “a very present help in trouble.” We find it good to wait because we have no fear of being disappointed. A full conviction that prayer shall be heard makes us sit even with Job on the dunghill, and bless the Lord who has taken away what aforesaid he gave. It makes us strengthen ourselves on the bed of languishing, and sing with Jacob, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.” It enables us with David to encourage ourselves in the Lord amid the ashes of our Ziklag. It helps us to go with Jeremiah into the low dungeon, and yet to say, “The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.” It enables us to hope with Jonah, when all hopes seem gone, till we at length bear witness, “Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.” In all difficulties, and under all opposition, we shall be able to endure with patience the will of the Lord, if we remain firm in the assurance that prayer is heard of the Lord. I often repeat Ralph Erskine’s ditty:-

*“I’m heard when answered, soon or late,
Yea, heard when I no answer get;
I’m kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used.”*

It is so. No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly; and, therefore, if an answer to prayer be withheld, it is because what we sought was not for our real good. A flat denial in form may be a full grant in essence, since all our prayers are comprehended in “Thy will be done”; and this is the standing corrective for all that we ask amiss. If, then, in prayer we do not have our will of God in one way, yet we shall have it in another; for we evermore, in the inmost depths of our soul, are praying, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” The Lord will either give us what we ask, or do some better thing for us. Believe in prayer with a tenacity that nothing can remove. Stand to it that he does hear you, and be not staggered. Hope against hope, and wait to waiting’s uttermost. Do not have a pretended and false faith in it, but let the solid, solemn, immovable conviction of your inmost soul be, “My God will hear me.”

If you now pass on to the verse that follows the text, you will get another series of thoughts, showing the result of an assured conviction that God

hears prayer. Observe, that it gives us an answer to our enemies. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: my God will hear me." The foe has seen me fall, and he has hastened to set his foot upon me; but I do not lie there in despair, surrendering myself to be destroyed by him, for "My God will hear me." How bravely can we deride derision, and pour scorn upon the scorners, even when they are in their glory, when we firmly believe that the Lord heareth prayer! They reckon that we are defeated, that we have no one to plead our cause, that we shall never be heard of again, and they have very ingenious ways of telling us these cruel persuasions of theirs. We answer them by declaring boldly that our heavenly Father has heard our cries, and that, before long, he will make this clear even to our foes. "Then mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God."

We fight a waiting battle. Fabius saved Rome by waiting, and we, also, are saved by the hope which waits upon the Lord, and bides the time of the faithful promise. The saint is no Caesar, who boastfully writes, "Veni, vidi, vici;" but his dispatches are written with the pen of patience, and here is one of them, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." We are of the tribe of Gad, of whom it is written, "A troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." Cheering is that promise:—"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Our adversaries had better not laugh till the affair is over. We have yet a weapon in reserve which we have not done with yet; that weapon is prayer. We answer their shouts of victory with this one sentence, "My God will hear me." The tables will yet be turned, the trampler shall be trampled on, and captivity itself led captive. We may have to wait long before the Lord takes up the quarrel of his covenant; but he will avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them. As for me, my heart is quiet beneath the contumely which comes of defending the Lord's own truth, for he will justify me before long; and if he should not do so speedily, yet he will do it ultimately: yea, I am happy to wait even till after death, for I know that my justifier liveth, and that, though after my skin worms devour this body, yet shall my Lord vindicate me and all others who have been faithful to his truth. But where would be our patience under defeat? where our answer to the adversary, if we were not sure that, beyond all doubt, God will hear prayer? We have left our case in his hands, and now we are unmoved by

sarcasm and ridicule, for our cause is safe in the keeping of the Eternal. Sneer still, thou philosophic doubter, "My God will hear me."

Again, our confidence in a prayer-hearing God sustains us with the bright prospect of rising when we are down. What saith the prophet? "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." What if I have slipped? What if, through pressure of pain and sorrow, my spirits have sunk within me? What if I am a broken and crushed man? Yet I can pray, and I do pray, and my God will hear me; therefore I shall arise again. Oh, blessed thought! The Christian may fall very low, but underneath him are the everlasting arms. Since those arms are underneath, they will stay the fall, and lift us up from it. We shall arise. How high that rising who can tell? Even though we fall into the grave, blessed be God we can fall no lower; and then comes the rising from among the dead, the rising to the throne. It makes my spirit leap within me to think how this conviction that God hears prayer begets in us the joyful certainty that we cannot be left in the dust, but we must arise, and shake ourselves, and put on our beautiful array. The God that has promised to hear us shall bring us again from Bashan; yea, he shall bring us up again from the depths of the sea. Our down-castings are temporary; our uprisings are eternal. We shall return with singing, and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. Faith sets us praying, and praying sets all heaven at work to draw us out of the pit, and set us on high.

A firm conviction that the Lord hears prayer gives the soul confidence that light will come to it. The prophet says, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." This delightful expectation springs out of that little word, "My God will hear me." If I am plunged in darkness I shall still pray; and as the Lord will hear me, he will give me light. Prayer lights candles where there are none. The meanings of oppressed Israel, though they were scarcely prayers, yet ended the long darkness of their Egyptian bondage. Peter lies in the dark, bound with chains; but the church is praying for him in Mrs. Mark's house, and suddenly a light shines in the dungeon, an angel awakens him with a touch on the side, and leads him out into the street to his own company. My God: my light. It cannot be that a Christian should be in the dark and have his God with him; for if his God be with him it must be light round about him. Joy and comfort must spring up in the most barren misery if we know how to pray: the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose if the feet of supplication touch it. They said that where the Tartar's foot fell the grass was withered; but we may

say that where the believer's knee touches all is made fruitful. God keep us in this conviction; for I say again, if this goes, all goes: if there is no more power in prayer, religion is either a nullity, or a mere piece of fanaticism, or a juggle of priestcraft. If God's answering prayer is but an idle day-dream, where are we? Poor lone children crying in the dark to a Father who cannot hear us. Poor children apt to be entangled in the terrible machinery of events, and to be whirled round and crushed by it, since no fatherly hand will be stretched out to rescue us! Mungo Park, in the desert, was refreshed by the sight of a bit of moss, because it told him that God was near; but all this was an error upon the modern theory; for God either may not, cannot, or will not interpose in answer to his children's cry. The reign of law is proclaimed, but the law-giver is pushed back beyond our reach. We call, but he does not hear: none but old-fashioned bigots can imagine that he does. Or if perchance he hears, it is a still greater chance that he will answer-so they say. If prayer seems to be answered it is a mere coincidence, a happy accident which pleases the pious mind. I am sick of repeating such cruel talk. Brethren, we know better. We are as sure of the law that our God hears prayer-we are each one personally as sure that "my God will hear me," as we are sure that the law of gravitation binds matter in its place. We have a personal providence, a personal God, and a personal God listening to our prayers; and we are persuaded, therefore, that all things must work together for good, and we must come out of the darkness, and that even in the darkness the Lord shall be a light about us. This supports our spirits under the greatest pressure, and gives us songs in the night.

All those are the results of holding firmly to the doctrine of effectual prayer; and to us most excellent results they are.

II. And from this I pass on, secondly, to notice THE REASON FOR THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WHICH BELIEVERS EXHIBIT IN THE MATTER OF PRAYER. They speak not without reason when they say, "My God will hear me." Why do we thus believe?

We believe it first, and mainly, because of the faithful Promiser. The character of the Lord God, who has promised to answer prayer, the truthfulness of the Lord Jesus, who has said, "If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it," and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who indites the prayer-in a word, the character of God himself constrains us to rely upon his word without a doubt. It is declared, over and over, in the inspired

Scriptures of truth, that "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." We have the command "Ask, and it shall be given you." We are told that "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." We are assured that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Yea, not only are we told this, but we have it set before us in actual instances, such as Elias, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, and multitudes of others. It is a matter of covenant with God that he will hear his children's prayers. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him!" Is the Lord faithful? Is he true? Only let us get a reply to those two questions, and the matter is settled. Is he the same God as in former ages? Can he, will he, still keep his word as aforetime? We have but one form of answer to these queries—he is Jehovah, and he changes not. I had rather have one little promise in the corner of the Bible to support my faith than I would have all the philosophies of scientific men to sustain my opinion. The history of philosophy is in brief the history of fools. All the sets of philosophers that have yet lived have been more successful in contradicting those that came before them than in anything else. It is well when the children of Ammon and Moab stand up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them; the enemies of God are good at the business of destroying each other. Within a few years the evolutionists will be cut in pieces by some new dreamers. The reigning philosophers of the present period have in them so much of the vitality of madness that they will be a perpetual subject of contempt; and I venture to prophesy that, before my head shall lie in the grave, there will hardly be a notable man left who will not have washed his hands of the present theory. That which is taught to-day for a certainty by savants will soon have been so disproved as to be trodden down as the mire in the streets. The Lord's truth liveth and reigneth, but man's inventions are but for an hour. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but as I have lived to see marvellous changes in the dogmas of philosophy, I expect to see still more. See how they have shifted. They used to tell us that the natural depravity of our race was a myth—they scouted the idea that we were born in sin, and declared with mimic sentiment that every dear babe was perfect. Now what do they tell us? Why, that if we do not inherit the original sin of Adam, or any other foregoing man; yet we have upon us the hereditary results of the transgressions of the primeval oysters, or other creatures, from which we have ascended or descended. We bear in our bodies, if not in our souls, the effects of all the tricks of the monkeys whose future was entailed upon us by evolution. This nonsense is to be received by learned societies with

patience, and accepted by us with reverence, while the simple statements of Holy Writ are regarded as mythical or incredible. I only mention this folly for the sake of showing that the opponents of the Word of God constantly shift their positions, like quicksands at a river's mouth; but they are equally dangerous, whatever position they occupy. In the announcement of hereditary philosophical thought has deprived itself of all power to object to the Biblical doctrine of original sin. This is of no consequence to us, who care nothing for their objections; but it ought to be some sort of hint to them. According to modern thinkers, what is true on Monday may be false on Tuesday; and what is certain on Wednesday it may be our duty to doubt on a Thursday, and so on, world without end. Every change of the moon sees a change in the teaching of the new theology. A good stout hypothesis in the old times served a man for a hobbyhorse for twenty years; but nowadays their sorry jades hardly last twenty months. Said I not well that the smallest promise of God is worth more than all that ever has been taught, or ever shall be taught, by sceptical philosophers and speculative theologians? Let God be true, but every man a liar. Whatever may be the truth in science, God is true, and on his promise we build our confidence. We will distrust the witness of all men and angels, but we cannot, we dare not, distrust the Lord.

I feel ashamed to add anything to the first overwhelming reason for faith, for that is enough, and more than enough; yet since faith is so often weak, we may place beneath it another prep. We believe in the power of prayer because of our past experience. Certain of us could not say less than "My God will hear me," for if we did we should be traitors to the witness of our lives. I shall not turn this into an experience-meeting, but, if I did, what testimonies we could produce to answered prayer! I will not even quote a selection from the many great and special answers which I have personally received; but all the saints of God are one in their testimony upon this point. I take leave to say that praying people are as a rule as honest and truth-speaking a people as those gentlemen who deny the virtue of prayer. Well, these men, myself among them, solemnly depose that God has heard and answered our prayers; and we do not say this in moments of fanaticism when we are worked up into a delirium of devotion, but we assert it soberly, as a plain matter of fact. If we were about to die we should assert this all the more earnestly. It is true to us as before God. Upon this statement, that God has heard and answered our prayers, we are prepared to speak as positively, solemnly, and deliberately, as if we thought it right

to call God to witness by an oath. We are not, therefore, prepared to have our witness summarily dismissed as of no value. We claim as men the right to be believed. At any rate, we shall hold to facts which we have ourselves experienced, and to the truth which they prove; and if we are ridiculed for so doing, we shall bear it with equanimity. When the philosopher said that there was no such thing as matter, he who hurt his head against a post was convinced of the contrary; and when another great theorist said that there was no such thing as mind, he who had been heart-broken with sorrow could not be converted to the opinion. It is hard to argue against our experience and consciousness. We are case-hardened. The Creole proverb says, "When the mosquito tried to sting the alligator, he wasted his time"; and the case is much the same when infidels deal with us. It would be needful to convince us that facts are not facts, that deliverances from trouble were not deliverances, that supplies of necessities were not supplies. I am ready to disbelieve my eyes, for they have often deceived me; I am ready to discredit my ears, for they have misled me; but I cannot disbelieve my personal experience, especially when it does not consist of a few scattered incidents, but of a chain of facts. The Lord has listened to my voice when I have cried to him, and this I know as certainly as I know that I have lived upon this earth; therefore I believe that "my God will hear me" in the present and in the future.

Beloved, we are sure that God will hear us, because we have towards God a sense of sonship. He is our Father, and we know it. Hence we argue that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, he also will give to us what we need at his hands, if we cry to him. Concerning this I need not argue. Granted the fatherhood of God, he must hear prayer. Deny that he is your Father, and I do not say that he will hear you.

Moreover, we believe in the power of believing prayer, because of the prevalence of our Intercessor. Jesus Christ himself is pleading for us in the presence of God. He has gone into heaven on purpose that he might represent his people at the throne of grace, and plead their cause; and we can never imagine that, as our great High Priest, accepted of the Father, he pleads in vain. When we ask in his name, and set his seal to our petitions, we must win our suit. We are bound to be as certain of this as of the continued life and boundless merit of our Lord. Our prayer is backed and endorsed by his adorable name, and this makes it quite another thing than if it were the mere request of a sinful man. It must be heard. Jesus, when thou dost take up my case, "my God will hear me."

Moreover, we have guidance in prayer, for the Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray. God himself puts acceptable desires into our hearts, and makes us to know what we should pray for as we ought; and surely such prayers cannot go unanswered. We pray to be helped to overcome sin; and this desire was implanted in us by the good Spirit-will it not be granted? We ask to be made holy, and to be enabled to glorify God. Surely, God did not implant such desires in us to mock us by giving us aspirations which he never intended to fulfill. To make us hunger and thirst after blessings which he could not or would not give, would be to torment us before our time; and this we cannot impute to God. The leading of the Spirit which induces us to pray is no dancing will-o'-the-wisp, uprising from the swamp of superstition, conducting us to fanaticism; but it is a clear and sure light which has never been followed by any man without guiding him to peace and safety. Have any of you ever suffered injury by prayer? Did you ever rise from your knees a worse man for pleading with God? Did you ever go away from a company of faithful, pleading men, and feel that you were morally lowered by joining in their devotions? I am sure that you never did. If anything has helped you to fight against sin, and to bear the burdens of life, it has been this drawing near to God. Therefore, I urge you, by the holy effect of prayer, to believe it to be among the things honest and true. Such a holy thing, implanted in you by God himself, cannot be a weed which he will pluck up and fling over the garden wall in contempt. God has never taught us prayer that it might be an imposition upon our credulity, and a sport for his supreme intelligence. Such a suggestion is plain blasphemy, and we mention it with abhorrence. That blessed exercise in which I have a hallowing and elevating fellowship with the Eternal cannot be a failure. Assuredly-"My God will hear me."

III. I close with a third head. Let us now CONSIDER THE EXERCISE OF THIS CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER. I have shown you the results of this confidence, and some few of the reasons for it; now let us see whither the exercise of this confidence leads us. What are we doing when we carry this assurance into action?

Our confidence that the Lord hears prayer is seen in our looking to him first and foremost at all times. For our eternal salvation we look to God alone, accepting that divine system in which, by water and by blood, we are saved from sin, through faith. Our confidence does not lie in our own resolves, or moral virtue, or spiritual attainments, but in him to whom we cry in prayer, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." We are glad of the

aid of friends in smaller concerns; but even there our first resort is to our God in heaven, for we each one feel this to be his chief defense-." My God will hear me."

This leads us also to make sure that God is ours. We live by appropriating our God to ourselves. We may, without terror, see our property lessen, and our friends desert us, and our dearest relatives pass away; but it would be horror, indeed, if we lost our God, and could no longer say, "My God." Others may choose what they please, as the object of their heart's chief choice, but we will pay no homage of the soul to any but Jehovah. "This God is our God for ever and ever." As another man's God I cannot rest in him, but as "My God," I am assured that he will hear me. Thus, we are driven, by our confidence in prayer to grapple him to our soul with hooks of steel. To say, "My God" is our heaven below.

This also impels us really to pray. Since God will hear us, we will pray to him, and we do. Alas! we have many sins in reference to prayer. Our slackness in prayer, and our unbelief as to prayer, are crimes for which we ought to cover our faces with shame; but when we walk with God aright, when we keep his commandments, and abide in his love, then he gives us life, joy, and power in prayer, and, then we become conscious of success at the throne. That power being bestowed upon us, we come to pray as naturally as a child cries. We ought to have set times for private prayer; it is most healthful that we should; but I question whether our best prayers, are not those which are quite irrespective of time and season. When a man does not pray because it is seven o'clock in the morning, but because he has a pressing need; when he does not pray because it is time to go to bed, but because he feels drawn to speak with God, then he prays indeed. When a man has a constant confidence in the prevalence of prayer he slips away from a trying business to seek guidance and support. The confident pleader, when he walks the street groaning in spirit, makes known his desire to the Most High. Perhaps Cheapside has been a Bethel to some of you, and your shop, has been a temple. The most living prayer bursts naturally from the swollen heart, and does not come because of time. I have heard of a minister who put in the margin of his manuscript sermons, "Cry here"; and in another place, "Here lift up your eyes." It must be very dreadful preaching when the emotion is made to order; and the same is true of praying. The fear is that you should not really pray when the clock says, "Now pray." I do not think we can always, keep the watch of the soul in exact time with the clock on the mantelpiece; therefore I think that the

most living prayer is that which comes by the movement of the Spirit of God just at that time when it is most of all required. "Let us pray" is, however, a voice which is never unseasonable. When would it be unfit for such an exhortation to be given? When would it not be profitable to pray? The Lord is always willing; therefore let us be always praying in one form or another. Let us pray, no matter what may be the trial, no matter what the joy, no matter what the company. Pray without ceasing, because it is always true—"My God will hear me." You know how it was said of a holy man as he walked the streets, "There goes the man that can have anything of God that he pleases to ask." This is the secret of a great life. Fail here, and you fail everywhere. Prosper on the mount with your uplifted hands, and Amalek in the valley is of no consequence. But how can we have this power if we have not the unquestioning confidence that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us"? Brethren, to be strong and happy spell over these words: "My God will hear me," till you can say them with your whole soul.

As for you, poor souls, who cannot say, "My God," shall I tell you that you may not pray? Far from it. If you have a desire to pray, encourage that desire. But mind that it is prayer, and not a mere form. Let your heart go up to him who says to you, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Instead of telling you not to pray, I would direct you how to pray. You have need, first, to have a God to pray to, for till then you cannot say, "My God will hear me." God can only be yours in the saving sense by Christ's being yours. Jesus says, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." God becomes our God by faith which appropriates him as he is revealed in his Son Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus, for he is the mercy-seat, and so the way to God in prayer. The gospel that we have preached to you is not, "Pray," but "Believe"; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Then, being saved, you will be able to pray with assurance of prevailing. Come to God by the blood of Jesus, and so shall a sinner's prayer be heard. Prayer is the vital breath of every saved man, even as faith is the life-blood of his soul. At this moment come to God by Jesus Christ. Thou art a sinner condemned by sin: Christ came into the world to save sinners: accept the Savior: trust thy soul with him, and ask that, for his sake, thou mayest have the free gift of eternal life. Thou art an empty, poor, naked, and miserable sinner; take thou the Lord Jesus, in all his fullness and blessedness, to be thine for ever, and then the great God will bow his ear to thee, even to

thee, and thou, too, shalt be numbered with those who have power with God.

Here on this spot I charge thee cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Let that request be silently offered, even though thou darest not lift thine eye to heaven. Come, brethren, let us all offer it, and then there shall come to each of us a justification far sweeter and larger than if we should stand aloof from sinners and say, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men." O my Lord, hear thou this my prayer, that those who hear or read this sermon may be able to say, even as thine unworthy servant most boldly says, "My God will hear me." Grant it, I pray thee, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,-Forgive once again the intrusion of personal matters. If I do not insert a short notice as to my health, many friends are lovingly anxious, and much correspondence is brought upon me. Let me, therefore, say briefly, "All is well." My only ailment is in the injured knee, and this improves daily. It is very slow work, but yet very encouraging. I can now walk a few yards.

I hoped to be in my pulpit on February 17th, but I resolved also to let the healing of the knee be my guide; for it would almost break my heart if I were to reach home lame, and be near my Tabernacle, and in the cold, and yet unable to get to my pulpit. Pressed by many anxious friends, both here and at home, I think I am only acting reasonably when I postpone my coming home for one more week. I hope to preach at the Tabernacle on February 24th, if the Lord will.

I deeply feel the great kindness of my brethren, at the Tabernacle and elsewhere, who have been fearful that I might bring on mischief to myself by beginning too soon. There is common sense, also, in their advice. I have balanced this, as in the sight of God, with my own ardent desire to use every moment for the Lord; and in the end, asking divine guidance, I have given the verdict as above.

May some hitherto unreceived blessing come upon my hearers and readers through the sermons which are preached upon my return!

Yours, in Christian love,
C. H. SPURGEON.
MENTONE, JUN. 31ST, 1889.

CHRIST'S CONNECTION WITH SINNERS THE SOURCE OF HIS GLORY.

NO. 2070

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
FEBRUARY 17TH 1889**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”-Isaiah 53:12.

WE may regard this verse as a kind of covenant made between the everlasting God, the infinite Jehovah, on the one part, and our great Representative, Mediator, and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the other part. The incarnate God is to be bruised and wounded; he is to pour out his soul unto death, and by a travail of soul he is to bear the sin of many; and then his ultimate reward is to be, that God will divide him a portion with the great, and he himself shall divide the spoil with the strong. Note the double recompense, and joyfully distinguish between the two divisions-that which Jehovah makes for him, and that which he makes himself. Our champion, like another David, is to confront and conquer the great enemy of the Lord's people, and then he is to have his reward. Unlike David, he is to pour out his soul, and die in the conflict, and then he is to receive a glorious portion from the Father, and he is also himself to seize upon the spoil of the vanquished foe.

At this moment, our Lord Jesus is enjoying the reward which his Father has allotted him:-"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great." He is no more despised and rejected. Who dare do dishonor to a majesty so surpassing? See how the whole host of heaven adores him! All the pomp of glory is displayed around him. To him the cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, in their ceaseless worship and undivided adoration. The four-and-twenty elders, representing the ancient and the present church, cast their crowns at his feet; and the myriads of the redeemed, whose robes are washed in his blood, pour forth their love, and life, at his feet. He has his portion with the great; none are so great as he. He is not only King, but king-maker, for he hath made his humblest followers priests and kings unto God, and his royalty is multiplied in each of them. How much his Father honors him, it is not for my tongue to tell you; and, if it were possible for me to tell it in words, yet the inner meaning could never be compassed by such narrow hearts as ours. He has infinite glory from the great Father God. He lives for ever, King of kings and Lord of lords, and all hallelujahs come up before him. Imagination cannot reach the height of his immeasurable majesty and felicity.

And why these honors? What has he done to merit these immeasurable glories? The answer is that he has done these four things: "he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

In addition to what his Father gives him, it is worthy of contemplation that our Lord has taken, in his life-conflict, great spoils with his own hands. "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." He has spoiled sin, death, and hell; each one the vanquisher of our race, the spoiler of the entire world. He has overcome these three, and in each case has led captivity captive. What must be the spoils of such victories? All the processions of triumph that ever went up the Sacra Via to the Capitol of Rome we may dismiss as empty pageants; all the glories of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece, are blots of the cruel past, which sicken us in remembrance. These led liberty captive; but when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive. Jesus blesses all by his victories, and curses none. He spoiled no man of his goods: he only brought death on death, destruction on the destroyer, and captivity upon captivity. In all his spoils men are gainers; and, therefore, when the incarnate God divides the spoil with the strong, all his people may joyfully shout without the reservation of a sigh for the conquered and the spoiled. That was a rich triumph, and the spoils he won are spoils that

enrich myriads of believers to-day, and shall enrich them throughout all the ages that are to come.

And why these spoils? What has he done? These trophies- where were they won? What was the conflict? Here is the answer: "Because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

It is a strange fact that I am going to declare, but it is not less true than strange: according to our text the extraordinary glories of Christ, as Savior, have all been earned by his connection with human sin. He has gotten his most illustrious splendor, his brightest jewels, his divinest crowns, out of coming into contact with this poor fallen race. What is man? What are all men? Nothings, nobodies. This great globe itself-what is it in connection with the vast creation of God? One grain of the sweepings of dust behind the door. The small dust of the balance bears a larger proportion to the eternal hills than this little globe to the great worlds which speak to us across the midnight sky. Yet all those glittering worlds that we can see with the telescope bear an extremely minute proportion to the illimitable fields of divine creation. Yet, we know not that anywhere Christ ever came into contact with sin, except upon this little ball. We have no revelation of any other redemption. This obscure star is faith's great marvel! How shall we comprehend that here the eternal Deity did take the nature of a man, and here did suffer in the sinner's stead "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"? All the eyes of all the angels turn this way. This mystery is too great for them. They cannot compass its full meaning, but desire to look into it. We know not, that anywhere in all the vast creation of God, there has ever been seen the like of this matchless, unparalleled deed of grace-that the Son of God, in mighty love, should come down to earth, and come into contact with human sin, that he might put it away. No one imagines that our Lord has often suffered. No, he has been incarnate once, and has been sacrificed but once. "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And this for guilty men! I am overwhelmed. I would fain sit down in silence, and give way to adoring wonder.

May the Holy Spirit himself now aid me, for my need is great! I am going to speak about these four things, very briefly. I have nothing of my own to say about them. I only want to put them before you as much as I can in their naked simplicity: there is a beauty in them which needs no describing,

which would be degraded by any adornment of human speech. Here are four flints out of which you may strike sparks of divine fire, if you are but willing to see their brightness. These four things that Jesus did, the four reasons why he is crowned with such superlative honor, are connected with you, if you have but faith to perceive the connection-so connected that they will save you, will even make you partake in the glory which has come of them.

I. The first source of the Mediator's glory is, that he, out of his love to guilty men, has **POURED OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH.**

Remember that the penalty of sin is death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." As God made us we should not have died. There is about man when he is in connection with God no reason or room for death; but as soon as man touched evil, he was divided from God, and he took into his veins the poison which brings death with it, and all its train of woes. Jesus Christ, our substitute, when he poured out his soul unto death, was bearing the penalty that is due to sin. This is taught in the Bible: in fact, it is the chief theme of Holy Scripture. Whenever sin was to be put away, it was by the sacrifice of a life. All through the Jewish law it stands conspicuous that, "Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin." God has so impressed this truth upon humanity that you can scarcely go into any nation, however benighted, but there is connected with their religion the idea of sacrifice, and therefore the idea of the offering of a life on account of a broken law. Now, the Lord Jesus came into such connection with men that he bore the death penalty which guilty men had incurred.

Remark the expression: "he hath poured out his soul unto death." It is deliberate. "He hath poured out his soul." It is a libation presented with thought and care; not the mere spilling of his blood, but the resolute, determinate pouring out of his whole life unto its last drop-the pouring it out unto death. Now, Christ's resolve to die for you and for me was not that of a brave soldier, who rushes up to the cannon's mouth in a moment of excitement; but he was practically pouring out his life from the day when his public ministry commenced, if not before. He was always dying by living at such a rate that his zeal consumed him-"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Deliberately, and as it were drop by drop, he was letting his soul fall upon the ground, till at length, upon the tree of doom,

he emptied it all out, and cried, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Then "he poured out his soul unto death."

As it was deliberate, so it was most real and true. I pray you do not think of Christ as pouring out his soul, as though the outpouring was a kind of sentiment of self-abnegation; as though it made him spend a sort of ecstatic life in dream-land, and suffer only in thought, intent, and sympathy. My Lord suffered as you suffer, only more keenly; for he had never injured his body or soul by any act of excess, so as to take off the edge from his sensitiveness. His was the pouring out of a whole soul in all the phases of suffering into which perfect souls can pass. He felt the horror of sin as we who have sinned could not feel it, and the sight of evil afflicted him much more than it does the purest among us. His was real suffering, real poverty, real weariness; and when he came to his last agony, his bloody sweat was no fiction, his exceeding sorrow unto death was no fancy. When the scourges fell upon his shoulders it was true pain that he suffered; and the nails, and the spear, and the sponge, and the vinegar-these tell of a real passion-a death such as probably you and I shall never know. Certainly we shall never experience that pouring out of his soul unto death which was peculiar to Jesus, in which he went far beyond martyrs in their extremest griefs. There were points of anguish about his death which were for himself, and for himself alone. "He hath poured out his soul unto death," in grief most weighty-so weighty that it can never be fully weighed in any scales of mortal sympathy.

And he did this, remember, voluntarily. If I were to die for any one of you, what would it amount to but that I paid the debt of nature a little sooner than I must ultimately have paid it? for we must all die, sooner or later. But the Christ needed not to die at all, so far as he himself was personally concerned. There was no cause within himself why he should go to the cross to lay down his life. He yielded himself up, a willing sacrifice for our sins. Herein lies much of the preciousness of his propitiation to you and to me. Love, love immeasurable, led the immortal Lord to die for man. Let us think it over, and melt into loving gratitude. A death endured out of pure love; a death which was altogether unnecessary on his own account, and indeed a superfluous act, save that it behoved him to suffer that he might fulfill his office of a Savior, and bring us near to God; this is a matter which should set our heart on fire with fervent gratitude to the Lord who loved us to the death.

“He hath poured out his soul unto death.” I will say no more about it, except that you see how complete it was. Jesus gave poor sinners everything. His every faculty was laid out for them. To his last rag he was stripped upon the cross. No part of his body or of his soul was kept back from being made a sacrifice. The last drop, as I said before, was poured out till the cup was drained. He made no reserve: he kept not back even his innermost self: “He hath poured out his soul unto death.”

Consider these two truths together. He is the Lord God Almighty, before whom the hosts of angels bow with joy; yet on yonder cross he pours out his soul unto death; and he does it, not because of anything that is in him that renders it needful, but for your sakes, and for mine—for the salvation of all those who put their trust in him. Put your trust in him, then, without reserve. Pour out your souls in full trust, even as he poured out his soul unto death. Come, and rest in him, and then see the reason why he is crowned with majesty. His death for your sins is the reason why he divides the spoils with the strong. He has his portion with the great because he “died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” This, which brought him so much shame, has now brought him all his glory. Come, and trust him! Come, and trust him wholly! Come, and trust him now!

II. Secondly, and somewhat briefly. It appears in the text, that our Lord did not only bear the penalty due to sinners, but HE WAS NUMBERED WITH SINNERS. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” There is a touch of nearness to the sinner about this which there is not in the first clause. He bears death for the sinner; but you could not suppose, if you had not read it, that he would be written in the sinners’ register. He was not, and could not, be a sinner; but yet it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” O sinner, see how close Jesus comes to you! Is there a census taken of sinners? Then, in that census, the name of Jesus is written down. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” He never was a transgressor: it was impossible that he could be. It would be blasphemy to say that the Son of God ever was a transgressor against his Father’s laws. In him was no sin in any sense, or shape, or manner. His spotless birth, his perfect nature, his holy life, all make him “separate from sinners.” How, then, was he numbered with the transgressors? This makes it the more marvellous, because it is so hurtful to a man who is pure, to be numbered with the impure. What would any woman with a delicate purity of mind think, if she were numbered with the harlots? What would any honest man among us think if he were numbered with thieves? But that would be

nothing compared with the holy Lord Jesus being numbered with the transgressors; and yet to this he submitted for our sakes. I said that he could not be a transgressor; but we are not like him in this. Any one of us could be either unjust or dishonest; for, alas! sin dwelleth in us, and the possibilities of its still greater development; but Jesus was clean in nature, and pure in heart, and therefore he could never be tainted with evil; and yet the inspired prophet says, "He was numbered with the transgressors." This was a stoop, indeed! This was coming down to where the sinner lay, and bowing over him to lift him up.

Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, first, by the tongue of slander. They called him a drunken man and a wine-bibber: they even called him Beelzebub. That was sharp enough for him to bear, whom all the angels salute as "Holy, holy, holy!" Accused of blasphemy, sedition, and so forth, he had enough to bear from evil lips. Nothing was too vile to be cast upon him by those who said, "Let him be crucified." Reproach never spared the spotless one; but spent its utmost venom on him. Like the Psalmist, he was the song of the drunkard. The very thieves who were crucified with him reviled him.

He was numbered with the transgressors in the earthly courts of justice. He stood at the bar as a common felon, though he was judge of all. Though they could not find witnesses, whose testimony agreed, yet they condemned him. Though Pilate had to say, "Why, what evil hath he done?" yet he was taken out with two malefactors, that he might die side by side with them; and then, we are told by the evangelist, the Scripture was fulfilled—"He was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark 15:28).

To go a little farther, our Lord Jesus Christ, on earth, was treated, in the providence of God, as transgressors are treated. Transgression sometimes brings on men poverty, sickness, reproach, and desertion; and Jesus Christ had to take his share of all these with sinful men. No wind was tempered for this shorn lamb. No winter's frost was stayed, no night dews dried to comfort his secret agonies.

*"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."*

All things in this world that are so keen and terrible to man, because man has become so guilty, were just as keen and terrible to him. The sun shone on him till his tongue was dried up like a potsherd, and did cleave to his

jaws, and he cried, "I thirst." The nails that pierced him tore his tender flesh as they would have torn that of the sinful. Fever parched him till his tongue cleaved to his jaws. There was no softening of the laws of nature for this man, because he had never offended; but he had to stand as a sinner where we sinners stand, to suffer from the common laws of a sin-cursed world, though he was not and could not be a sinner. "In him was no sin"; yet he was numbered with the transgressors.

And look, my brethren. Oh, that I may know how to speak properly on it! The Holy God treated him as if he were one of us: "it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." God not only turned his back on transgressors, but he turned his back upon his Son, who was numbered with them. God never can forsake the perfectly innocent, yet he who was perfectly innocent said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Sinking and anguish of spirit, even to soul-death, cannot come to a man who is numbered with the perfectly righteous. It was because Jesus voluntarily put himself into the sinner's place that he had to bear the sinner's doom; and, he being numbered with the transgressors, the justice which smites sin smote him, the frown that falls on sin fell on him, the darkness which comes over human sin gathered in sevenfold night about his sacred brow. In the day of the Lord's anger, "He was numbered with the transgressors."

As this is the reason why he is now exalted, it seems to me that you and I ought to feel a mingling of grief and joy at this time to think that the Lord Jesus would condescend to put his name down with transgressors. You know what a transgressor is, do you not? One who has done wrong; one who has broken laws; one who has gone beyond bounds and committed evil. Well, Jesus Christ says, "Father, that I might save these transgressors, put my name down among them." It was necessary that it should be so, that he, standing in their stead, might lift them into his place, transferring his righteousness to them, as he took their sin upon himself. I could weep as I tell you that "He was numbered with the transgressors." I cannot preach. This theme baffles me altogether. I wish that you would look into it yourselves. Never mind my words. Think of my Lord, and of these two things: "He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors."

III. That leads me to the third matter by which the Lord Jesus Christ has won his victories, and earned reward of God. It is this: “HE BARE THE SIN OF MANY.”

Now, do not think that these words are mine, and therefore cavil at them. Deliberately observe that these are the words of the Holy Ghost. “He bare the sin”: “He bare the sin of many.” They cavil at us for saying that he bare the chastisement of sin. We shall say it none the less plainly; but we shall go much further, and insist upon it that, literally, Jesus bare the sin of man. Else, why did he die? Why did he die at all? “He was man,” say you, “and, therefore, he died.” There was no reason why the Christ should die because he was a man, for, being born without the taint of sin, and having lived a spotless life, and having never violated the law of God, there could be no justice in Christ’s dying at all, if there was not some reason for it apart from himself. It is an act of injustice that Jesus should be permitted to die at all, unless there can be found a reason apart from his own personal conduct. If death be the consequence of sin, there being no sin in Christ, the consequence could not follow without the cause. You tell me that by wicked hands he was crucified: it was so, and yet the Scripture assures us that this was by the determinate purpose and foreknowledge of God. How could this have been had our Lord had no connection with sin? It was not of necessity that he should die because he was man. He might have been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire; or it might have been said of him, as of Enoch, “He was not, for God took him.” If the rough Elias ascended to heaven, how much more the gentle, tender, perfect, absolutely perfect, Christ, might have been expected to do so! There was no reason, then, in his personal nature, why he should die.

“He died,” said one, “as an example.” But, my dear friends, I do not see that. In his life he is an example to us through and through, and so he is in his death. If we must needs die, it is an example to us that we should die as bravely, as patiently, as believingly as he did; but we are not bound to die at all unless God requires it at our hands. Indeed, we are bound to shun death if it can virtuously be avoided. Self-preservation is a law of nature; and for any man to voluntarily give himself up to die without some grand purpose would not be justifiable. It is only because there is a law that we must die that we may judge ourselves permitted to volunteer to die. The Savior does not set us an example in a sphere into which we cannot enter. In that case he goes beyond us altogether, and treads the wine-press alone. He is a Being whom we cannot follow in the higher walks in which he is

both God and man. In his great voluntary self-surrender unto death, the Son of God stoops from a position which we, who are mortal because of sin, have never held.

“Well,” say you, “but Jesus Christ died as an exhibition of divine love.” This is true in a certain sense, but from another point of view, of all the things I have ever heard, this does seem to me to be the most monstrous statement that could be made. That Jesus Christ, dying because of our sins, is a wonderful example of divine love, I do know, admit, and glory in; but that Christ’s dying was an instance of divine love, if he did not die because he bare our sins, I entirely deny. There is no exhibition of divine love in the death of Christ if it be not for our sins; but an exhibition of a very different sort. The death of the perfect Son of God, per se, and without its great object, does not exhibit love, but the reverse. What? Does God put to death his only begotten Son, the perfectly pure and holy being? Is this the finale of a life of obedience? Well, then, I see no love in God at all. It seems to me to be the reverse of love that it should be so. Apart from sin-bearing the statement that Jesus must needs die the death of the cross to show us that his Father is full of love is sheer nonsense; but if he died in our room and stead, then the gift of Jesus Christ by the Father is undoubtedly a glorious instance of divine love. Behold, and wonder, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is love, if you please; but not the mere fact that the Son of God should be put to death. That were a thing altogether unaccountable, not to be justified, but to be looked upon as a horrible mystery never to be explained—that the blessed Son of God should die—if we did not receive this full and complete explanation, “He bare the sin of many.”

If our Lord’s bearing our sin for us is not the gospel, I have no gospel to preach. Brethren, I have befooled you these five-and-thirty years, if this is not the gospel. I am a lost man, if this is not the gospel; for I have no hope beneath the copes of heaven, neither in time nor in eternity, save only in this belief, that Jesus, in my stead, bore both my punishment and sin.

If our Lord did so bear our sin we have a firm and joyous confidence. God would not accept a substitute in our place, and then punish us. If Jesus suffered in my stead, I shall not suffer. If another has gone to prison and to death for me I shall not go there. If the axe has fallen on the neck of him that took my place, justice is satisfied, the law is vindicated, I am free,

happy, joyful, grateful, and therefore bound for ever to serve him who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not know how you look upon this doctrine, but it seems to me to be something worth telling everywhere. I would like to make every wind bear it on its wings, and every wave waft it on its crest. There is a just and righteous way to forgive sin, by Jesus bearing the death-penalty in the sinners' stead, that whosoever believeth in him, should be justified from all things, from which the law could not deliver him.

Now, these three things—that he poured out his soul unto death, and so bore the sinner's penalty; that he was numbered with the transgressors, and so stood side by side with sinners; and, next, that he actually bore their sin, and so came into a wonderful contact with sin, which did not defile him, but which enabled him to put away the sin which defiled men—these three things are the reasons of the glory of our Lord Jesus. God, for these three things, and one more, makes him to divide the spoil with the strong, and divides him a portion with the great.

IV. The last thing is this: "HE MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS." You see all along, Christ gets his glory by standing side by side with guilty men. A curious mine it is to get gold out of. I will not venture to say what Augustine, in a burst of enthusiasm, once uttered. When speaking of Adam's fall, and then describing all the glory that comes to God out of the salvation of the guilty, that holy man could not help using the unguarded expression, "Beata culpa!" "Happy fault!" Yet, though I would not say so much as that, I do see that out of this dunghill of sin Christ has brought this diamond of his glory by our salvation. If there had been no sinners, there could not have been a Savior. If no sin, no pouring out of the soul unto death; and if no pouring out of the soul unto death, no dividing a portion with the great. If there had been no guilt, there had been no act of expiation. In the wondrous act of expiation by our great Substitute, the Godhead is more gloriously revealed than in all the creations and providences of the divine power and wisdom.

*"Sin, which strove that love to quell,
Woke yet more its wondrous blaze;
Eden, Bethlehem, Calvary, tell,
More than all beside, his praise.*

In the person of his dying Son, bleeding for human guilt, the Lord God has focused the splendor of his infinity. If thou wouldst see God, thou must

look to Calvary. God in Christ Jesus-this is God indeed. God in Christ Jesus bearing sin and putting it away-here thou seest what a God can do in boundless love. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But this is the finale of it. He makes intercession for the transgressors. Who among us will take up the part of the guilty? Who will plead for the guilty? I know, in certain cases, the lawyer will sell his tongue to the most polluted; but if a man were perfectly pure, you would not find him saying a word in defense of the guilty; would you? So far as the man was guilty he could not be defended. Unless there were a fear of too severe a punishment, no one would take his part; and even in that case, the offender is viewed as so far deserving that he is not guilty enough for so heavy a penalty. For the guilty we could not plead, so as to deny or extenuate evil. A just man would plead for innocent persons who might be falsely accused; but our Lord made intercession for transgressors. When he was here on earth how tender he was with transgressors! Women that were sinners came around him, and he never bade them be gone. She that was taken in adultery, oh, how he dealt with her! When Peter was about to deny him, he said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Those nights out there on the cold mountains were not spent for himself, but for sinners. He bore on his heart the names of guilty men. He was always pleading their cause, and when he came to die he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He took their part, you see. He would exculpate them if he could. I dare say that he has often prayed like that for you. When you have been despising religion, and saying vile things about your Lord, he has said, "Ah, poor soul! It is like the ravings of a man in a fever, who does not know what he is talking about. He does not know what he is saying. Father, forgive him."

Our blessed Lord pleaded thus when he was here; and now he has gone up yonder he is pleading still for the same persons. Though we cannot see through that veil which hides the invisible from us, yet the eye of faith, I hope, is strong enough to see that he is at the Father's side at this moment making intercession for transgressors. I do not picture him up yonder as using entreaties or pleading to an agony. Oh, no! With authority he intercedes, for he has finished the work, and he claims the reward. I do not even picture him as using words. Those are the poor tools with which men plead with men; but the death which our Lord endured for the guilty is pleading with the Father. The death of Christ is a well-spring of delight to

God. The Father thinks of what Jesus has suffered in vindication of the law, even of his obedience unto death; and that thought has power with the Judge of all the earth. In effect, the wounds of Jesus perpetually bleed. Still his cries of the great Sacrifice come up into his Father's ear. The Godhead, delighted to bless, is charmed to find the way of blessing men always open through the fact that the propitiation has been made, the sin has been put away.

I cannot continue longer, for strength and time fail me. Only it does seem to me so delightful to think that Jesus pleads for sinners. If you see him die, he is dying for sinners. If you see him with his name written down in a register, that register is the sinners' census book: his name is written there that he may be in a position advantageous for sinners. If you see him pleading now that he is risen, he is the advocate for sinners. Did you ever read this text in the Bible: "If any man does not sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"? No, you never did! But I will tell you what you do read there: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "If any man sin." Is there anybody here that never sinned? Then there is no Christ for you. He never did anything for you, and never will. Are you guilty? Do you feel it? Do you confess it? Do you own it? Christ is for you. If a doctor were to set up in the town, he would never think of sending out a circular in such terms as these: "Henry Smith, M.D., invites healthy persons to call upon him, for he is proficient in the healing art." There will be no business for "Henry Smith, M.D.," among the healthy folks, let him be as learned as he may. And if he be known as an eminent physician, he does not need to intimate that sick persons are welcome to call upon him; for the very fact that he is a physician means that he seeks practice, and lives to serve the sick. My Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saving power, cannot save those who do not need saving. If they have no sin he cannot cleanse them from it. Can he? What, then, have some of you to do with the Savior? You are very good, respectable people, that have never done anything wrong in all your lives; what is Jesus to you? Of course, you go your own way, and take care of your own selves, and scout the idea of being beholden to free grace. Alas! this is folly. How foolish you are to think you are such characters! for you are nothing of the sort. If you look within, your heart is as foul as a black chimney that has never been swept. Our hearts are wells of defilement, Oh, that you could see this, and quit your false righteousness! If you will not, there is nothing in Jesus for you. He derives his glory from sinners, not

from self-conceited folks like you. But, you guilty ones, that will own and confess your guilt, may cheerfully remember that those four things which Jesus did, he did in connection with sinners, and it is because he did them in connection with sinners that he is this day crowned with glory and honor and majesty.

Jesus Christ does not shrink from sinners. What then? O you sinners, do not shrink from him! If Jesus does not shrink from sinners -(let me say it again)-ye sinners, do not shrink from him. If we were to go to-day to some of those unhappy parts of the world in the north of Europe (it makes one's blood curdle to think that there are such places), where poor decaying lepers are made to live alone, and if these poor creatures came our way, we should wish them every blessing, and should desire for them every comfort; but while we were expressing our kind wishes we should be gradually edging off, and leaving a distance between ourselves and their horrible pollution. That is not the way in which Jesus acts towards sinners: he draws near, and never sets a hedge between himself and them. You need not undergo a quarantine before you may enter the port of salvation by Christ. Yonder is a filthy leprous sinner, as full of filth as an egg is full of meat, but Jesus comes right up to him, and lays his hand upon him, and says, "I will; be thou clean." Jesus never keeps at a distance from the sinner.

But suppose this poor leper began to run away from him. It would be natural that he should, but would also be very foolish. No, poor creature, stop thy running! Stay thou at Jesus' feet! Look thou to him! Trust him! Touch his garment and be healed! O my dear hearers, in this pulpit I seem to stand a long way off from you and talk to you from afar, but my heart is with you. I wish I knew how to persuade you to come to Jesus. I would use some loving logic, that I have not yet hit upon. How heartily would I entreat you to trust the Son of God, made flesh, bleeding and dying for guilty men! If you will trust him, he will not deceive you, but you shall be saved, and saved at once and for ever.

And, O you that love him and know him, will you learn one lesson, and then I will send you home? As Jesus does not shrink from sinners, do not yourselves shrink from them. You are not so pure and holy as he was, and yet he came into the world to save sinners. Go you into the world to seek them. Be in earnest after sinners. You get so good, some of you, that there is no living with you. You forget the dunghills where you grew, and fancy

yourselves angels, but you are nothing of the sort. God has made something of you, and now you are too respectable to look after those who are no worse than you were once. If a man sins, you do not speak to him, lest you should be disgraced by his society. What pride! A man is known to be a drunkard, and there are some even of you that are teetotalers, who would not talk with such, but leave them till they are improved, and then you would speak to them. You will do them good if they come to you for it, but you will not go to them: you cannot bring your souls to handle the wound while it bleeds, and touch the filthy while they are foul. Some are too fine and finikie to look after roughs. But I venture to say to the rough, the ragged, the graceless, the godless, that they are more likely to get a blessing than the self-righteous. I believe that there is more likelihood of converting a downright out-and-out sinner than of reaching the consciences of your very nice, neat, hypocritical people. Do not, therefore, shrink from sinners, for Jesus did not; and as from them he won his brightest trophies, even so may you. Be not ashamed, even if, by talking with sinners, you should come to be taken for one of them, for your Lord himself “was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Let it be your vocation, as a man redeemed by blood, to be “the sinners’ friend,” henceforth and for ever. God help you so to do!

O my beloved, may God send a blessing upon us at this hour. Pray for it. Pray for it. Lord, send it, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR FRIENDS,-With great pleasure I have prepared this sermon upon that truth which lies at the heart of the Christian faith. The denial of the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord is the abjuration of Christianity. Without atonement by the death of the Savior there is no gospel. I do not conceive “substitution” to be an explanation of atonement, but to be of the very essence of it. Those of us who have received the Lord Jesus as our expiation and righteousness know what divine power dwells in that precious truth.

In a few days I hope to be on my way home: indeed I may be so when this sermon is published. I crave a kindly remembrance in the prayers of the

faithful. May there be years of useful preaching and fruitful hearing in store for preacher and readers!

Yours, in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Feb. 11th, 1889.

TREMBLING AT THE WORD OF THE LORD.

NO. 2071

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 1ST, 1884.

“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”-Isaiah 66:2.

PORTRAIT painting is a great art. Many pretend to it, but the masters of the art are few. In the Word of God we have a gallery of portraits so accurate, so striking, that only the hand of the Lord could have drawn them. Most of us have been startled to see our own portrait there. The best of all is, that at the bottom of each likeness we have the Lord's judgment upon the character, so that we are able to form an estimate of what our true condition is before the Lord. Here you have a man drawn to the life: he is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at the Word of the Lord. Here, also, you have the Lord's estimate of him: “To this man will I look.”

I hope to dwell chiefly upon the character described in the closing words, “And trembleth at my word.” Support the text by the fifth verse, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.” This trembling is, in God's esteem, an admirable trait in their character. The glorious Jehovah, from his throne in heaven, speaks of those contrite ones who tremble at his word: and then the prophet takes up the strain, and cries, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.” It is a very great mercy that there are descriptions of saints given in the Word of God which go very low, and

reach the feeblest degrees of grace, and the saddest frames of mind. We find the children of God sometimes upon very high places: their spiritual life is vigorous, and their inward joy is abounding. When we give you descriptions of saints in that condition, many of the Little-faiths and Despondencies at once cry out, "Alas, I know nothing of this! Would God it were so with me! but indeed it is not." They are greatly discouraged by those very things which should raise their spirits and stimulate their desires: for surely if one believer is able to climb the Delectable Mountains, there is all the more hope that another may do so. Yet, we have to thank God that, in his priceless Scripture, he has painted for us portraits of the believer in his low estate. In the picture gallery of those saved by faith we find Rahab as well as Sarah, and erring Samson as well as holy Samuel, In the family register of the Lord we have the names of believers who were weak, and sad, and faulty. We have instances in the sacred record of undoubtedly gracious men who were in very uncomfortable and undesirable conditions. Men are spoken of as the Lord's people when their souls are sick, when grace is at a very low ebb, and when joy is eclipsed. God's people are in Scripture owned as such when it is winter with their spirits, and grace lies dormant, like sap stagnant in the tree. The Lord owns spiritual life in his own, when there is small evidence of it; and that evidence is confused. The mention in the Scriptures of small but sure evidences is cheering to many. I know many of God's people that have been greatly comforted by the text, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Oh," they have said, "we do feel a love to all God's people, whoever they may be; and if that is evidence of grace, we have that evidence." Apostles could say, "We know, and we are quite sure about it, that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; therefore we also may be encouraged, by our sense of love to the saints, to enjoy the same assured confidence that we also have passed from death unto life. You may, some of you, think this an insecure ground of consolation; but I can bear witness that it is like the conies' hole among the rocks, a very useful shelter from the enemy.

That is a very choice evidence, too, where God speaks of those that think upon his name: "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." If our thoughts dwell lovingly upon the name of the Lord, this is a saving sign; and yet how small a thing it seems! Thoughts are like straws, but they show which

way the wind blows. Surely the Lord's net of comfort hath meshes small enough to hold the smallest fish.

That, again, is very comforting where the Lord says, "Your heart shall live that seek him." Even seekers shall live. Though as yet they are rather seekers than possessors, they have the Lord's promise of eternal life. Though they are only pursuing, and have become faint in the pursuit, yet the love which set them pursuing will keep them following on.

That is a blessed word indeed: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "I do call upon his name," said one, "I know I do. I am crying to him in prayer. I do wish to have his name named upon me. I choose him to be my God, and I dedicate myself to him; and if that is calling upon God's name, then, truly, I am a child of God." This precious passage has been a special stay to my own heart in time of great heaviness of spirit. I know I call upon the name of the Lord, and I shall be saved.

How often also have I said to myself, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"! To see even a ray of light is conclusive evidence that I am no longer blind. The eye that can see a solitary ray of light has clearer evidence of being restored, if possible, than if it lived in the flood of sunlight; for if it can see a single ray, then is sight not only there, but it is there in no small degree. The man who can trust Jesus when grace is at its lowest in his own soul, is by no means a man of little faith, but rather is he a man of strong confidence.

Dear friends, rejoice that the Lord, in infinite mercy, has deigned to utter the words of my text, since they serve as a most comfortable evidence to God's people. There is a song the Jubilee singers used to sing, which begins, "Swing low, sweet chariot." I am sure I do not know what the singers mean by the expression; and so I give it a meaning of my own, and say that I am right glad when a promise swings so low that I can get into it. Surely a promise from God is a chariot lined with love, drawn upward by winged steeds, which bear our hearts aloft; and it is a mercy when it swings as low as this text: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

"Trembleth at my word." This is the description to which I call your attention. Here are the elect men upon whom the Lord looks, and with whom he dwells. They are not the chivalry of earth, but the chosen of

heaven. They are not dancing, but trembling; and yet they have more reason to be happy than those have who laugh away their days.

Let us enquire concerning these chosen ones, first: who are these people that tremble at the Lord's word? Secondly, let us enquire, why do they tremble? Whence comes their lowly spirit? their humiliation before the Lord? Then, next, we will give a glance at a comparison here used, and answer the question-what does God compare them to? What does God say that he will do for them? Let me read you the passage, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." There you see that God prefers the trembler to the temple, and makes to the contrite heart a larger promise than even to the consecrated shrine of his glory. May the Holy Spirit bless these meditations!

I. Aid me with your prayers while I try to answer the question- WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE THAT TREMBLE AT GOD'S WORD? I think I hear your hearts crying, "Oh, that we may be numbered among them!" Let me begin to answer the question by telling you who they are not. They are not a proud people: they do not cry, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice!" They are humbly hearing; hearing the word of God, and inwardly reverencing the heavenly monitor. They are no longer careless and reckless, for the voice of the Lord has brought them to their bearings. They have bowed their heads before Jehovah, and they listen with rapt attention to everything that he may speak. They are like the child Samuel when he said, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." They are teachable, and lowly, and by no means belong to the school who correct the infallible, and judge the unerring.

They are not a profane people, that is clear: they neither make a mock at sin nor at God's word. It is a terrible sign of hardness of heart when a man can find no jest-book so ready to his hand as Holy Scripture. Full sure, if men must play with words, I know not that they are always to be blamed; but they should find the word of man sufficient for their amusement, and not take Jehovah's word to be their racket-ball. Oh, it is ill with a man's soul, be sure of that, when he can treat the Word of the Lord with lightness, and regard it as no more than the word of Shakespeare or

Spenser. Such are not the men that tremble at God's word, but very far from it. They would not themselves care to be so described; in fact, they would scorn the idea of being afraid of the Book they despise. Some there are that are downright scoffers. They twist texts of Scripture; they pervert them to make mischief of them. They will hold up even the blessed Christ of God to ridicule; and the Holy Spirit, although to speak ill of him is a fearful thing, yet even he has not been free from their profane utterances. No, the proud man, and the profane man, are as far asunder as the poles from the man that trembles at God's word.

I must put down the careless in the same list, and say of the Lord's tremblers they are not indifferent people. We have among us a class who cause us great sorrow of heart. They are not likely to jest at God's word, but yet it has no power over them; they do not scoff at it, but they do not feed on it. They have too much thought and sense to become infidels; but yet they overlook the importance of the truth which they accept. God's book lies in their houses honored, but unread. They do not much trouble to go and hear about its meaning; or if, through custom, they become attendants at the house of God, they hear the gospel, but it goes in at one ear and out of the other. Like the French king who was brought to London in great state, and yet was only a prisoner to the Black Prince, so is the Bible bound in morocco and adorned with gilt, but is kept in bonds. There is no practical regard to it, no weighing it, no considering it, no meditating upon it, no applying it to the conscience and the daily life. Those cannot be said to tremble at God's word, who neglect the great salvation. They put far from them a consideration of the law of the Most High, and live as if they had license given them to act as they please. O friends, careless souls cannot be numbered with those that tremble at God's word!

These were not a critical, sceptical people. They trembled at the Word, and did not sit down on the throne of usurped infallibility, and call the Scriptures to their bar. There are men abroad nowadays -I grieve to say some of them in the ministry-who take the Bible, not that it may judge them, but that they may judge it. Their judgment weighs in its balances the wisdom of God himself. They talk exceeding proudly, and their arrogance exalteth itself. O friends, I know not how you feel about the prevailing scepticism of the age, but I am heart-sick of it! I shun the place where I am likely to hear the utterances of men who do not tremble at God's word. I turn away from the multitude of books which advocate doubt and error. The evil is too painful for me. If I could be content to be an Ishmaelite, and

have my hand against every man, I might seek this company, for here I find every faculty of my being called to warfare: but as I love peace, it sickens and saddens me to meet with the enemies of my soul. If I knew that my mother's name would be defamed in certain company, I would keep out of it; if I knew that my father's character would be trailed in the mire, I would travel far not to hear a sound so offensive. I could wish to be deaf and blind, rather than hear or read the modern falsehoods which, at this time, so often wound my spirit.

I feel more and more a tenderness for the truth of God of the same sort as I would feel for the good name of my wife or my mother. I wish the modern revilers would have some compassion upon us, old believers, to whom their talk is such torture. They might keep their doubts for home consumption. When a man was going to swear, a wise person bade him wait till he was further away from the town, so that nobody might hear him; for it might cause grief to a Christian ear. When a man has anything to say against the eternal truth of God let him speak it to those who love to hear it—to his mates and admirers. But as for us, we are determined we will not be tortured by this kind of thing: we cannot endure it; and we will not remain among those who bespatter us with it. "Oh, but surely you are open to conviction?" they say. We are open to no conviction that shall be contrary to the truth that has saved us from going down to the pit. We are open to no conviction that shall rob us of our eternal hope, and of our glorying in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not deliberate, for we have decided. To be for ever holding the truth of God, as though it might yet turn out to be a lie, were to lose all the comfort of it. To be for ever prepared to desert our Lord and Master, to follow some brand-new philosopher, would be perpetual disloyalty. Nay, we have not come thus far at a guess. We have known our Lord and his truth for these forty years, and it is not may-be-or-may-not-be with us now. We neither speculate, nor hesitate; but we know whom we have believed, and by his grace we will cleave to him in life and in death.

Those who tremble at God's Word are not presumptuous people, who derive fictitious comfort from it. We meet at times with a vain-confident man, who puts behind his back every warning and threatening, and only appropriates to himself every promise, though the promise be not made to him. Such a man steals the children's bread, and without a question, dares to put into his felon mouth what God has reserved for his own. This thief knows nothing of trembling at God's Word: he makes much too free with

what the godly hardly dare to look upon. I will not say a word in favor of unbelief: it is a dreadful sin; but I would say very much in honor of that holy caution, that sacred bashfulness, that godly reverence, which treats holy things with deep humility and careful jealousy. Some of God's dearest children are so afraid of presumption that they go too far the other way, and hardly dare to be as confident as they might. Some of the holiest people that I know are afraid to say what they might say; for they scarcely dare to call themselves the children of God. On the other hand, I have heard others say what I fear they never ought to have said, for they have boasted that they never had a doubt. I heard one minister of great experience, who believes in the doctrine of perfection, assert very plainly that he had lived in the midst of the church of God for many years, and that he had seen many persons who claimed to be perfect, but he did not think that any one agreed with them; and, on the other hand, he had known intimately certain other persons whom he thought to be as nearly perfect as men could be, but in every case they had been the first to disown all notion of personal perfection, and mourned their own conscious imperfection. That is my observation, also. I distrust the men who publish their own perfection: I do not believe one of them, but think less of them than I care to say. Deformity talks of its beauty, while true beauty mourns its deformity. I gaze with loving sympathy upon those known to me whom I liken to dew-laden lilies: they are so heavy with the dew of heaven that they bow low till they almost touch the ground. It may need a trained eye to see the beauty of lowliness, but assuredly for a chaste loveliness nothing can exceed it. The lily of the valley hath a charm about it that is not to be found in flowers which lift their glorious colors aloft. Give me such lilies, for I believe that among them Jesus lives; and that he loves right well the men that are of a broken and a contrite spirit, that tremble at his word. There is too much brass, and too little gold, about the perfection of the present day. It hath a brazen forehead, and hath a way of sitting by the roadside—a way which in old time belonged not to true purity. I had rather tremble at God's Word than testify to my own excellence. We have had enough of witnesses to themselves, let us now have some witnesses for God.

I have largely told you what these tremblers are not; and I must now tell you a little of what these people are. They are people who do believe that there is a Word of God. There are plenty of persons who profess and call themselves Christians, and yet do not believe that this sacred Book is the

very Word of God. Say that it is inspired, and they answer, "So is the Koran, and so are the Vedas." They talk after this fashion: "This is the religious book of the ancient Hebrew nation. A very respectable book it is, but infallible, certainly not: the very Word of God, certainly not." Well, then, we distinctly part company with such talkers. We can have no sort of fellowship with them in any measure or degree with regard to the things of God. They are to us as heathen men and publicans. If we are to come under the head of those that tremble at God's Word, we must believe that there is a Word of the Lord to tremble at, as we do most assuredly believe, let others talk as they may.

They are a people who are acquainted with God's Word. You cannot tremble, in the sense here meant, at a voice you have never heard, or at a book you have never opened. There is nothing sacred in so much paper, ink, and binding-nothing in the fashion of a volume to make you tremble: you must hear the Lord speak, and know what he saith to you. When, like the ancient king, you have found the Word of God, and read its holy laws, then you will tremble. You are astonished to find how much you have broken the law, and how short you have fallen even of the full enjoyment of the gospel, and then you tremble. An intelligent appreciation of the Word of God can alone make a man tremble at it; and the more he understands it, the more cause for trembling will he see in it. Ay, and the more he enjoys it, the more will he tremble. The highest joy which it yields to mortal men is attended with a reverent awe, and a holy trembling before God. If the believer went beyond the enjoyment of the literal Word, and saw the Incarnate Word himself, in all the splendor of his person, he would tremble still more; for what said John, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead"? A sight of the Incarnate Word would create even a greater trembling than the full understanding of the Word as it is written and revealed. Yet such trembling is a sign of grace, and by no means to be censured.

But what meaneth this trembling? Believe me, it does not mean a slavish fear. They that tremble at God's word at the first may do so, because the word threatens them with death. But afterwards, as they advance, and grow in grace, and become familiar with the God of love, and enter into the secret of his covenant, they tremble for a very different reason. They tremble because they have a holy reverence of God, and consequently of that Word in which resides so much of the power and majesty of the Most High. These are the men of whom we are going to speak at this time: these

are they that reverence the Word, who would not have a syllable of it touched, who regard it as being divine after its measure, and therefore sacred as the skirts of Deity. What God has spoken bears a portion of his majesty about it, and we own that majesty. I say that these choice spirits are a people that all their lives long continue to tremble at the word of the Lord. George Fox, the famous founder of the Society of Friends, was called a “Quaker” for no other reason than this: that often, when the Spirit of God was upon him, and he spoke the Word with power, he would quake from head to foot beneath the burden of the message. It is an honorable title. No man need be ashamed to quake when Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” In the presence of God a man may well tremble. Surely he is worse than the devil if he does not; for the devils believe and tremble. Demons go the length of that; and he that knoweth God, and hath any sense of his infinite power and inconceivable purity and justice, must tremble before him. I believe George Fox not only quaked himself, but he made others quake; and if we tremble at God’s word, we shall make others tremble. True power, when it rests upon us, will discover our own weakness, but it will not itself be hindered thereby.

II. I have described these tremblers so far as my scant knowledge and brief time will allow: the time has now come to enquire, WHY DO THEY TREMBLE? I have been trenching upon this field of enquiry already. They do not tremble because they are going to be lost. Those who are going to be lost are pretty generally free from trembling: “there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm.” I would, my hardened hearer, that you did tremble; and because you do not tremble for yourself I tremble for you. Oh, that you judged yourself, that you might not be judged! I would that you condemned yourself, that God might acquit you; I would that you were horribly afraid; for then the great cause for fear would be over. See how the text blesses all the contrite and the trembling; and, when you have seen it, seek to be among them.

God’s people tremble, first, because of his exceeding majesty. Note what became of Ezekiel, of Daniel, of Habakkuk, of John the beloved, when they had visions of God. No man could see God’s face and live. There must always be some sort of cloud between. Through the veil of Christ’s manhood we see God and live; but God absolutely is beyond all creature ken—the sight were far too much for us. Even a glimpse of his skirts is something overwhelming! They that have seen God at any time have trembled at him and at his Word. For the Word of the Lord is full of

majesty. There is a divine royalty about every sentence of Scripture which the true believer feels and recognizes, and therefore trembles before it.

They tremble at the searching power of God's Word. Do you never come into this place and sit down in the pew, and say, "Lord, grant that thy Word may search me and try me, that I may not be deceived"? Certain people must always have sweets and comforts; but God's wise children do not wish for these in undue measure. Daily bread we ask for, not daily sugar. Wise believers pray that the Word of the Lord may prove to be quick and powerful, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of their hearts; that it may do with them what the butcher does with the animal when he cuts it down the middle, and lays the very entrails open to inspection; ay, cleaves the mid-bone, and lets the very marrow be seen. That is what God's Word has done for you and me, I am sure; and when it has done so, we have trembled. I can personally bear my witness to the way in which the solemn Word of the Lord makes my whole soul to tremble to its center. The Word of the Lord has cut very close sometimes with many of you, and made you cry, "Am I saved or not?" The man that did never tremble before the Lord does not know him. It is very easy to take the matter of your soul's salvation for granted, and yet to be mistaken. It is infinitely better to ask your way twenty times than miss your road home. And I do not blame the man who with holy anxiety says, "Is it so, or is it not so? for I want to know and to be sure." O beloved, I am not sorry that you tremble before the refining fire of sacred truth; I should be much distressed if you did not.

God's searching word makes man tremble; so does the Word when it is in the form of threatening. Believe me, dear friends, the words of God about the doom of sinners are very dreadful. Hence, there are some that try to pare them down, and cut the solemn meaning out of them; and then they say, "I could not rest comfortable if I believed the orthodox doctrine about the ruin of man." Most true, but what right have we to rest comfortable? What ground or reason can there be why we ever should have a comfortable thought with regard to the doom of those who refuse the Savior? If with that dreadful doom before us which Holy Scripture threatens to ungodly men we do grow far too indifferent, to what will the church of God come when it has torn out the doctrine from the Bible, and given it up? Why, sinners will be more hardened, and professors more trifling. He who seeks comfort at the expense of truth will be a fool for his pains. Blessed in the end will that man be who can endure the Word of the

Lord, when it is all thunder and flaming fire; and does not rebel against it, but bows before it. If it makes you tremble, it was meant to make you tremble. One said, after he had heard Massillon, "What an eloquent sermon! How gloriously he preached!" Massillon replied, "Then he did not understand me. Another sermon has been thrown away." If a sermon concerning the future punishment of sin does not make the hearer tremble, it is clear that it is not of God; for hell is not a thing to talk about without trembling. My inmost desire is to feel more and more the overwhelming power of Jehovah's judgment against sin, that I may preach with all the deeper solemnity the danger of the impenitent, and with tears and trembling may beseech them to be reconciled.

He that knows the Lord aright also trembles with fear lest he should break God's law. He sees what a perfect law it is, and how spiritual it is, and how it overlaps the whole of human life, and the man cries, "It is high; I cannot attain unto it; O my God, help me, I pray thee." He views the law with reverence. He admires with a sacred fear. He trembles at God's word, not because he dislikes it, but because he cannot bear to be so far off from compliance with its righteous demands. He sees the law fulfilled in Christ, and there is his peace; but yet the peace is mingled with deepest awe. "Oh," says one, "if he trembles like that, it shows he does not know the love of God." It shows that he does know it. Have you heard of the boy whose father was exceedingly fond of him? He was asked by some other boys to go and rob an orchard with them, but he said, "No, I will not go." They replied, "Your father won't scold you, nor beat you; you may safely come." To this he answered, "What! do you think because my father loves me, that therefore I will grieve him? No, I love him, and I love to do what he wishes me to do. Because he loves me I fear to vex him." That is like the child of God. The more he knows of God's love, the more he trembles at the thought of offending the Most High.

We, also, tremble lest we should miss the promises when they are spread out before us, sparkling like priceless gems. We hear of some who "could not enter in because of unbelief"; and we are taken with trembling lest we should be like them. We tremble lest there should be any passage of Scripture or doctrine of revelation that we are not able to believe: we pray for grace that we may never stagger at anything in the Word. We tremble lest we should misbelieve; and tremble more-if you are as I am-lest we should mistake and misinterpret the Word. I believe Martin Luther would have faced the infernal fiend himself without a fear; and yet we have his

own confession that his knees often knocked together when he stood up to preach. He trembled lest he should not be faithful to God's word. Angels have a holy fear of God, and well may you and I tremble when engaged in his service. To preach the whole truth is an awful charge. It was as much as even the Son of man could do fully to discharge his mission here below. You and I, who are ambassadors for God, must not trifle, but we must tremble at God's word.

III. Now we have got through the description of these trembling ones, and we have shown why they so exceedingly fear and quake; our third question was to be, **WHAT DOES GOD COMPARE THEM TO?** Harken, for here is a thing to be noted and thought upon. The Lord compares the tremblers at his Word to a temple. "Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." They are his temple. And to the Jews the temple was something very wonderful. There stood the holy and beautiful house, the joy of the whole earth. Lined with unrotting wood, and overlaid with pure gold, and its hewn stones put together without hammer or axe. To the Israelite's mind there never was such a building before. Yet the glorious Jehovah speaks lightly of the temple, and says, "Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

So, then, a man that trembles at God's word is God's temple; and he is emphatically so. He is so beyond the sense in which the house of Solomon was thus honored. His heart is full of worship. His trembling is, in itself, worship. As the angels veil their faces in the presence of the Lord, so do good and true men veil theirs, trembling all the while, as they worship him that liveth for ever. As the temple, even to the posts of the doors, moved at the presence of the God of the whole earth, so doth every part of our manhood become awe-stricken when he that dwelleth between the cherubim shines forth within our spirit. Well may we tremble to whom the Infinite draweth nigh! The ungodly, in their brutishness, may be free from the fear of God; but the man to whom grace has given a holy sensitiveness, worships with fear and trembling.

Note that the Lord does not merely compare us with the temple, but he prefers us to the temple; and further, he prefers us even to the great temple of the universe not made with human hands, which he himself sets so much

above the house that Solomon built. The Lord says, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool"; and yet he seems to say, "All this is not my rest, nor the place of mine abode; but with this man will I dwell, even with him that trembleth at my word." The Lord prefers the trembling spirit, not only to the golden house below, but to the heavenly house above. The Lord speaks of heaven as his throne; and what is the trembler at God's Word but God's throne? God is evidently enthroned within him. Under a sense of the divine presence, the stupendous weight of Deity has crushed the man, and made him tremble in every part of his nature. It is the glory of the revelation which causes the sinking of heart, the shrinking of the soul. As for the earth, it is Jehovah's footstool; but so is this lowly, trembling man. He is willing to be God's footstool, willing to be as the dust beneath God's feet. Who is there among you, my beloved in the Lord, that would not feel highly honored if he might be permitted to be as the footstool of the Infinite Majesty? It is too high a place for us! To lie as a door-mat at his temple-gate for the poorest of his saints to wipe his shoes upon, is an honor greater than we deserve: we feel it to be so. At any rate, I speak for myself: when God is near me, I feel as if it was an honor to be the servant of the least of his poor people. "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness." Yet, see! the Lord makes his throne and footstool out of the heart and conscience of the man that trembles at his Word. It is a sublime comparison: ye are the temples of God, and something more. The more you study these verses, the more you will be astonished.

And what does God say he will do? He saith, "To this man will I look"-look first with approval. The Lord seems to say, "I will not look on proud Pharisees; I will not look on the presumptuous; but I will look at the lowly trembling truster. I will fix my eye upon him; he shall be countenanced by me. I will lift up the light of my countenance upon him. He is right with me, and I will show myself gracious to him." It is right that the creature should tremble at the Creator; right that the sinner should tremble before his Judge; right that a child should give due honor to his august Father; therefore will the Lord look upon such a one with approval. Sweetly does Miss Steele pray in her song

*"Low at thy feet my soul would lie,
Here safety dwells, and peace divine;
Still let me live beneath thine eye,
For life, eternal life is thine."*

The text means, next, that he will look upon him with care. You know how we use the expression, "I will look to him"; thus will God look to the man that trembles at his Word. You that can stand alone may look to yourselves; but he that trembles shall have God to look to him. When you are afraid, cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe," and your tottering footsteps shall be firmer than a giant's tread. When you grow so self-satisfied that as the young man you can run without weariness, you shall both weary and fall. Oh, trust not in yourselves, but tremble before the Lord, and he will look to you, and see that no evil shall come nigh unto you!

*"With sacred awe pronounce his name,
Whom words nor thoughts can reach,
A contrite heart shall please him more
Than noblest forms of speech."*

The look of the Lord shall mean a third thing, namely, delight. We had a part of that in the term approbation: it is marvellous that God should take delight in the man that trembles at his word. The Lord has no such pleasure in the careless and carnally secure. He that goes tramping through his Christian career as if he were somebody, and all were safe, is no favourite of heaven. The man who takes things easily and self-confidently, with a kind of happy-go-lucky feeling that all must end well with him-he has no consideration from God. Have you seen the fine professor who has despised the tender in heart? Mark that man, for the end of that man will be a crash-"great shall be the fall thereof." Have you heard the boastful preacher, self-sufficient as to his own knowledge and eloquence? Mark that man also, for his end is confusion. But watch that trembling one, whose only hope is in Christ, whose only strength is in the Lord, for he shall be sustained. Watch the self-distrustful one who never pounces upon a privilege as if it were his by right of merit, but humbly accepts it as a gift to the unworthy-he is the man that shall stand in the evil day. He that goes through life fearing is the man who has nothing to fear. "Happy is the man that feareth alway," says the Word of the Lord. He that is afraid of falling under trial, and cries, "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil"; he shall be kept from sin; but he who rashly rushes into temptation shall fall by it. He who watches by day as well as by night, puts on his armor when there seems no war, and carries his sword always drawn even when there is no enemy visible: oh, that is the man who shall cope with the deadly enemy of souls! The Holy Ghost is in him, and the Lord has regard

unto him; he shall not fall by the hand of the enemy. Though oftentimes he trembles, he shall be safe at last. Glory shall thus be given to God that helped him. The self-confident would not have glorified God if he had succeeded, for he would have thrown up his cap inside the gates of heaven, and magnified his own name. As for this man, he doffs his crown. “Non nobis, Domine,” he cries, when he enters heaven. “Not unto us, not unto us, O is still his cry. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood; unto him that kept us from falling, and preserved us to his kingdom and glory, unto him shall be all honor. Every man who this day trembles at God’s Word says “Amen” to this. God bless you, my beloved The Lord himself look to you, and dwell with you!

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS,-Next week I hope to publish a sermon newly delivered at the Tabernacle; and I trust I may have the privilege of continuing to preach at home, Sabbath by Sabbath, for many months to come. I beg of those who have profited by the sermons to ask for me a fresh anointing of God’s Spirit now that I begin anew to minister in the great congregation. I would fain see the Word of the Lord glorified “by signs following,” in the conversion of thousands of sinners, and the upbuilding of the people of God. These great blessings are ready for bestowal, and only await our asking. Let us importunately pray.

The great works which I am called upon to superintend require so much of care that I tremble as I return to my place to reassume my burden. With great earnestness I beg my kind friends to hold up my hands by their prayers. If ye have judged me faithful, entreat the Lord for me that I faint not.

Yet, withal, I cannot close without owning the good hand of the Lord, which has kept me hitherto, and will still keep me, despite all adversaries. The Lord is faithful, whatever men may be. Let us trust in him, and not be afraid. Into the thick darkness which now hovers over much of the church, and blinds many of her leaders, we advance with uplifted banner, believing that the gloom will vanish before the eternal light. CRUX LUX. The doctrine of the cross is light. This will we uphold until death.

Yours ever heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Feb. 16th, 1889.

BREAKFAST WITH JESUS.

NO. 2072

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
FEBRUARY 24TH, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.”

Or, as we have it in the Revised Version,

“Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples durst enquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.”-John 21:12.

THE Lord Jesus is thoughtful of bodily wants. In his earlier days he fed multitudes of people, on two grand occasions, with bread and fish. And now that he has died and risen from the dead, and is in the body of his glory, he still thinks of the hungry bodies of men, and calls to the fishermen, “Children, have ye any meat?” Finding that they have nothing, he makes a breakfast for them. “Come and break your fast” falls very condescendingly from his lips, and it proves to us how he cares for the temporal needs of the poor. Here is warrant for the servants of God endeavoring to feed the hungry crowd. We are not to buy them with so-called charities, for that our Lord never did. Loaves and fishes are a very poor spiritual bait, and catch none of the right sort of fish. The feeding must come because they need it, and for the love of God, and with no ulterior aim. As the Savior fed the people, so, according to our ability, we may attempt to do, without fear that we shall therein be going beyond our legitimate province.

Our Lord and Savior was particularly mindful in this case of the wants of his own people. These seven apostles were supplied by his care. If any of

you are in needy and trying circumstances, catch at this fact, and be encouraged. He that said to the seven, "Come and break your fast," will not forget you in the time of your need. On your part, now is the time for the exercise of faith; and on his part, now is the season for the display of his power. If you look to your fellow-men, perhaps they may fail to help you: they are far too apt to give the cold shoulder to those who are not well-to-do; but if you look to him, you shall have your prayer answered. "In some way or other the Lord will provide." I cannot tell how, any more than I can tell you how our Lord that fire of coals, or how he procured the fish which was broiling on the fire; but there was the fire, and there was the fish; and so, in the Lord's own way, even in the mount of the Lord, it shall be seen that the Lord will provide. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." He that taught you to say, "Give us this day our daily bread" did not teach you an empty phrase. O ye whose need presses so closely as even to make you acquainted with hunger, behold how Jesus pities you, and look to him to aid you; for he is the same now as he was by the lake of Galilee. Go a step further. As Jesus is so careful of the condition of his people that he will have their bodies fed, we may be sure that he will have their souls nourished. I said to myself, as I considered my return among you, "The first thing we will do when I get home shall be to feed the servants of God, that so they may be in good working order." Our Lord began this third manifestation of himself, not with prayer, but with provender. Much had to be said and done; but they must breakfast first. They were to be questioned, rebuked, instructed, commissioned, warned; but they must first be fed. The essential thing that morning was a fire of coals, and broiled fish and bread; for they must be put into good condition, and then they would be ready to hear what their Lord should say to them. Things that were of prime importance must yet be kept back a little while, until they could bear them and profit by them; and that they could not do while they were cold and hungry; hence fire and food. Now, if it was so with the body, how much more is it so with the soul? I want you, therefore, this morning, to ask the Lord to spread a table for you in the wilderness. May your song at this time be-

*"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by."*

Many things call for your earnest attention; but it will be poor haste if you rush to work without refreshing the inner man. Pause a while, and feast with your Lord, in order that you may be able to attend to your pressing duties. If you had a tree to fell, you would count it no loss of time first to sharpen your axe. When the axe is sharp, then the tree will come down all the sooner: sharpen, therefore, the axe of your mind. This morning have nothing to do but to attend to the commissariat of your soul. The Lord's first miracle was at a wedding feast; and in the miracle now before us he provides a breakfast. His is no starveling gospel, he giveth us all things richly to enjoy. Hear his cry, in the ancient Song of Songs: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Dear child of God, believe, and doubt not. Should a choice morsel come your way, partake of it with a believing confidence.

I. First, I shall invite you TO SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF A FEAST WITH JESUS. Jesus saith unto you, "Come and break your fast"; and his words are never without the deepest meaning. See the importance of a meal with Jesus. It was peculiarly needful to these men, because they were in a needy condition. They were wet, cold, and hungry. A fire of coals was a fine center for them, whereat they could dry their jerseys, and warm their hands. The fish, fresh from the sea and from the fire, was most suitable for their hunger. Before them Jesus spreads the old food with which he always fed the people; food pleasant and easy of digestion. Bread, with a relish of fish, was the constant menu of all our Lord's feasts. Jesus does not like to see his servants wet, and cold, and hungry; and so he provides for the removal of these discomforts. Depend upon it, what Jesus does not like to see is not good for us. It is not well for us to be unhappy. If, therefore, you feel, this morning, in your inmost souls, uncomfortable, and much out of sorts, your Lord does not wish you to be so. The thoughts of your own misery will hinder your thoughts of him, and prevent your rendering him good service. My Master bids me, this morning, see to it that all hands are provided with good cheer. Gladly, therefore, do I invite you to the fire of coals which is furnished by his glowing love. Cheerfully do I set before you the holy food of sacred truth furnished by his Word; and I would thus fulfill his command to me, "Feed my sheep." It is important, dear child of God, that you should be happy; it is important that you should be in a flourishing spiritual condition within; therefore, come and break your fast with Jesus. Many a battle has been lost, because the soldiers were not in good fettle for the fight; let it not be so with you. You need stamina if you are to do hard

and long work for Jesus and his truth; and there is no keeping up the stamina without heavenly food. It is important, considering the condition of many of you, that you should have a meal with Jesus at once.

Besides, they were weary with a night's fruitless toil. As I told you in reading, it was "night" and "nothing" while Jesus was away. Have I not before me some servants of God who have not seen any good following their exertions of late? They have fished for men, but the nets have remained empty. It is dreary work, toiling all night and taking nothing. I know this, because I know still better the reverse of it. Oh, it is a blessed thing to have a successful season by the little river of retirement, when one is away from the great sea of the city! In my late seclusion, it has seemed to me that the fish kept coming up to my line, and biting at my hook, though I had not of purpose baited it for any. The Lord sent me persons to receive a blessing, and they had a quiet word, and went on their way rejoicing. Alas! it is not always so. You may have a widespread net cast into the great sea, and no end of fishes all around you, and yet you may take nothing: that night's work yielded nothing but splash and haul, disappointment and fatigue. If you are in that condition, you evidently need encouragement. Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord will be your present want. The Savior calls to you, "Come and breakfast. Leave the boat, and the nets, and forget the night's vain toil, and come and commune with me." Weary worker, worried and weeping, cease your complaining, and now come to the fire and the food which Jesus provides for you.

You will remind me that, before the breakfast, the disciples had taken a great number of fish, and had counted them. Just so; and that is another reason for calling them to feast with Jesus. Catching fish is a fine business, but being fed is equally needful. No fisherman can live on catching and counting. It is a very deceptive thing for a man to sustain his faith upon the success of his labors. Our tendency in a revival is to rejoice over converts, and count them "a hundred and fifty and three." It is not wrong to count your converts if Christ gives them to you: the awkward part of it is, that you are apt to count in with the fish a number of frogs—I mean a sort of convert that Jesus never sent. You may, if you please, count every convert, and say, "a hundred and fifty and three"; but do not think that this will nourish your own soul. You cannot sustain the life of grace upon the grace received by others. Believe me, you must in secret draw from the divine storehouse your personal supplies, or you will be famished. You will find it

very hungry work if you try to live on catching and counting! You must be yourself watered, or your watering of others will dry up your soul. The most successful evangelist, if he attempts to live on his own work, will suck up the wind. If a teacher of children, or a conductor of young men's classes, makes the food of his soul to be his success in the service of God, he will feed on ashes. O you that have had grand times in preaching or teaching, do not be content with these! Grace for your office is one thing; grace for yourselves is another. It is well to catch fish; but even that would be sorry work if you perished with hunger yourselves.

Again, dear friends, I think it was a very necessary thing that they should break their fast, for the Lord Jesus Christ was going to search their hearts. "When they had dined": notice that, not till then, Jesus questioned Peter. When they had breakfasted, "Jesus saith, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "When they had breakfasted," not before. He would not deal with Peter, or any of them, while they had empty stomachs. I beg you to feed well this morning, because you will have to be overhauled before long, and it will be well to have heart to bear it. Truth will be preached to you another day which will blow quite through you, like a mighty wind-truth which will burn as an oven, and like a refiner's fire. Get yourself in good order for cross-examination. Prepare your soul for the hour of trial, when the business of the hour will be to answer the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Ah, dear friends! if heart-searching trials come upon us when we are lean and famished, they pull us down dreadfully, for we are out of condition; but the same measure of heart-searching administered to us when soundly nourished by communion with Christ, will do us good.

*Though cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
When I have fed with Christ at home,
My soul defies them all.*

He that is right with God can bear to be questioned. He that is nourished and built up with heavenly food, can bear to examine the grounds of his faith, and to test the foundations of his hope. Such a man can face the inquiry-

*"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?"*

So, therefore, because heart-searching times will come before long, I entreat you to comfort your souls with a morsel of bread.

Remember, also, that they were about to receive a commission: they were to be told to feed Christ's lambs and sheep. But I think I hear you say, "That commission, like the examination, was directed to Peter." I know it; but I am also sure that when the Lord said to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" the question went home to them all. What the Lord said to Peter specially, he was saying to them all, in truth. Have you never felt, when a word of warning has been addressed to your friend, that it was even more applicable to yourself than to him? An indirect admonition is, to some natures, more powerful than one personally directed. Nathanael, Thomas, James, John, and the others, were quite as truly addressed by the Savior as "Simon, son of Jonas." The arrow shot at Simon was not lost upon the sons of Zebedee. Certainly, they were all of them to feed the lambs, and pastorize the sheep; and the commission which was given distinctly to Peter, was meant for all the Lord's servants. See, then, the necessity for their breaking their fast. If they are to feed others, they must be fed themselves. "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." He that watereth others must be himself watered. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept," was a very sorrowful lament; and the Lord would not have his people imitate it. Jesus was going to give them a blessed work to do, and therefore he would put them into working order before he allotted it to them. O brothers and sisters, it may seem a very small thing for you to feed your own selves, but it is not so. I would have you strong yourselves, that you may labor for others. You cannot be made a blessing to those around you till you are blest yourselves. Your usefulness largely depends upon your personal joy: "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Once more, our Lord was going to give to one of them a warning, and, by that one to hint much the same heritage of trials to the others. "Another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Crucifixion awaited Peter, and a martyr's death in some form awaited all those who were present, except John. This the Master lets them know; but he does not mention it till they have dined. Do not reckon upon an easy journey between here and heaven. If you do, you will be mistaken; for "in the world ye shall have tribulation. If the Lord loves you, he will chasten you: it is the covenant mark. Marvel not when you fall into manifold trials; but rather rejoice in this, that you have evidence herein that your Father has not

forgotten you, but is still training you for his heaven. But while we give you that warning, we invite you to come and feed on heavenly bread, and refresh your souls with those spiritual luxuries whereby men are made ready for labor and suffering. "Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," that you may be prepared to do that which is good, and delight yourself in sacrifice. It is no trifling matter, therefore, when I say to you, in the words of the Old Version, "Come and dine," or in the exacter phrase of the Revision, "Come and break your fast." Thus much for the importance of the matter.

II. Secondly, I want you to SEE JESUS HIMSELF ACTING AS YOUR HOST. It was Jesus who cried to them, "Children, have ye any meat?" It was he that said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." It is he that gives the invitation, "Come and break your fast." Jesus is Master of the feast.

He condescends to the feast. Is it not wonderful that the Holy Lord should have communion with his faulty followers? Yet he will breakfast with us—with us who doubted him, as Thomas did; with us who denied him, as Peter did; with us who forsook him and fled, as all the rest did. He, always sinless, was now without physical necessities. He had risen from the dead, and he did not need to eat, yet did he still have familiar fellowship with sinful man. On one occasion he ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb; and I suppose that on this occasion he also ate with them; for one does not ask others to come and dine, and then himself refrain from eating. He communed with them by that bread and by that fish. It was wonderful condescension. But will the Lord still come and commune with us? Will he, "without whom was not anything made that was made," have fellowship with a sinful mortal like me? Take comfort, ye who are conscious of sin, from the fact that his last near companion here below was a thief, and the first that passed the pearly portal with him and entered into his kingdom, was that self-same justly executed one. Come along with you, you child of God, conscious of your gross unworthiness; come, for he invites you now to feast with himself. This shall be your nourishment, not alone the food which he prepares for you, as his own company.

Notice, that Jesus, as the host, prepared the feast. We shall never know how that fire of coals was kindled: some speak confidently of it as the work of angels; but why introduce angels where they are not needed? They can kindle fires, doubtless, but so can the Savior without their aid. There was the fire of coals, and there was the fish laid thereon. Where did he get

the fish? All sorts of idle speculations have been raised about his having bought it from a passing boat. There is no need of such inventions. Doubtless both fire and fish were the products of creative power. We have before us one of those miracles which were commonplaces to the Savior. He spoke, and there was the fire and the fish laid thereon, and a crisp cake hot from the coals. Dear friends, your soul can never feed except upon what Jesus has prepared for you. His flesh is meat indeed; but there is no other meat for souls. He has not to kindle a fire for your comfort, it is burning now: it has been kindled long ago. There was never a morsel of manna in the mouth of any child of God but the Word of the Lord supplied it. There was never food yet for a true heart but what it came from him who is our life, and the food of our life. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" said they of old: but that is exactly what he does. All that he gives to us of spiritual nourishment is of his own preparing.

What is equally wonderful to me is this, that, after the Lord had prepared it, he himself was the waiter at the feast. Read verse thirteen: "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." When there are seven at table, a host might well be justified in saying, "Dear friends, you are welcome to all that is before you; pray help yourselves." But we cannot help ourselves: he who prepares the feast must also bring the food to us. "Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise." Only one serving man, and that the Lord himself! O Master, we know there is good spiritual food in thy Word, but we are not able to appropriate it. Come thou, and thyself lay home the promise to the heart. You know what a way our Lord has of making us to lie down in green pastures: we do not even lie down of ourselves. He places the nourishing Word in the heart. Remember that passage in Hosea, which stands in the original, "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart." I can speak to your ear, but Jesus speaks to the heart. The Lord Jesus, by the work of the Holy Spirit, has a way of so conveying the heavenly food into us, that we do receive and inwardly digest it, and it entereth into the secret part of the soul, and is assimilated, and we are truly built up thereby. I pray that the Holy Ghost may thus work at this time. See your host. It is the Lord himself who lovingly condescends to commune with you, and in a wonderful way prepares the feast, and with boundless condescension himself helps you to it.

All the while he was doing this he showed himself. "This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples." The chapter opens by

saying, "And on this wise showed he himself." When the Lord was handing out that bread he was showing himself, and they could see him in that act; and when he brought them the fish to eat, they saw him revealed as the very Christ. They saw more of him in giving the bread and the fish than they would have seen if he had stood still to be gazed upon. Jesus feeding us is Jesus revealed. If he had stretched out his hand for them to examine the nail-prints, they would not have seen him so well as when that hand gave them food. Oh, if the Lord Jesus will come to you individually, as I pray he may, and bring you heavenly food this morning, you will see him—see him with eyes full of tears. Are there not times with you when divine truth comes home to you in such a sweet, comforting, nourishing way, that you have said, "It is the Lord; he is himself the sum and substance of his own blessed gospel. He has himself brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me is his own love"? A vision of Christ is the most filling thing in the world. If we may but see him in glory, that shall be the heaven of heaven. If I were the dying thief I would be happy to die with him side by side on the cross, and count it bliss to be with him there. But what must it be to pass through the pearly gate with him, and to be with him in his kingdom, as that same dying thief was! This is your morning's portion: do not miss it. "He showed himself." Is it weeks since you have seen your Lord? Oh! then, heave a great sigh, and say, "Lord, show thyself to me." Is it days since you have had actual fellowship with Jesus? Oh, that your heart might break after him now! Do not be satisfied to let this morning's sitting break up without your having seen the Lord—every one of you who are his true disciples. O dear friends, you that hear about Christ, and just let it glide by, what are you worth? What sort of Christians are those who do not know the vitals of Christianity, the secret enjoyments of rapturous love? Outside in merely external religion everything is cold and dreary, and I do not wonder at people getting weary of it, and giving it up. The glory lies within the veil. We must see Jesus. Our home is where God reveals himself to his people. Little drops of religion are poor things. Oh, for Madame Guyon's torrents! Oh, that the sacred torrent would bear us away! That mighty river, not the river Kishon, but what if I call it Kedron?—the Kedron of his suffering love, which is a torrent indeed! Oh, to be borne along by the stream of free grace and dying love, until one is conscious of nearing the unfathomable depths of love unsearchable!

Thus much about our host. Mine is a poor talk. God grant that, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you may get far beyond me, and see him, whom having not seen we love!

III. Now, SEE THE PROVISION. I have tried to beckon you into the feast, and I have also tried to point out our host. Now, attentively regard the provisions. There are two parts. First, there was what he had mysteriously prepared—the fish laid upon the coals; and, secondly, what he had graciously given; for he said, “Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.” It was the same sort of fish, no doubt; but it came in two ways.

First, let us note the mysteriously prepared provision. See the fish which is broiling on the coals! Mysterious fish! Mysterious coals! Feed now with all your hearts upon the mystery of everlasting love. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” Feed on the mystery of the covenant of grace, when, on your behalf, the blessed Son of God stood sponsor and surety before the great Father, and the Father covenanted for his Son’s sake to bless his chosen. Oh, the mystery of the eternal gift of the elect to Jesus, and the gift of Jesus to his elect! Before the world began all this was provided for our need. Cannot you feed on this?

Think, next, of the kinship of Christ to you. He came to Bethlehem that he might take our nature. He lay an infant on a woman’s breast; he was cradled as a child; he abode here a suffering, wayworn man. Was not that a beautiful verse we sang just now, which began:

*“Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Arrayed in majesty and blood
Thou art our life, our souls in thee
Possess a full felicity”?*

Yes, he is brother to you; of your nature, of your flesh, and of your bones; your Goel, next of kin, sworn to redeem you, and even espoused to you. Jesus is brother to you who are in adversity. Feed on that.

Here is another fish of the kind found only in the sea of mysterious love—I point you to his effectual atonement. He has finished his lifework for you, and poured forth the price of your redemption, minting it from his own heart. He has washed you from your sins in his own blood. He hath made you kings and priests unto God. He has bought you with a price, so that you are not your own. The dying Christ bore your penalty: the living Christ has ensured your acceptance and your immortality. “Because I live,” saith

he, “ye shall live also.” While he shows himself to you this morning, he gives you these ancient things to feed upon. Come, feast upon the love that had no beginning, the love that can know no end, nor change, nor measure. Remember your living and everlasting union with him. The union between you and the Ever-blessed is inseparable. “Who shall separate us?” Come, fall to! I pray you, break your fast, you who are most weary, and worn, and sad! Sit not back from the table, but eat to the full. My beloved, eat of these fish laid on the coals-these mystic, marvellous things, in the preparation of which you have had no hand, but which Jesus aforetime has prepared for you.

But the feast was also made of what the Lord had graciously given, and they had drawn out of the deep. The Lord has caused us to obtain many precious things by his own Spirit; and these we have made our own, taking them in our net and dragging them to shore. Let us feed on mercies experienced. Just now to myself these are very many -” a hundred and fifty and three.” I can scarcely count the favors the Lord has given me of late. My net is not broken, but I wonder it is not; for the draught of benefits is so great: he daily loadeth me with benefits. I desire abundantly to utter the memory of his great goodness. Cannot you do the same, and in the memory find a feast for love? “A hundred and fifty and three”-an odd number, but large: a number which, if you have been careful in your gratitude, may be very exact for all that-even the last three must not be forgotten.

*“Streams of mercy never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise.”*

“How precious, also, are thy thoughts unto me, O God!” The Lord has dealt well with his servants, according to his Word. Let us rejoice in his name as he has revealed it to us.

Have you not a netful of answers to prayer? Some here present have received such blessings that they may be compared to great fishes. When we have many fishes we expect them to be small fry, but ours are all great fish. Oh, the great goodness of a great God to great sinners, in the times of their great need! Let us be satisfied with the Lord’s great goodness to us when in trouble we have sought his face. “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” “I sought the Lord, and he heard me.” Come, feed upon what you have already tasted and handled, both of his word and work. Rejoice in what you have seen him do

in you and for you. Why, here are great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three.

The provision on the lone lake shore was more than enough for seven men, however hungry they might be. Was it not? They might eat as much as they liked without any fear of exhausting the supply; and after the meal, they would not have left twelve baskets full alone, as there had been at the former feast, but a superabundance for their brethren, or for any wanderers along the shore. Now, dear friends, try for a minute or two to dwell upon the wonders of God's truth and grace to you. Think of what he did in your conversion; what he has done in the time of temptation; how he has supplied your needs; and how he has given you enjoyments of his love. I was looking back through former volumes of my sermons, and I noticed how often a sermon occurs without a date upon it. I know what that denotes. It means that I was ill, and in great pain. Two or three times in almost every year I have to hear the Lord preach to me in the chamber of sickness, and I am unable, therefore, to preach to you. These were bitter things at the time; but I bless the Lord for them all, and for raising me up again and again, and renewing my strength. He will not leave me now. Cannot you also turn to your diaries, and remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, and speak well of his name? All this will be to you a fire of coals and fish drawn from the deep sea.

I have almost done. I do not know whether you have been fed; but I hope you have. I would again invite you in Wisdom's name, saying, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

IV. But, lastly, SEE HOW THE GUESTS BEHAVED THEMSELVES. I hope if you are fed well, you will behave in the same way. These guests of our Savior, we find, "durst not ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord." Come, let us get close up to our Lord.

When a soul draws near to Jesus, its words are few or none. Notice what the disciples said to the Master on this occasion. They only spoke one word, and that word was "No." John spoke to Peter, but not to the Lord. All the time before breakfast, and all the time they were at breakfast, they never said anything to him but "No." That one deep "No" betrayed the vacuum, the emptiness, the hunger: that was all they had to say. You, also, may say as much to your Lord as that: "Lord, I am nothing, nobody; I have nothing; I can do nothing without thee." Not another word is recorded as coming from them. That devotion which must always show itself by

shouting may be very genuine, but it is to be feared that it is superficial. Deep waters run silently. Great feeling is dumb: there is a frost of the mouth when there is a thaw of the soul. Words are often a wall between our spirit and the Great Spirit. I think I remember reading of George Fox sitting down, with a crowd of people round him, for a long time, and never saying a word. They were all watching and waiting; and if it had been myself, I should have stood up full soon, and have said something, like a fool. But he was a wise man, and he sat still. It takes a very wise man to hold his tongue so long. George Fox kept silence that he might famish the people from words. A grand lesson for them, and one that might be useful to some of you. You must have words! Fine words! Wonderful words! A big mouthful of words is fine food for fools. Some preachers seem to think that saints can feed on their eloquence, but they need more substantial meat. Could we not put things prettily if we were to try and throw out to you great bouquets of flowers? What would be the good of it? You want food; you want Christ; and if you could get Jesus himself, words would be an impertinence-your own words as well as mine.

As there were no words, so there could be no doubtful questions. Whenever a man gets away from communion with Christ, he begins to ask a host of questions. Persons who have no religion have always a selection of religious questions, varying from the stupidity of "Who was Cain's wife?" onward to, "What will man become by evolution?" When a soul has drawn near to Jesus, and has been fed by him, it is no more troubled with doubts than a man at the equator is bitten by frost. "I believe in the Bible," said one. "How can you do that?" sneered another. "Because I know the Author," was the fit reply. If you are walking in the light with your Lord, questions and doubts are heard no more, but you adore in deep restfulness of soul, "knowing that it is the Lord." How did the disciples know this? By reason? Well, the knowledge is not unreasonable; but we rise higher: we know Jesus by contact, by converse, and by a consciousness-or shall I call it an omnipotently overpowering conviction?-which needs no supporting argument. When we fall at his feet in lowliest reverence of joyful love, we believe and are sure. We become doubt-proof. As an iron-clad throws off the ball which is hurled at it, so a love-clad heart defies all the suggestions of scepticism.

They ate the bread and fish that morning, I doubt not, in silent self-humiliation. Peter looked with tears in his eyes at that fire of coals, remembering how he stood and warmed himself when he denied his

Master. Thomas stood there, wondering that he should have dared to ask such proofs of a fact most clear. All of them felt that they could shrink into nothing in his divine presence, since they had behaved so ill.

Yet were they also silent for joy. Did you ever feel the bliss of dying to self? As you near the vanishing point of self, the glory of the Lord dawns on you with immeasurable splendor. To grow bigger, and bigger, and bigger, until you fill the halls of fame, and your name echoes round the world, is the ambition of the vain, and it is an abomination. But to grow less and less, till the Lord God is all in all, is the joy of saints, and it is an offering of sweet smell.

*“The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie:
Thus, while I sink, my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high.”*

They were silent in wonder as they gazed on the risen One. He was all over wonder to them—a world of beauties and of miracles. When he fed them, when he gave them the bread, when he gave them the fish, it was a melting season. They remembered how he washed their feet; but then he was in his state of humiliation; and they marvelled yet more that now he was risen he would still be among them “as one that serveth.” They were dumb with surprise, and gratitude, and love.

I suppose they could not speak because they felt such deep, unutterable reverence for his majesty. They felt, with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place!” God was manifest in the flesh, and they beheld his glory; hence Peter speaks of himself as “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” What could they do but, while they apprehended that glory, remain quiet, and inwardly adore? Quietism alone may gender evil; but the practice of occasional quietism affords healthy nourishment to the soul. A sitting silently at the feet of Jesus is of more worth than all the clatter of Martha’s dishes.

Communion with Christ will teach you a reverence which words cannot express. There is an exceeding weight of glory which would break the backs of all the words of all languages should we essay to load them therewith.

*“Come, then, expressive silence,
muse his praise.”*

“Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.”

Brethren, have you fed? Have you breakfasted with Jesus? If so, I am well content. But I would remind you that when you come hither again, you must hear what your Lord has to say by way of question and command; for, “when they had dined,” solemn business began. It must not be with us as with Israel: “The people sat down to eat, and to drink, and rose up to play”; but we rise to work, and suffer, and to go far towards heaven in the strength of the meat we have enjoyed.

Some one will ask, “Have you not a word for the unconverted this morning?” Indeed, I have something better than words. When we set forth the provisions of grace before the godly, we are really inviting poor hungry sinners. The sight of food is a fine creator of appetite. When the prodigal returned to his father, they brought forth the best robe and put it on him, and they put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; but when it came to the eating, what was done? The father did not say, “Bring forth the fatted calf, and feed my son with it.” His words were: “Let us eat, and be merry.” Why, I thought he was caring most for his returning child. Yes, but he was faint, and sick at heart, and needed to have his appetite aroused. One sure way to induce another to eat is to eat yourself. If he stands there, and his sadness has taken away his appetite, do you eat and be merry, and you will soon find that his mouth will begin to water, and he will be ready to feed with you. I do hope some people will feel an appetite coming to them this morning, and will cry, “I long to feed on heavenly bread, and to have my heart refreshed in the presence of the Lord Jesus.” O poor heart, believe in Jesus, and he is yours! Children of God, just as you can enjoy Christ, and show that enjoyment in your lives, you will be fascinating others to your Lord, and thus by your means I shall not have preached in vain to the unconverted.

O ye who would fain come to Jesus, look at the first chapter of this Gospel of John. The word is there, “Come and see”; while in this last chapter of John it is, “Come and dine.” Remember that the first thing to do is to “Come and see,” or look to Jesus. He says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look to Jesus, see him dying in your stead to put away your guilt. Look with the appropriating glance of faith, trusting in him; and then ere long you shall feed on him, to your heart’s

delight. The Lord send his blessing upon this word, for his name's sake!
Amen.

TWO ESSENTIAL THINGS

NO. 2073

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 3RD, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God,
and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Acts 20:21*

THIS was the practical drift of Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and everywhere else. He kept back nothing which was profitable to them; and the main profit he expected them to derive from his teaching the whole counsel of God was this, that they should have “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” This was the great aim of the apostle. I pray that it may be so with all of us who are teachers of the Word: may we never be satisfied if we interest, please, or dazzle; but may we long for the immediate production, by the Spirit of God, of true repentance and faith. Old Mr. Dodd, one of the quaintest of the Puritans, was called by some people, “Old Mr. Faith and Repentance,” because he was always insisting upon these two things. Philip Henry, remarking upon his name, writes somewhat to this effect — “As for Mr. Dodd's abundant preaching repentance and faith, I admire him for it; for if I die in the pulpit, I desire to die preaching repentance and faith; and if I die out of the pulpit, I desire to die practising repentance and faith.” Some one remarked to Mr. Richard Cecil, that he had preached very largely upon faith; but that good clergyman assured him that if he could rise from his dying bed, and preach again, he would dwell still more upon that subject. No themes can exceed in importance repentance and faith, and these need to be brought very frequently before the minds of our congregations.

Paul testified concerning “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”; by which I understand that, as an ambassador for Christ, he assured the people that through repentance and faith they would

receive salvation. He taught in God's name mercy through the atoning sacrifice to all who would quit their sin and follow the Lord Jesus. With many tears he added his own personal testimony to his official statement. He could truly say, "I have repented, and I do repent"; and he could add, "but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior; I am resting upon the one foundation, trusting alone in the Crucified." His official testimony, with its solemnity, and his personal testimony, with its pathetic earnestness, made up a very weighty witness-bearing on the behalf of these two points — repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved friends, we cannot at this time do without either of these any more than could the Greeks and Jews. They are essential to salvation. Some things may be, but these must be. Certain things are needful to the well-being of a Christian, but these things are essential to the very being of a Christian. If you have not repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no part nor lot in this matter. Repentance and faith must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post upon which its hinges are fixed. A door without a door-post to hang upon is not a door at all; while a door-post without the door hanging to it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder; and these two he has made inseparable — repentance and faith. I desire to preach in such a way that you shall see and feel that repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ are the two things which you must have; but even then I fail, unless you obtain them. May the Holy Spirit plant both these precious things in our hearts; and if they are already planted there, may he nourish them and bring them to much greater perfection.

I. Let me observe, in the first place, that THERE IS A REPENTANCE WHICH IS NOT TOWARD GOD. Discriminate this morning. Paul did not merely preach repentance, but repentance toward God; and there is a repentance which is fatally faulty, because it is not toward God.

In some there is a repentance of sin which is produced by a sense of shame. The evil-doers are found out, and indignant words are spoken about them: they are ashamed, and so far they are repentant, because they have dishonored themselves. If they had not been found out, in all probability they would have continued comfortably in the sin, and even have gone further on in it. They are grieved at having been discovered; and they are

sorry, very sorry, because they are judged and condemned by their fellows. It is not the evil which troubles them, but the dragging of it to light. It is said that among Orientals it is not considered wrong to lie, but it is considered a very great fault to lie so blunderingly as to be caught at it. Many who profess regret for having done wrong are not sorry for the sin itself, but they are affected by the opinion of their fellow-men, and by the remarks that are made concerning their offense, and so they hang their heads. Truly, it is something in their favor that they can blush; it is a mercy that they have so much sense left as to be afraid of the observation of their fellows; for some have lost even this sense of shame. But shame is not evangelical repentance; and a man may go to hell with a blush on his face as surely as if he had the brazen forehead of a shameless woman. Do not mistake a little natural fluttering of the heart and blushing of the face, on account of being found out in sin, for true repentance.

Some, again, have a repentance which consists in grief because of the painful consequences of sin. The man has been a spendthrift, a gambler, a profligate, and his money is gone; and now he repents that he has played the fool. Another has been indulging the passions of his corrupt nature, and he finds himself suffering for it, and therefore he repents of his wickedness. There are many cases that I need not instance here, in which sin comes home very quickly to men. Certain sins bear fruit speedily: their harvest is reaped soon after the seed is sown. Then a man says he is sorry, and he gives up the sin for a time; not because he dislikes it, but because he sees that it is ruining him: as sailors in a storm cast overboard the cargo of the ship, not because they are weary of it, but because the vessel will go to the bottom if they retain it. This is regret for consequences, not sorrow for sin. Ah, look at the drunkard, how penitent he is in the morning! "Who hath woe? who hath redness of the eyes?" But he will get a hair of the dog's tail that bit him, he will be at his cups again before long. He repents of the headache, and not of the drink. The dog will return to his vomit. There is no repentance which only consists of being sorry because one is smarting under the consequences of sin. Every murderer regrets his crime when he hears the hammers going that knock the scaffold together for his hanging. This is not the repentance which the Spirit of God works in a soul; it is only such a repentance as a dog may have when he has stolen meat, and is whipped for his pains. It is repentance of so low a sort that it can never be acceptable in the sight of God.

Some, again, exhibit a repentance which consists entirely of horror at the future punishment of sin. This fear is healthful in many ways, and we can by no means dispense with it. I do not wonder that a man who has lived a liar, a forger, and a perjurer, should, in the hour of his discovery, put an end to his life. If he accepts modern theology, he has escaped, by this means, from the hand of justice: the little pretense of punishment which deceivers predict for the next world no man need be afraid to risk rather than subject himself to a felon's fate. According to current teaching, it will be all the same with all men in the long run, for there is to be a universal restitution; and therefore the suicide does but rationally leap from pursuit and punishment into a state where all will be made happy for him by-and-by, even if he does not find it altogether heaven at first. He escapes from punishment in this life, and whatever inconvenience there may be for him in the next life he will soon get over it, for it is said to be so trivial that those who keep to Scripture lines, and speak the dread truth therein revealed, are barbarians or fools. Many men do, no doubt, repent truly through being aroused by fear of death, and judgment, and the wrath to come. But if this fear goes no further than a selfish desire to escape punishment, no reliance can be placed upon its moral effect. If they could be assured that no punishment would follow, such persons would continue in sin, and not only be content to live in it, but be delighted to have it so. Beloved, true repentance is sorrow for the sin itself: it has not only a dread of the death which is the wages of sin, but of the sin which earns the wages. If you have no repentance for the sin itself, it is in vain that you should stand and tremble because of judgment to come. If judgment to come drives you, by its terrors, to escape from sin, you will have to bless God that you ever heard of those terrors, and that there were men found honest enough to speak plainly of them; but, I pray you, do not be satisfied with the mere fear of punishment, for it is of little worth. The evil itself you must lament, and your daily cry must be, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Another kind of repentance may be rather better than any we have spoken of, but still it is not repentance toward God. It is a very good counterfeit; but it is not the genuine article. I refer to a sense of the unworthiness of an ill life. I have known persons, upon a review of their past, rise above the grovelling level of absolute carelessness, and they have begun to enjoy some apprehension of the beauty of virtue, the nobleness of usefulness, and the meanness of a life of selfish pleasure. A few of those who have no

spiritual life, have, nevertheless, keen moral perceptions, and they are repentant when they see that they have lost the opportunity of distinguishing themselves by noble lives. They regret that their story will never be quoted among the examples of good men, who have left "footprints on the sands of time." Musing upon their position in reference to society and history, they wish that they could blot out the past, and write more worthy lines upon the page of life. Now, this is hopeful; but it is not sufficient. We are glad when men are under influences which promise amendment; but if a man stops at a mere apprehension of the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, what is there in it? This is not repentance toward God; it may not be repentance at all in any practical sense. Men have been known to practice the vices they denounced, and avoid the virtues they admired; human sentiment has not force enough to break the fetters of evil. Repentance toward God is the only thing which can effectually cut the cable which holds a man to the fatal shores of evil.

Once more, there is a repentance which is partial. Men sometimes wake up to the notice of certain great blots in their lives. They cannot forget that black night: they dare not tell what was then done. They cannot forget the villainous act which ruined another, nor that base lie which blasted a reputation. They recall the hour when the inward fires of passion, like those of a volcano, poured the lava of sin adown their lives. At the remembrance of one gross iniquity, they feel a measure of regret when their better selves are to the front. But repentance toward God is repentance of sin as sin, and of rebellion against law as rebellion against God. The man who only repents of this and that glaring offense, has not repented of sin at all. I remember the story of Thomas Olivers, the famous cobbler convert, who was a loose-living man till he was renewed by grace through the preaching of Mr. Wesley, and became a mighty preacher, and the author of that glorious hymn, "The God of Abraham Praise." This man, before conversion, was much in the habit of contracting debts, but could not be brought to pay them. When he received grace, he was convinced that he had no right to remain in debt. He says, "I felt as great sorrow and confusion as if I had stolen every sum I owed." Now, he was not repentant for this one debt, or that other debt, but for being in debt at all, and, therefore, having a little coming to him from the estate of a relative, he bought a horse, and rode from town to town, paying everybody to whom he was indebted. Before he had finished his pilgrimage, he had paid seventy debts, principal and interest, and had been compelled to sell his horse,

saddle, and bridle, to do it. During this eventful journey he rode many miles to pay a single sixpence: it was only a sixpence, but the principle was the same, whether the debt was sixpence or a hundred pounds. Now, as he that hates debt will try to clear himself of every sixpence, so he that repents of sin, repents of it in every shape. No sin is spared by the true penitent. He abhors all sin. Brethren, we must not imitate Saul, who spared Agag and the best of the sheep. He had been told to destroy all, but he must needs spare some. Agag must be hewn in pieces, and the least objectionable of sin, if such there be, must be at once destroyed. Grace spares no sin. "Oh," saith one man, "I can give up every sin except one pleasure. This I reserve: is it not a little one?" Nay, nay; in the name of truth and sincerity, make no reserve. Repentance is a besom which sweeps the house from garret to cellar. Though no man is free from the commission of sin, yet every converted man is free from the love of sin. Every renewed heart is anxious to be free from even a speck of evil. When sin's power is felt within, we do not welcome it, but we cry out against it, as Paul did when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We cannot bear sin: when it is near us, we feel like a wretch chained to a rotting carcass; we groan to be free from the hateful thing. Yes, repentance vows that the enemy shall be turned out, bag and baggage; and neither Sanballat, nor any of his trumpery, shall have a chamber or a closet within the heart which has become the temple of God.

II. I have said enough to show that there is a repentance which is not toward God; and now, secondly, let us observe that EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD. Lay stress on the words, "toward God." True repentance looks toward God. When the prodigal son went back to his home, he did not say, "I will arise, and go to my brother; for I have grieved my brother by leaving him to serve alone." Neither did he say, "I will arise and go to the servants, for they were very kind to me. The dear old nurse that brought me up is broken-hearted at my conduct." "No," he said, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Our Lord's picture of a returning sinner is thus drawn in very clear colors, as a return to the Father, a repentance toward God. You are bound to make humble apology and ample compensation to everybody you have wronged; you are bound to make every acknowledgment and confession to all whom you have slandered or misrepresented: this is right and just, and must not be forgotten. Still, the

essence of your repentance must be “toward God”; for the essence of your wrong is toward God. I will endeavor to show you this. A boy is rebellious against his father. The father has told him such a thing is to be done, and he determines that he will not do it. His father has forbidden him certain things, and he therefore defiantly does them. His father is much grieved, talks with him, and endeavors to bring him to repentance. Suppose the boy were to reply, “Father, I feel sorry for what I have done, because it has vexed my brother.” Such a speech would be impertinence, and not penitence. Suppose he said, “Father, I will also confess that I am sorry for what I have done, because it has deprived me of a good deal of pleasure.” That also would be a selfish and impudent speech, and show great contempt for his father’s authority. Before he can be forgiven and restored to favor, he must confess the wrong done in disobeying his father’s law. He must lament that he has broken the rule of the household; and he must promise to do so no more. There can be no restoration of that child to his proper place in the family till he has said, “Father, I have sinned.” He is stubborn, unhumbled, and rebellious till he comes to that point. All the repentance that he feels about the matter which does not go toward his father, misses the mark: in fact, it may even be an impudent aggravation of his rebellion against his father’s rule that he is willing to own his wrong toward others, but will not confess the wrong he has done to the one chiefly concerned.

O sinner, you must repent before God, or you do not repent at all; for here is the essence of repentance. The man repenting sees that he has neglected God. What though I have never been a thief nor an adulterer; yet God made me, and I am his creature, and if throughout twenty, thirty, or forty years I have never served him, I have all that while robbed him of what he had a right to expect from me. Did God make you, and has he kept the breath in your nostrils, and has he kindly supplied your wants till now, and all these years has he had nothing from you? Would you have kept a horse or a cow all this time, and have had nothing from it? Would you keep a dog if it had never fawned upon you? never noticed your call? Yet all these years God has thus preserved you in being, and blessed you with great mercies, and you have made no response. Hear how the Lord cries, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!” This is where the sin lies.

Further than that, the true penitent sees that he has misrepresented God. When he has suffered a little affliction, he has thought God was cruel and

unjust. The heathen misrepresent God by worshipping idols: we misrepresent God by our murmurings, our complainings, and our thought that there is pleasure in sin, and weariness in the divine service. Have you not spoken of God as if he were the cause of your misery, when you have brought it all upon yourself? You talk about him as if he were unjust, when it is you that are unjust and evil.

The penitent man sees that the greatest offense of all his offenses is that he has offended God. Many of you think nothing of merely offending God: you think much more of offending man. If I call you “sinners” you do not repel the charge; but if I called you “criminals” you would rise in indignation, and deny the accusation. A criminal, in the usual sense of the term, is one who has offended his fellow-man: a sinner is one who has wronged his God. You do not mind being called sinners, because you think little of grieving God; but to be called criminals, or offenders against the laws of man, annoys you; for you think far more of man than of God. Yet, in honest judgment, it were better, infinitely better, to break every human law, if this could be done without breaking the divine law, than to disobey the least of the commands of God. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou hast lived in rebellion against God? Thou hast done the things he bids thee not to do, and thou hast left undone the things which he commands thee to do. This is what thou hast to feel and to confess with sorrow; and without this there can be no repentance.

Near the vital heart of repentance, right in its core, is a sense of the meanness of our conduct toward God. Especially our ingratitude to him, after all his favor and mercy. This it is that troubles the truly penitent heart most: that God should love so much, and should have such a wretched return. Ingratitude, the worst of ills, makes sin exceeding sinful. Sorrow for having so ill requited the Lord is a spiritual grace. A tear of such repentance is a diamond of the first water, precious in the sight of the Lord.

True repentance is also toward God in this respect, that it judges itself by God. We do not repent because we are not so good as a friend whom we admire, but because we are not holy as the Lord. God’s perfect law is the transcript of his own perfect character, and sin is any want of conformity to the law and to the character of God. Judge yourselves by your fellow-men, and you may be self-content; but measure yourselves by the perfect holiness of the Lord God, and oh, how you must despise yourself! There is

no deep repentance until our standard is the standard of perfect rectitude, till our judgment of self is formed by a comparison with the divine character. When we behold the perfection of the thrice holy Jehovah, and then look at ourselves, we cry with Job, “Mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

To sum up: evangelical repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass. We repent of the sin of our nature as well as of the sin of our practice. We bemoan sin within us and without us. We repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere surface repentance, and not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. Repentance of the evil act, and not of the evil heart, is like men pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak. Some would dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; they would remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. All that is done by way of amendment without a bemoaning of sin because of its being rebellion against God will fall short of the mark. When you repent of sin as against God, you have laid the axe at the root of the tree. He that repents of sin as sin against God, is no longer sporting with the evil, but has come to stern business with it; now he will be led to change his life, and to be a new man: now, also, will he be driven to cry to God for mercy, and in consequence he will be drawn to trust in Jesus. He will now feel that he cannot help himself, and he will look to the strong for strength. I can help myself toward my fellow-man, and I can improve myself up to his standard; but I cannot help myself toward God, and cannot wash myself clean before his eye; therefore I fly to him to purge me with hyssop, and make me whiter than snow. O gracious Spirit, turn our eyes Godward, and then fill them with penitential tears.

III. Thirdly, I am going to throw in a bit of my own. I confess that it does not rise to the glorious fullness of the text, but I use it as a stepping-stone for feeble footsteps. I thus apologize as I say — **THOSE WHO HAVE EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE ARE PERMITTED TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.** Paul says that he testified of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”; and, therefore, where there is repentance, faith is allowable. O penitent sinner, you may believe in the Savior! While you are laboring under your present sense of guilt, while you are loathing and abhorring yourself, while you are burdened and heavy laden with fears, while you are crushed with sorrow as you lie before the Lord, you may now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Before you have any quiet of conscience,

before any relief comes to your heart, before hope shines in your spirit; now in your direct distress, when you are ready to perish, you may at once exercise faith in him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. There is no law against faith. No decree of heaven forbids a sinner to believe and live.

You may pluck up courage to believe when you remember this — first, that though you have offended God (and this is the great point that troubles you) that God, whom you have offended, has himself provided an atonement. The sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is practically a substitution presented by God himself. The Offended dies to set the offender free. God himself suffers the penalty of his law, that he may justly forgive; and that, though Judge of all, he may yet righteously exercise his fatherly love in the putting away of sin. When you are looking to God with tears in your eyes, remember it is the same God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this offended God, “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Recollect, also, that this atonement was presented for the guilty: in fact, there could be no atonement where there was no guilt. It would be superfluous to make expiation where there had been no fault. For man, as a sinner, Christ died. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I pray you, then, the more deeply you feel your sinnership, the more clearly perceive that the sacrifice of Calvary was for you. For sinners the cross was lifted high, and for sinners the eternal Son of God poured out his soul unto death. Oh that my hearers, who mourn over sin, could see this, and rejoice in the divine method of putting sin out of the way!

But, remember, you must, with your repentance, come to God with faith in his dear Son. I have said that you may do so; but I apologize for so saying, for it is only half the truth. God commands you to believe. The same God that says, “Thou shalt not steal,” is that God who says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This is his commandment, that you believe on Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Faith is not left to your option, you are commanded to accept the witness of God. “Believe and live,” has all the force of a divine statute. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Therefore, if thou art already a rebel, do not go on rebelling by refusing to believe in the Lord’s own testimony.

Remember that there can be no reconciliation made between you and God unless you believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has given as a Savior, and commissioned to that end. Not believing in Jesus is caviling at God's way of salvation, quarrelling with his message of love. Will you do this? You have done wrong enough by fighting against Jehovah's law, are you going to fight against his gospel? Without faith it is impossible to please him; will you continue to displease him? Disbelief in Christ is on your part casting a new dishonor upon God, and thus it is a perseverance in rebellion of the most aggravated form. By refusing his unspeakable gift, you do, as it were, put your finger into the very eye of God. To refuse the Son is to blaspheme the Father. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Come, poor soul, be encouraged. Clearly, if you have repentance toward God, you are allowed to believe in Jesus. Upon the drops of your repentance the sun of mercy is shining; what a rainbow of hope is thus made!

Do not hesitate. You would fain be washed, for you mourn your defilement; yonder is the cleansing fount! You are pained with the malady of sin; there stands the healing Savior, cast yourself at his feet! No embargo is laid upon your believing. God has not even in secret said to you, "Seek ye my face in vain." Come, I pray you, and fear not.

We testify to you "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But that faith must be toward the Lord Jesus Christ. You must look to Jesus, to the substitute, to the sacrifice, to the mediator, to the Son of God. "No man cometh unto the Father," saith Jesus, "but by me." No faith in God will save the sinner except it is faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt to come to God without the appointed Mediator, is again to insult him by refusing his method of reconciliation. Do not so, but let your repentance toward God be accompanied with faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; you are warranted in thus believing.

IV. And now I come to my last point. Oh that I might be helped by the Holy Ghost! Here I come back to the text, and get on sure ground. EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE IS LINKED TO FAITH, AND FAITH IS LINKED TO REPENTANCE. We testify not only of repentance toward God, but of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are born of the same Spirit of God. I do not know which comes first; but I fall back on my well-worn image of a wheel — when the cart starts, which spoke of the wheel moves first? I do not know.

Repentance and faith come together. Perhaps I may say that repentance is like Leah, for it is “tender eyed”; and faith is like Rachel, fairer to look upon. But you cannot take Rachel to yourself unless you will have Leah also; for it is according to the rule of the gospel that so it should be. The Old Testament, with its law of repentance, must be bound up in one volume with the New Testament of the gospel of faith. These two, like Naomi and Ruth, say to each other, “Where thou dwellest I will dwell.” There are two stars called the Gemini, which are always together: faith and repentance are the Twins of the spiritual heavens. What if I liken them to the two valves of the heart? They must be both in action, or the soul cannot live. They are born together, and they must live together.

Repentance is the result of an unperceived faith. When a man repents of sin, he does inwardly believe, in a measure, although he may not think so. There is such a thing as latent faith: although it yields the man no conscious comfort, it may be doing something even better for him; for it may be working in him truthfulness of heart, purity of spirit, and abhorrence of evil. No true repentance is quite apart from faith. The solid of faith is held in solution in the liquid of repentance. It is clear that no man can repent toward God unless he believes in God. He could never feel grief at having offended God, if he did not believe that God is good. To the dark cloud of repentance there is a silver lining of faith; yet, at the first, the awakened soul does not know this, and therefore laments that he cannot believe; whereas, his very repentance is grounded upon a measure of faith.

Repentance is also greatly increased as faith grows. I fear that some people fancy that they repented when they were first converted, and that, therefore, they have done with repentance. But it is not so: the higher the faith, the deeper the repentance. The saint most ripe for heaven is the most aware of his own shortcomings. As long as we are here, and grace is an active exercise, our consciousness of our unworthiness will grow upon us. When you have grown too big for repentance, depend upon it you have grown too proud for faith. They that say they have ceased to repent confess that they have departed from Christ. Repentance and faith will grow each one as the other grows: the more you know the weight of sin, the more will you lean upon Jesus, and the more will you know his power to uphold. When repentance measures a cubit, faith will measure a cubit also.

Repentance also increases faith. Beloved, we never believe in Christ to the full till we get a clear view of our need of him; and that is the fruit of repentance. When we hate sin more we shall love Christ more, and trust him more. The more self sinks, the more Christ rises: like the two scales of balance, one must go down that the other may go up: self must sink in repentance that Christ may rise by faith.

Moreover, repentance salts faith and sweetens it, and faith does the same to repentance. Faith, if there could be true faith without repentance, would be like the flowers without the dew, like the sunshine without shade, and like hills without valleys. If faith be the cluster, repentance is the juice of the grape. Faith is dry, like the fleece on the threshing-floor, receptive and retentive; but when heaven visits it with fullness, it drips with repentance. If a man professes faith, and has no sense of personal unworthiness, and no grief for sin, he becomes a man of the letter, sound in the head, and very apt to prove his doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks. But when you add to this the mollifying effects of true repentance, he becomes lowly, and humble, and easily to be entreated. When a man repents as much as he believes, he is as patient in his own quarrel as he is valiant in "the quarrel of the covenant." He holds his own sinnership as firmly as he holds the Lord's Saviorship, and he frequents the Valley of Humiliation as much as the hills of Assurance.

If there could be such a thing as a man who was a believer without repentance, he would be much too big for his boots, and there would be no bearing him. If he were always saying, "Yes, I know I am saved; I have a full assurance that I am saved"; and yet had no sense of personal sin, how loudly he would crow! But, O dear friends, while we mourn our sins, we are not puffed up by the privileges which faith receives. An old Puritan says, that when a saint is made beautiful with rich graces, as the peacock with many-coloured feathers, let him not be vain, but let him recollect the black feet of his inbred sin, and the harsh voice of his many shortcomings. Repentance will never allow faith to strut, even if it had a mind to do so. Faith cheers repentance, and repentance sobers faith. The two go well together. Faith looks to the throne, and repentance loves the cross. When faith looks most rightly to the Second Advent, repentance forbids its forgetting the First Advent. When faith is tempted to climb into presumption, repentance calls it back to sit at Jesus' feet. Never try to separate these dear companions, which minister more sweetly to one another than I have time to tell. That conversion which is all joy and lacks

sorrow for sin, is very questionable. I will not believe in that faith which has no repentance with it, any more than I would believe in that repentance which left a man without faith in Jesus. Like the two cherubs which stood gazing down upon the mercy-seat, so stand these two inseparable graces, and none must dare to remove the one or the other.

I have almost done; but the thought strikes me, Will these good people go home, and remember about repentance and faith? Have I so talked that they will think of me rather than of the points in hand? I hope it is not so. I do pray you, throw away all that I may have said apart from the subject; cast it off as so much chaff, and keep only the wheat. Remember, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let each one ask himself, Have I a repentance which leads to faith? Have I a faith which joins hands with repentance? This is the way to weave an ark of bulrushes for your infant assurance: twist these two together, repentance and faith. Yet trust neither repentance nor faith; but repent toward God, and have faith toward the Lord Jesus. Mind you do this; for there is a sad aptitude in many hearers to forget the essential point, and think of our stories and illustrations rather than of the practical duty which we would enforce. A celebrated minister, who has long ago gone home, was once taken ill, and his wife requested him to go and consult an eminent physician. He went to this physician, who welcomed him very heartily. “I am right glad to see you, sir,” said he; “I have heard you preach, and have been greatly profited by you, and therefore I have often wished to have half an hour’s chat with you. If I can do anything for you, I am sure I will.” The minister stated his case. The doctor said, “Oh, it is a very simple matter; you have only to take such and such a drug, and you will soon be right.” The patient was about to go, thinking that he must not occupy the physician’s time; but he pressed him to stay, and they entered into pleasant conversation. The minister went home to his wife, and told her with joy what a delightful man the doctor had proved to be. He said, “I do not know that I ever had a more delightful talk. The good man is eloquent, and witty, and gracious.” The wife replied, “But what remedy did he prescribe?” “Dear!” said the minister, “I quite forget what he told me on that point.” “What!” she said, “did you go to a physician for advice, and have you come away without a remedy?” “It quite slipped my mind,” he said: “the doctor talked so pleasantly that his prescription has quite gone out of my head.” Now, if I have talked to you so that this will happen, I shall be very sorry. Come, let my last word be a repetition of the gospel

remedy for sin. Here it is. Trust in the precious blood of Christ, and make full confession of your sin, heartily forsaking it. You must receive Christ by faith, and you must loathe every evil way. Repentance and faith must look to the water and the blood from the side of Jesus for cleansing from the power and guilt of sin. Pray God that you may, by both these priceless graces, receive at once the merit of your Savior unto eternal salvation. Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Acts 20:17-27; Psalm 51.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” —
34 (VER. 1), 579, 51 (VER. 2).**

INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

NO. 2074

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 10TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”—John 14:17.

THE part of the text on which we shall meditate is this:—“The Spirit of truth; ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” Observe that the Holy Spirit is here called the Spirit of truth. There is much meaning in this expression. He is the teacher of truth, unalloyed truth, practical, divinely effective truth. He never teaches anything but the truth. If it comes from the Spirit of God, we may receive it from him without any hesitation. It is he that takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us; and these things are true, and he thus proves himself to be the Spirit of truth. He is the very Spirit and soul of truth, the essence, the life and power of it. Divine truth, when merely heard, takes no effect upon the mind until the Spirit of God enlivens it, and then it becomes a quickening force. He makes the truth itself, in its reality and substance, to enter the soul, and affect the heart. He is the teacher of truth, and he is himself the active power that makes truth to be truth to us in the assurance of our inmost souls.

He is the Spirit of truth in this sense, too, that he works truthfulness in his people. In those with whom the Holy Ghost works effectually “there is no guile”; they are open-hearted, honest, sincere, and true; they have an intense affection for the truth, and a zeal for it. They are by his truthful influence preserved from deadly error. If it were possible, false teachers would deceive even the elect; but where the Spirit of God dwells, he

detects for us the false from the true, and he gives us the spirit of a sound mind, by which we reject that which is false, and cleave only to that which is revealed of God. In this sense he is the Spirit of truth; and as he works truthfulness in his people, so the work that he does is always true and real work. You may get up an animal excitement, and your converts will, in due time, fail: but the Spirit of God worketh true conversion, sincere repentance, and saving faith, such as no sun of persecution can dry up and wither. He worketh deep conviction of sin, and simple faith in the Lord Jesus; and these things abide in the heart. The new birth, as he works it, is not after the fancied manner of baptismal regeneration, but after an effective spiritual manner, so that a divine life is imparted, and the man becomes a child of God. He produceth real sanctification: not the pretense of perfection, but the reality of holiness. Everything the Spirit of God does is substance, and not shadow. The baseless fabric of a vision is the work of man; but the eternal, abiding, everlasting work of grace is wrought by the Spirit of truth alone.

As he is the Spirit of truth, we may be sure that, whatever he sets his seal upon, is true. He will only bear witness to truth; but he will not assist in maintaining error. Mark this word: careful observation will show, that in proportion as the nominal church of the present day has departed from the truth of God, the Spirit of God has departed from her. He can never set his seal to a lie; the testimony of his sacred operation, in “signs following,” is borne only to the truth of God. If I preach to you that which is not the Word of the Lord, it will not be followed by the work of the Spirit of truth; there will be no conversions among sinners, and there will be no edification for the people of God. It is by the truth as his instrument that the Spirit of God works; and we must be very careful that we do not bring forth any other instrument. Let us not talk, as some do, as if Scriptural doctrine were of little or no consequence; for where the doctrine is not of God, the Spirit of truth is grieved, and he will depart from such a ministry. Except we keep close to the words of the Lord Jesus, and the revelation of the inspired Book, the Spirit of truth will show his displeasure by refusing to use our utterances. In vain your music, your architecture, your learning, and your “bright services” if the truth be given up. Farewell to the witness of the Spirit in the hearts of men when men are taught the inventions of men in the place of the revelation of God.

If the Holy Spirit is bearing witness in your spirit that you are the children of God, then you are truly born of God; the presence of the divine

Paraclete is the seal of your adoption. If he dwells in you, this is the token of your sonship; for he does not dwell in the unregenerate. If he helps, strengthens, comforts, guides, illuminates, and sanctifies you, you have a seal which you need not question, the seal of God upon you, that you are his chosen, and shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels.

This brings me to the doctrine upon which I shall enlarge this morning. This is the distinction between the men of the world and the disciples of Christ. The world knows nothing of the Holy Spirit; but the disciples of Christ know him; for the Lord Jesus saith, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." There are a great many distinctions in the world of a religious kind: one man weareth his phylacteries, another is girt with camel's-hair; one man comes with multiplied ceremonies, another with none at all. You cannot judge who are the people of God by these external things. Forms of church government, and modes of worship, may be important in their own place; but before the Lord the infallible test is this—Do you bear the fruit of the Spirit of God in you? Doth he indwell you? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"; but he that hath the Spirit dwelling within his soul, he it is that is a trueborn heir of heaven.

We have raised a solemn question to begin with, have we not? But, dear friends, I do not desire it to remain a question. I pray that it may be no question with any one of you, but that you may know that it is so, and may go on to enjoy the blessed privilege of being on intimate terms with the Holy Ghost: "But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

I. To come close up to my subject, the first head will be, BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT. They know him, to begin with, by believing what has been taught them concerning the Comforter by the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ had taught his people concerning the Holy Spirit, and they had received his teaching, he said, "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." If they had refused the sayings of Christ, if they had possessed no love, if they had not kept his commandments, if they had arrogantly resolved to find out this mystery for themselves by their own thinking, apart from the instruction of their Master, they would not have known the Spirit of God. We must begin our acquaintance with the Spirit by sitting at the feet of Jesus, and accepting his testimony as sure.

But, more than this, we know the Holy Spirit by knowing our Lord Jesus, and by him knowing the Father. There is such an intimate union between the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son, that, to know the Holy Spirit, we must know the Son of God, and know the Father. If we know the Lord Jesus, we have the Spirit of God; for by no one else could the things of Christ be revealed to us. Beginning, then, at the very beginning, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? You know something about him, but do you know him? Is he your near friend, your acquaintance? Are you on personal terms of fellowship with him? If so, then you see the Father in his face. Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and he tells his people, "From henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." You are, therefore, acquainted with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, and you have seen the glory of his grace beaming in your Savior's face. In this way you have become acquainted with the Holy Spirit, who is not divided from the Father and the Son. As you know the Son you know the Father, and in this way you come to know the Holy Spirit. No man cometh to the Father but by the Son, and he that cometh to the Father receiveth of the Spirit.

We know the Holy Spirit, next, by his operations upon us. We not only know about his operations, but we have been the subjects of them. All those who are true disciples of Christ have felt a divinely supernatural power working upon them. First, the Holy Spirit operates to our spiritual quickening. There was a time when we were dead in trespasses and in sins: holy feeling was unknown to us, and the life of faith was far from us. At that time we did not desire, nor even know spiritual things: we were carnally minded, and the carnal mind knoweth not the things which be of God. The Spirit of God came upon us, and we were awakened, aroused, and made to live. Do you remember that? Many of us can distinctly remember when we passed from death unto life. With others the visible life may have been made manifest more gradually, but even in them there was a moment when the vital force entered the soul, and they can now rejoice that they have been quickened who were once spiritually dead. You know the Spirit in measure when he breathes upon your dead heart, and it begins to throb with the heavenly life. In connection with that quickening there was conviction of sin. In what a powerful light does the Holy Spirit set our sin! In my discourses to you about sin I try to show you how heinous it is, and how terrible are its consequences; but when a single beam from the Spirit of truth shines upon sin, it makes it appear "exceeding sinful." I

remember how Mr. Bunyan says, when under conviction, “I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind.” When the Spirit of God revealed him to himself he would have willingly changed places with toads and serpents, for he esteemed the most loathsome objects to be better than himself. This revelation of darkness is the effect of light, the light of the Spirit of God; and when he convinces us of sin we begin to know him.

When, after having convinced us of sin, he leads us to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ, then we know him! How many a promise did some of you hear, but you could not receive it! How many a comforting discourse did you listen to, and yet it did not comfort you! but when the Spirit of God came, as in a moment, you saw Jesus as the consolation of Israel, the Friend of sinners, the atoning Sacrifice, the Surety of the covenant of grace, and sweet peace came streaming into your soul! At that time you did not only know that the Holy Spirit leads to Jesus Christ, but you knew that he was leading you. In that respect you knew him by an experimental acquaintance, which is the best of knowledge.

Since that time, beloved brethren, we have known the Holy Spirit in many ways: restraining from evil, stimulating to good, instructing, consoling, directing, and enlivening. He has been to us, full oft, the Spirit of reviving; we have grown dull, and cold, and sleepy, till that verse of the hymn has been verified:

*“In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise,
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.”*

But no sooner has the Spirit visited us, than we have felt all alive- bright, cheerful, and intense. Then our whole heart has run in the ways of God’s commands, and we have rejoiced in his name. How true is that word, “He restoreth my soul”! Thus have we known the Holy Spirit by his operations within us.

Oftentimes he has acted as an illuminator. A difficult Scripture or mysterious doctrine has been before me: I have looked at the original, and I have examined what the best Biblical students have written upon it; and yet, when I have thus used all the helps within reach, the point has remained in the dark. My best aid has ever been to resort to the great

Author of the sacred Word, even the Holy Spirit himself. He can, by blessing the means which we are using, or by directly leading the mind in the right track, put an end to all difficulty. He has the clue of every maze, the solution of every riddle; and, to whom he wills, he can reveal the secret of the Lord. Dear young believers, you who wish to understand the Scriptures, seek this light from above, for this is the true light. Other lights may mislead, but this is clear and sure. To have the Spirit of God lighting up the inner chambers of truth, is a great boon. Truth of the deeper sort is comparable to a cavern, into which we cannot find our way except by a guide and a light. When the Spirit of truth is come, he pours daylight into the darkness, and leads us into all truth. He does not merely show the truth, but he leads us into it, so that we stand within it, and rejoice in the hid treasure which it contains. Then we know him as our sacred illuminator.

I specially note that we also know him as the Comforter. Alas for the disturbance of heart which we receive in the world; perhaps even in the family! Few things, it may be, are as we could wish, and therefore we are sore troubled; but when the Spirit of God comes, peace flows to us like a river, and Jesus breathes on us, and says, "Peace be unto you." Do you know that peace? Many saints of God have enjoyed a heavenly calm upon their sick beds: when pain would else have distracted them, the Spirit of God has rested them in Jesus. I have heard of one saint, near his end, who asked, "Is this dying? Then I should like to keep on dying for ever." He felt so much comfort, such an inbreaking of the floods of joy which the Holy Spirit creates, that death itself had not only lost its sting, but had even become a joy to him. The comforts of the Holy Ghost take bitterness out of wormwood and gall, and the sting out of the last enemy. May God give us to know the Holy Spirit as our Comforter! Happy knowledge!

I trust that we have oftentimes known the Holy Spirit as guiding us in various ways. I will not speak largely on this, for some might not understand it; but I know of a surety that the Holy Spirit does give to his favored people hints as to things to come. I say not that any man is inspired to tell the future; but I do say that choice saints have received preparations for the future, and foreshadowings of their coming experiences. When believers come into difficult circumstances, they bow the knee, and cry for guidance, even as David said, "Bring hither the ephod." The oracle is not dumb, but in some way, not always to be explained, the Spirit of God guides our steps through life, if we are willing to obey his monitions. Is it

not written, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it"? The divine communications of the Holy Spirit are the precious heritage of true saints; but they are a peculiar voice to their own souls, and are not to be repeated in words. If you know these divine workings, as I am sure many of you do, then through his operations you are made to know the Holy Spirit. That deep calm; that peace which only he can give; that exhilaration, that superlative joy as of heaven begun below which only the Lord can work; that steadfast courage, that holy patience, that fixedness of heart, that gentleness of manner and firmness of purpose, which come only from above-these all introduce you to the wonder-working Spirit who takes pleasure thus to operate upon the minds of the heirs of eternal glory. Thus we know the Holy Spirit by his works, and gifts, and revelations.

But I do not think we have entered the center of the text even yet. "Ye know him," says the text: ye know not only his work, but himself I may know the great achievements of an artist in marble, but I may not know the sculptor himself. I may know a man's paintings, and therefore I may guess somewhat of his character, but yet I may not know the man himself. "Ye know him," says our Lord; and truly we know the Holy Ghost as to his personality. If the Holy Ghost were a mere influence, we should read, "Ye know it." Let us always shun the mistake of calling the Holy Ghost "it." It cannot do anything. It is a dead thing: the Holy Ghost is a living, blessed person, and I hope we can say that we know him as such. Others may doubt his personality; but we believe in the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and behold, in the names given to him, the emotions ascribed to him, and the acts performed by him, abundant proofs of his sacred personality. In our hearts we know him.

As we know his personality, so we know also his divinity, because the Holy Ghost works in us effects which none but God could work. Who can give life to the spiritually dead? Who but the Lord and giver of life? Who can instruct and illuminate as the Holy Spirit does? Only because he is divine can he guide us into all truth, and purify us unto perfect holiness. There have been things wrought in us, in our experience, in which we have beheld, not only the finger of God, but God himself working in our hearts to will and to do of his own good pleasure. Oh, worship the Holy Spirit! The greatest crime of sinners is to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and the greatest fault of saints is to neglect the Holy Ghost. Let us adore him, yield to him, confide in him, and pray that we may know him to the full.

So it comes to this, that as we know the Holy Spirit's personality and Godhead, we have come to know him. I mean this-that there is now a personal intercourse between the believer and the Holy Ghost, a conscious and clear fellowship and communion. The communion of the Holy Ghost is one of the three choice blessings of the great Benediction. Do we not enjoy it? We speak with him, and he speaks with us. We trust him, and he puts us in trust with many a precious truth. We are not strangers now; we do not talk of him as a personage a long way off of whom we have heard, a divine mystery with which prophets and apostles were acquainted in remote ages; but we know him. Come, let me look into your faces, my beloved in the Lord, and let me ask you, Is this true or not? If you are obliged to say, "We do not know whether there be any Holy Ghost, for we are utter strangers to him," then I pray the Lord to deal graciously with you, and manifest his Son Jesus Christ to you by the power of that same Holy Spirit of whom we speak. The Spirit of truth is to those of us who trust in the Lord Jesus our present help; he is more familiar with us than any other person; for he enters within, where none else find admission. "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Thus much upon our first head; now I will take you to another, exceedingly important and interesting. May the Holy Ghost help me.

II. The second head is this: BELIEVERS KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH HIMSELF. Let us read the text again: "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." It is not, "Ye know him; for ye have heard gracious preaching;" nor, "Ye know him; for ye have read about him in the Scriptures." No-"Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The moon cannot help us to see the sun, nor can man reveal God. God can only be seen in his own light. No one can reveal the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit. I thought this morning, coming along-I have to preach about the Holy Spirit; but what can I do without the Holy Spirit himself? I can only preach aright concerning him by his own presence with me; and if he be not there, I shall only darken counsel by words without knowledge. Why is it that we know the Holy Ghost only by the Holy Ghost?

I answer, first, on account of the inadequacy of all means. By what methods can you make a man know the Holy Ghost? He is not to be discerned by the senses, nor perceived by eyes or ears. What if the preacher should be as eloquent as an angel, in what way would that make you know the Holy Ghost? You would probably remember more of the man than of his subject. Nothing is more to be deplored than a hungering after mere

oratory. It would be infinitely better to speak stammeringly the truth than to pour forth a flood of words in which the truth is drowned. Words are nothing but air and wind, and they cannot possibly reveal the Holy Spirit. No outward ordinances can reach the point any more than human speech. We greatly rejoice in the baptism of believers, and in the breaking of bread, in which the death of the Lord Jesus is set forth before us; but in what symbol could we fully see the Holy Spirit? If he were even to descend upon us as a dove, we should see the visible shape, but we should not necessarily discern the Spirit. The Spirit himself must reveal himself. Beloved, there is no chariot in which God can ride to us: the axles of creation itself would break beneath the enormous load of Deity. It is not possible for God to reveal himself fully by his works: he is seen only by himself. Hence the Son of God himself has come to us as "God with us." In him we see God. The Holy Spirit must himself come into the heart to which he would make himself known.

This is even more clear from the inability of our nature to discover the Holy Spirit. We are dead by nature, and how can we know anything until he makes us alive? Our eyes are spiritually blinded: how can we see him until he opens our eyes? We are altogether without strength by nature: how can we run after him until he first comes to us and gives us the power to do so? We are unable to perceive the Holy Spirit; for the carnal man knoweth not the things which are of God, for they are spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned. We must be endowed with a spirit before we can discern the great Spirit. Flesh cannot transform itself into spirit. No, it is the Lord himself who must come and breathe into us the Spirit of life, and then we perceive him who is the Spirit of truth.

The Holy Spirit must reveal himself to us if we are to know him: this is clear from the nature of the case. How do I know a man but by the man himself appearing to me, and speaking to me, and manifesting himself to me? You cannot with accuracy judge of a man by his writings. It is a curious circumstance, that Mr. Toplady, who wrote very bitterly on behalf of truth, was, in temper, the sweetest of men. On the other hand, Mr. Romaine, of Blackfriars, who, in his writings, seems to be the gentlest of beings, was by no means free from harshness. You must see a man, nay, more, you must live with a man in order to know him. You must live with the Holy Spirit, and he must dwell with you, and be in you, before you can speak of knowing him at all.

The facts of the case prove this. I shall put it to any believer here who can humbly say, "I know him; for he dwelleth with me, and is in me." How do you know the Holy Ghost but by the Holy Ghost? Did you learn your religion of me? Then you have it all to unlearn. Did you learn it out of a book? You have need to begin again. Did you inherit it from your parents, or borrow it from your friends? Then you are still ignorant of the vital point, God is only known through himself; the Holy Spirit by the holy Spirit. Have you not found it so in your own case? Why, you have sat and heard a sermon which was in itself cheering, comforting, and quickening; for your neighbor said, "What a happy time we have enjoyed!" Alas! you thought you had never felt more stupid and lifeless. Have you not gone down the Tabernacle steps, and said to yourself, "I am as hard as stone, and as cold as a winter's fog? What shall I do?" Thus are you without the Spirit of God; but when the divine Spirit comes upon you, such complaints are at an end; then doth the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb is made to sing. Then are you full of living joy in listening to the gospel; every word you hear seems to be on wheels; and towards you the cherubim fly swiftly, bringing live coals from off the altar.

III. My third head is, BELIEVERS ENJOY A SACRED INTIMACY WITH THE SPIRIT OR GOD. I am not going to withdraw that word intimacy. It is warranted by the language of our Lord; for he says, "Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

First, he says, "He dwelleth with you." Is not that a wonderful sentence? The Holy Ghost is God, and therefore the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and yet behold the condescending fact! "He dwelleth with you." The Holy Spirit is now upon earth, the vicar and representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I will send you another Comforter"—that is, another Helper and Advocate, like himself. Consider how our Lord dwelt with his disciples; for after the same fashion the Spirit of truth dwells with us. Jesus permitted to his disciples the most intimate intercourse with himself: they ran to him with their troubles, they told him their difficulties, they confessed their doubts. He was their master and Lord, and yet he washed their feet. He ate and drank with them, and permitted the freest intercourse. You never find our Lord repelling their approaches, or resenting their familiarities. He did not draw a ring round himself and say, "Keep your distance." Now, in the same manner, the Spirit of truth deals with believers. "He dwelleth with you." You may go to him at any time, you may ask what you will of him, you may speak to him as a man

speakeeth with his friend. You cannot see him, but he sees you, which is much better; you cannot hear his voice, but he hears your voice, nay, he hears your thoughts without a voice. He is most near to those who are in Christ. "He dwelleth with you."

Dwelling with us, he is in our assemblies. It is he who fulfils the promise of our Lord, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is by the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus is with us: that we might enjoy that sacred presence, it was expedient for our Lord to go away. Beloved, what a mercy it is when the Holy Ghost is in our assembly! What a dreary business it is when the Holy Ghost is gone from the congregation! The people come and go, and perhaps there may be fine music, splendid millinery, admirable eloquence, a vast crowd, or a wealthy congregation. But what of these things? They are a bag of wind! If the Holy Spirit is not in the congregation, it is gathered together in vain. Behold, the people spend themselves for very vanity if the Lord is not among them. But the Comforter does come into our assemblies; for it is written, "He dwelleth with you."

He also comes into our homes—"He dwelleth with you." Where do you dwell, O true believer? Is it in a very poor lodging? "He dwelleth with you." It may be, dear friend, you live on board ship, and are tossed upon the sea; but "He dwelleth with you." Perhaps you go to work in a mine, far beneath the surface of the earth; still, "He dwelleth with you." Many choice saints are bed-ridden, but the Spirit dwells with them. I commend to all of you who love the Lord these gracious words: "He dwelleth with you." The first disciples said to the Lord Jesus, "Master, where dwellest thou?" He answered, Come and see. So do I bid you note where the divine Spirit deigns to dwell. Behold and wonder: he dwells with his people wherever they are; he does not leave them alone, but he abides with them as a shepherd with his flock.

Well may we know him, for he takes up his abode with us; and he does this, not as a latent, inoperative influence, but he works in the place where he dwells. He makes our members instruments of his working, and sanctifies the faculties of our nature as vessels of a temple wherein he dwells. He perfumes every chamber of the house of manhood, and consecrates every corner of our being. O believer, "He dwelleth with you" in all the might of his Godhead, and you are made strong in the inner man by his strengthening. Fall back upon the Holy Ghost in the moment of your

weakness. Alas, my brethren! are there any moments when we are not weak? Fall back, therefore, upon the Holy Spirit at all times. Even in the prayer in which you seek strength, ask that the Spirit may help your infirmities. Even for the faith which brings you all grace, ask for the Spirit of God to work faith in you. “He dwelleth with you,” for you are unable to live without his constant presence, and you need not attempt the perilous experiment.

The second sentence runs, “He shall be in you.” This is a greater marvel. “Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?” Take care of them; never defile them; let not the idea of drunkenness, gluttony, or lust, come near you; for it is written, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” With what reverence should we look upon the body, now that it has been redeemed by the Lord Jesus, and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit! The Spirit also dwells within your minds. We possess him, and he possesses us. “He shall be in you,” as a king in his palace, or a soul in its body. I am afraid that many professors know nothing about this. I must be talking nonsense in the esteem of some of you: if it seems nonsense, let that fact condemn you. You cannot be right before God unless the Spirit of God be in you, in your mind, your heart, your desires, your fears, your hopes, your inmost life. The Spirit must permeate your entire being, filling it full with his floods, even as the waters cover the channels of the deep. “He shall be in you.” It is a wonderful fact, but believers realize it. The Spirit shall be in you as the source of your life, and the force of your life. What cannot a man do when the Holy Spirit is in him? His weakest endeavor will prosper when the Holy Spirit is pouring his life into him; for he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. But, without the Holy Spirit, what barren and withered trees we are! May we never know the awful drought which comes of the absence of the Spirit!

Brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ came upon the earth, and was beheld as God in human flesh, that was to us the pledge of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in us: for, as God dwelt in the human person of the Lord Jesus Christ, even so doth the Spirit abide in our humanity. Our Lord’s life on earth was the picture of the Spirit’s indwelling. As he was anointed of the Spirit, even so are we in our measure. “He went about doing good.” He lived consecrated to God, loving the sons of men; and thus will the Spirit of God within us cause us to live: we shall imitate the Christ of God

through the Spirit of God. The death of Christ was the way by which the Spirit was enabled to come to sinful men. By his great sacrifice the stone is rolled away which once blocked the road.

*“Tis through the purchase of his death,
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we.”*

When our Lord rose from the dead we had the guarantee that even so the Spirit of God would quicken our mortal bodies, and renew us into newness of life. But it was when our Lord ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, that the Holy Spirit was, to the full, actually given. When our Redeemer returned to his Father's throne, he scattered the largess of heaven: he gave the Holy Spirit to men of various offices, and to his whole church; then were the days of refreshing by divine visitation. Your ascended Lord gives you this token of his love-the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in you: prize it above all things. Do you know it? It seems like an impertinence for me to put this question to some of you, who are grey-headed, and yet there is need. I trust you knew the Holy Spirit before I was born; but yet I cannot help pressing the enquiry, for you may not know him even now.

I have urged the question upon myself, and therefore I urge it upon you. Does the Spirit of truth dwell in you? If not, what will you do?

IV. I come to a conclusion with one more observation. BELIEVERS SHALL HAVE A CONTINUANCE AND AN INCREASE OR THE SPIRIT'S INTIMACY. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Mark well the increase. Is it not a blessed step from with to in? “He dwelleth with you”—that is, a friend in the same house; “and shall be in you,” that is, a spirit within yourself; this is nearer, dearer, more mysterious, and more effective by far. The bread yonder is “with” me. I eat it, and now it is “in” me. It could not nourish me until it advanced from “with” to “in.” What a distinct advance it is for the child of God when he rises from the Spirit of God being with him to the Spirit of God being in him! When the Spirit of God helped the apostles to work miracles, he was with them; but when they came to feel his spiritual work in their own souls, and to rejoice in the comfort which he brought to them, then he was in them. Even if you could obtain miraculous gifts, you ought not to be

satisfied to speak with tongues, nor to work miracles; but you should press on to know the Spirit with yourself-indwelling, communing, quickening you.

“He shall be in you.” Notice, that in consequence of this, we know him. If a person dwells with us, we begin to know him; but if he dwells within us, and has become intertwined with our being, then we know him indeed. “He shall be in you” is a high degree of intimacy.

As we have noticed the increase, so remark the continuance: “He shall be in you.” There is no period in which the Holy Spirit will have finished his work so as to go away and leave the believer to himself. Our Savior says of the Comforter, that he “shall abide with you for ever.” Grieve not the Spirit of God, I pray you; quench him not, resist him not, but carefully cherish in your hearts this divine word, “He shall be in you.” What comfort is here! You dread the days of age and infirmity, but “He shall be in you.” You tremble before that trial which threatens you, but “He shall be in you.” You do not know how you will answer the gainsayer: take no thought what you shall speak, it shall be given you in the self-same hour what you shall speak, for he shall be in you. And when the last moment approaches, when you must breathe out your soul to God, the living Spirit who dwelleth with you, even as the nurse sitteth at your bedside, shall then be’ in you, and by his living power within shall transform death into the gate of endless life. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” O child of God, your Comforter will not leave you; he will continue still to take up his residence within you until you shall be taken up to dwell where Jesus is for ever and ever.

This is our great reliance for the future upholding of the church as a whole, and of each individual believer: the Spirit of God dwelleth with us, and shall be in us. The church of God will never be destroyed; the gates of hell shall not prevail against her; for the Holy Ghost dwelleth with us, and shall be in us to the end of the world. This is the reliance of the child of God personally for his perseverance in grace. He knows that Jesus lives, and therefore he shall live; and the Holy Spirit is within him, as the life of Christ, which can never die. The believer pushes on, despite a thousand obstacles, knowing that God gives him the victory, through the Lord Jesus Christ, out of whose hand none can pluck him.

I have done; and yet I have done nothing unless the Spirit of God shall bless the word spoken. Oh, that some of you, who have never known the

Spirit of God, may feel his power coming upon you at this moment! You may be sitting in the pew very careless even now, and yet before you leave he may descend, and soften your hard heart. The other day the ground was hard as iron, and the water was turned to ice; but there came a breath from the south, and soon a thaw set in, the snow vanished, and the ice was gone: even so the Holy Spirit breathes on us, and our inward frost disappears at once. Come, Holy Spirit. Come even now. Let us implore his presence and power. Pray for a closer, clearer knowledge of him, O ye children of God. Pray also that sinners may be met with by his grace. The first token of the Spirit's work will be that they will begin to feel their sin, and cry for mercy; and when that is done, the glad tidings of pardon are for them. To them we say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The Lord make the word effectual, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

OUR LORD'S ENTRANCE WITHIN THE VEIL.

NO. 2075

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 17TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”-Hebrews 9:12.

UNDER the old covenant the Lord was set forth to the people as dwelling apart, within the veil. A thick tapestry hung before the most holy place, and thus concealed the light which symbolized the presence of God. Within the inner sanctuary Jehovah dwelt apart, and none entered the sacred precincts save one man, and he but once a year. The great teaching was-God is hidden from men; sin has made a division between man and God; the way of approach is not yet made manifest. Yet even then there was a hint given that an entrance would be made manifest; for the division was not a piece of brickwork, nor even an arrangement of cedar overlaid with gold: it was a veil which, once in the year, was solemnly lifted, that the high priest might pass beneath. This hinted that sinful men were yet to be permitted to draw nigh unto the Most Holy God, through the Christ of God. That, I say, was implied, if men had faith enough to spy it out. Three hundred and sixty-four days in the year the teaching was, “No admission”: one day out of the three hundred and sixty-five the teaching was, “A way of access will yet be shown.”

Now, beloved friends, the priests of old, the holy and the most holy place, were only “patterns of things in the heavens “; they were not the things themselves. In them we see instructive types and symbols, but nothing more. How greatly we may rejoice as we read the eleventh verse of the

chapter before us! It begins with “But”; and, oh, what a blessed “but” for you and for me! Up till then religion dealt with externals, such as meats, and drinks, and washings, and carnal ordinances, and priests who could only offer the blood of bulls and of goats; but the coming of the Messiah changed all this. We pass from shadow to substance.

*“Finished all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law.”*

Now have grace and truth come by Jesus Christ. Read on: “Christ being come.” How the joy-bells ring out—“Christ being come” It was the music of Bethlehem—“Christ being come.” It was the song of Anna and Simeon—“Christ being come.” This will be the joy of the whole earth when once earth understands her truest privilege—“Christ being come.” The good things were still to come for many a year; but now “Christ being come,” we have them in possession. No son of Aaron stands before us, but the Christ, the truly Anointed One, commissioned of the Lord to introduce man to his offended God. Anointed by the eternal Spirit without measure, the Lord Jesus Christ appears in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and then to destroy the separating veil by going in unto the Father. If I had to tell you to-day that a Savior would in due time be born, and would offer a sacrifice for sin, there would be great joy in the news; but we have something far better; for the Anointed One has appeared, and fulfilled his course. He has been here among the sons of men the Incarnate God: “Immanuel, God with us,” the true High Priest for men in things pertaining to God. Again, I say, let the joy-bells ring out—“Christ being come”

He is “an high priest of good things to come.” Things which were in the olden time “things to come,” are things present at this hour; for Jesus has brought to light the precious things of the covenant, which kings and prophets desired to see. Yet even now there are good things in the future. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The Lord Jesus has brought all good things to those who believe in him, that they may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Good things to come find their way hither by the Mediator. God himself has come among men in the person of the Lord Jesus, who has taken our nature into union with his Godhead. Our Immanuel was born at Bethlehem, he dwelt at

Nazareth, he died on Calvary, and he has now gone up on high because his work is finished, and the reward of it is given.

The striking point to which I call your attention is this: while our Lord was here, he was comparable to the high priest when he stood on the outside of the veil. I want you to recollect that fact. Outside is the place of sinful men. Did the holy Jesus ever stand there? He did. His sacrifice was of necessity offered without the veil, and as a sign thereof “he suffered without the gate.” The fact is evident that our Lord suffered by being forsaken of God. The veil hung thick between him and God till his great sacrifice was accepted: in testimony whereof hear you not that bitter cry, the bitterest that ever came from human lips, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Our High Priest then stood on the outside of the veil. But after he had presented his sacrifice, after it had been consumed with fire, he passed within the veil, and rose to the throne of the eternal God. He entered heaven as a priest, in all the solemnity of accomplished sacrifice. “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” Upon that august entrance I shall try to speak this morning; but I am very conscious of my want of power to do so. Thought is shallow, speech is stammering in the presence of a theme so high, so deep. Come, Holy Spirit, and in thine infinite compassion reveal our great High Priest to all thy waiting ones now!

I. First, beloved, I shall call your attention to THE SACRIFICE OF HIS ENTERING. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in.”

We have this morning taken for our lesson the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus: may I ask you all to study it with care? There we saw that the high priest, once in the year, entered the most holy place, but “not without blood.” Our Savior, as God and man in one person, standing in the sinner’s place, could not enter within the veil until first he had presented a sacrifice. By blood even he must enter; that blood must be his own. Let us think about his sacrifice.

We note concerning it, first, that the sacrifice presented by our Lord was unique. It was “his own blood” that he offered—blood from the veins of a man; but what a man! Remember how he himself said it: “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not: but a body hast thou prepared me.” The body of Christ was specially prepared of God for this great sacrifice. Though we rightly speak of our Lord as “clothed in a body like our own,” yet we may

not forget that, in some points, his humanity was peculiar. He was without spot. In his birth he received no taint of original sin. Was it not said to the virgin, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”? Thus the person of our Lord was unique among men, and it is that pure personality which was presented as an offering to the Lord. He was pure and holy, and therefore able to bear the sin of others, since he had none of his own. God especially prepared his body for the indwelling of the Deity, and he stands before us as a personage, the like of which neither heaven nor earth containeth, God is pure spirit, but this sacred Person has a body: man hath no pretensions to divinity, but this glorious One counts it not robbery to be equal with God. He is God and man in one person, by a marvellous unity which we believe but can never comprehend; and as our Mediator, by the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God. This singular sacrifice deserves our singular faith.

The sacrifice of our Lord was, in the highest sense, substitutionary. The penalty of sin is death; and Jesus died. All through the old law there is no atonement except by the death of victim. Indeed, this is what God hath said from the beginning, even in the garden. Still is this the sentence of the law: “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” Sin necessitates death. The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to earth to make a reconciliation by the holiness of his life, or by the earnestness of his teaching, but by his death. The text saith, “By his own blood he entered in.” He must die in the room, and place, and stead of guilty men, before he could enter heaven on their behalf. Just as the calves and the bullocks in the type were slain, and their blood poured out before God, so must Jesus be slain in the sinner’s place. O beloved, let us cling to the great truth of the vicarious sacrifice, which is the chief teaching of this sacred Book. Take this away, and I do not see anything left in the Bible at all which can be called good news. The very soul of the doctrine of Christ is atonement by his death.

*“He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father’s righteous ire.”*

The victim was killed, but it was also consumed, by the holy fire, upon the altar of God. Our Lord offered up himself unto God, not only by the death which came from the cross, but by the consuming of soul which came from the horror of bearing human sin. The tempest of sin’s consequences burst

upon the innocent head of the great Substitute: the thunder-cloud emptied its dire contents upon his soul. He, voluntarily putting himself in our place, bore the result of that substitution. Out of infinite love, Jesus became an offering for sin. Not of compulsion, but of his own sacred choice, he became the sin-offering for the sinner, that the sinner might be made the righteousness of God in him. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." This we know, and in this great truth we steadfastly abide. What other hope have we?

The sacrifice which our Lord presented before he went within the veil was personal. Stress should be laid upon the word "own" here. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood." The Lord Jesus did not bring before God the sufferings of others or the merits of others, but his own life and death. "He poured out his soul unto death." I will repeat the text which I quoted just now, for it is well worth repeating a thousand times. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Aaron could not do this: the blood he brought was not his own; and if he could, by any strange imagination be supposed to bring his own blood, yet it could only have been for himself, since his death was due to God as the punishment of his own individual sin. Our Lord owed nothing to the justice of God on his own account: he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"; and, therefore, when he took our place, it was that he might voluntarily offer up his own sacrifice, of personal suffering, and personal death, yielding up his whole being as a sacrifice in our stead. When he hangs naked upon the tree, I dare not look; but, with tears in my eyes, I worship. I own with deepest love how absolutely he gave up everything on my behalf, reserving not even a rag for himself, nor an atom of himself. "He saved others; himself he could not save." It was, in the most emphatic sense, a personal sacrifice, In that sacrifice none could share, and in the after-entrance none could have a part at the time. Read Leviticus 16:17: "And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." Even in sympathy we cannot enter the inner shrine of his sacrifice; in their innermost depths they are unapproachable. Jesus treads the wine-press alone. Gethsemane!-who can stand in the garden, and view the bloody sweat, and hear the deep groanings of that mighty heart? Even the favored three are overcome with sorrow, and fall asleep.

*“Who can penetrate through thee,
Lonesome, dark Gethsemane?”*

But as for Calvary, where the darkness was denser still, till midday turned to midnight, as an emblem of what was going on; into that awful blackness we cannot peer. “Thine unknown sufferings” still remains one of the best descriptive expressions concerning that which can never be described. All this, I say, was his own sole, personal grief for sins in which he had no personal share: this was his sacrifice of entrance.

I cannot dwell long on any one point; but, I pray you, treasure these truths, which are more to be valued than the much fine gold. This sacrifice of his was of transcendent value. Think who he was that was offered. The Son of the Highest offered his own self unto God. There was never such another as he, as we have already said, for he was God and man in one person; and it was this Divine Person that was offered up a sacrifice without the veil, that he might enter within it. I cannot imagine a limit to the value of the sacrifice of Christ: I hope none of you will ever try to do so. When he gave himself up as a sacrifice, there was a greater recompense made to the justice of God than if the whole human race had been consumed. When God himself comes here to stand in the sinner’s place, the law obtains a fuller vindication than if worlds of guilty ones had borne its penalty. When the Law-giver himself bears the penalty of the law-breaking, the law is made honorable, and it is plainly demonstrated that God will not spare the guilty, but that every transgression must receive its penalty. When even the innocent Substitute is made to die because sin is laid upon him, we are sure that sin is exceedingly hateful to God. Hence the sacrifice of our Lord was of transcendent value.

This sacrifice, let men nowadays say what they will, was made in reference to human guilt. The passage I read to you in Leviticus insists upon this. The blood was sprinkled in the holy place “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins.” Our Lord Jesus has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. His death was not merely an example, nor simply a display of divine love. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” His death dealt with our uncleanness: it cleanseth us from all sin. “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

And this had reference to God. The sacrifice of the day of atonement was not seen by the people, and its blood was not sprinkled where they could

look upon it: it was for the Lord only. God, the infinitely loving One, because of the very infinity of his love, cannot look upon sin without displeasure, seeing it is man's worst enemy. He must punish the sinner when he dares to break the perfect law. The sacrifice is, therefore, needed, to show the Lord's hatred of evil, and his resolve to be just. Jesus did not die to make God merciful, as some falsely say that we teach; but because God was merciful Jesus died, that there might be a clear passage for divine mercy, without the violation of divine justice. Jesus did not die to make God love sinners, for he always did love them; but that his love might be exercised in consistency with holiness it was needful that the law should be vindicated, and the threatening against sin should not become a dead letter.

You see, then, the entrance offering which our Lord presented outside the veil. Come and partake in its cleansing effects.

II. Let us now notice THE MANNER OF HIS ENTRANCE. We are told in the text, "He entered in once into the holy place." Much emphasis is to be laid upon that word "once."

It has been done, then, once. Once has he offered up himself without spot unto God; once has he lifted the veil, and passed into the holy place of fullest fellowship with God on our behalf. It has been done! Oh, clap your hands for very mirth! Let your harps ring out loudly and sweetly with excess of joy. Jesus has entered in. Our Head and Representative is with God. It is not a thing to be wrought in the future, but it has been accomplished. His sacrifice had an immediate efficacy. On the spot it availed to open the kingdom of heaven. From the cross the Forsaken One entered into his kingdom as the Beloved of God. To prove how complete was the effect of his sacrifice, he went into the heaven of God at once. "It is finished." The proof is that Jesus entered in once within the veil.

It means, however, that it was only once. Once only has Jesus made entrance officially into the heavenly places; for, by that one entrance, he has made the way open and manifest. His offering has been made once, and no more; and so it is written, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." No, there is not a repeated offering of Christ to God, nor a repeated taking possession of heaven on our behalf. "Once for all" the work is done. Jude tells us that "once for all" the faith was delivered to

the saints: it is a final act, which is so complete that it needs no repeating. The entrance of our Lord once for all into the holy place has secured the entrance of his people. It was once, and it cannot be twice, because it was so effectual; and this is set forth by the Evangelists, for when our Lord entered the holy place, the veil was rent. The holy of holies was laid open: its enclosure was thrown down. What if I say that the inner shrine has expanded itself and taken in the holy place, and now all places are holy where true hearts seek their God? Had our High Priest merely lifted the veil and passed in, we might have supposed that the veil fell back again: but since the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, there can be no need for a new entrance; for that which hinders is taken away. No veil now hangs between God and his chosen people: we may come boldly to the throne of grace. Blessed be the name of our Lord who has entered in "once"!

And now, beloved, he has entered into the holy place once in the sense that he has entered in the fullest and most complete manner. When the High Priest went up to the mercy-seat, he drew near to the symbol of God, but not necessarily near to God himself. But our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, came so near to God that no nearness could be greater. He always was in his Godhead one with the Father: but as God and man in one person he is now for ever with God. He saith, "I and my Father are one." The nearness of the God-man Christ Jesus to his Father is something to think upon with reverent pleasure; for, remember-

*"In the person of his Son
We are as near as he."*

Christ has gone into the glory of the Father, and he has made a way for us to enter into like nearness. The road is open, the access is free: God meets us, and invites us to meet him. He waits to speak with us, as a man speaketh with his friend.

I wish I knew how to put this before you; but I fail. I pray you to think it over. Let these feeble words suffice to suggest to you the manner of his entrance as set forth by the word "once."

III. But now, thirdly, let us consider THE OBJECTS OF HIS ENTRANCE. What did our Lord Jesus Christ do by his entrance within the veil? What comes of it?

It means, first, that he made atonement within the veil. He cleansed the heavenly places. Read the twenty-third verse of the chapter before us: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." How it startles us to read such words! Was the heavenly place itself defiled? No, that cannot be; but if you and I had gone there without atonement by blood, heaven would have been defiled. Look at the crowds of once sinful men and women who are daily entering there to dwell with God. How could they come there if the heavenly places had not been prepared for them? Look at the multitude of our prayers and praises that are daily going up there! Are they not all in a measure impure, and would it not have defiled heaven to accept them? But the Lord has gone there, and has sprinkled his blood upon the mercy-seat, that so our prayers and praises, yea, and ourselves also, may enter without let or hindrance. Albeit that the guilty are taken up to dwell with God, and our poor prayers are accepted of God, neither we nor our prayers carry any defilement into the holy place, because the atoning blood is there beforehand. After heaven hath sucked up into itself so much of the sinnerhood of earth, it remains as pure as it was when only God and his holy angels dwelt therein. While men that were once steeped in sin are permitted to come and sit at the right hand of God, God remains as rigorously righteous as if no guilty one had been forgiven: the great sacrifice has secured this.

Then, next, he enters there to appear for us. Read the twenty-fourth verse: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." He hath gone there to put in an appearance on our behalf. As in a court of law, when a man appears by his attorney, or legal representative, he is in the court, even though he may be miles away; so are we, to-day, in possession of our eternal inheritance through him, who has put in an appearance for us. God sees his saints in heaven in the person of their glorious representative. In him we are raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places. Is not this a subject for quiet enjoyment? The Forerunner has for us entered upon the purchased possession.

He is there, next, to perfect us. Look at the tenth chapter, and fourteenth verse: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." His one sacrifice hath made the comers thereunto perfect; and

to show their perfectness, they enter into the holy place. His work is done, else he would not be within the veil; his being there is proof that everything is complete, and that his people are complete in him. The set-apart ones are accepted, for he in whom they stand is accepted. As when Adam was driven out of the garden, we were all driven out of the garden; so now that the second Adam is in the Paradise of God, we are there, too, in him.

He has entered in once also that he may abide there. Look at the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the tenth chapter: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." Jesus is with God in glory, and always must be there till the purposes of grace are accomplished. He holds a permanent session at the right hand of the Father in everlasting triumph. Till our Representative is expelled from heaven, we cannot lose it. As that can never be, look up, O believer, and see where you are, and where you always must be; accepted in the Beloved, made nigh by the blood of Christ!

Once more, he is there to admit us to the same nearness. Read the twenty-first verse: "Having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart." Behold, the Lord Jesus meets us when we pray and praise, and he presents our worship. When we fall asleep, and wake up in another state, he will come and meet us-at heaven's wide entrance, and through the rent veil admit us into the glory. What must it be to be with him on his throne; to behold his glory, and that for ever! It will not be long before we reach that felicity. Some of us are within hearing of the eternal song. Wherefore, let us cheer up, and if the way be rough, let us remember that it cannot be long. Since He has entered, by whom we are everywhere represented, this guarantees our entrance into the glory of God. Therefore has he gone before that he may welcome us home.

Turn these thoughts over, and surely you have heavenly manna to feed upon-food for faith, and material for songs. Thou art gone in before us, Lord; and because we love thee we rejoice.

IV. But now, lastly, let us review THE GLORIES OF THIS ENTRANCE. We have seen the sacrifice of our Lord's entrance, the manner of his entrance, and the objects of his entrance; and now let us muse upon the glory of his entrance, which is this: "having obtained eternal redemption." The words, "for us," are supplied by the translators, and therefore we leave them out. Our Lord entered the most holy place "having obtained eternal

redemption.” When Aaron went in with the blood of bulls and goats, he had not obtained “eternal redemption”; he had only obtained a symbolic and temporary purification for the people, and that was all.

Our Lord enters in because, first, his work is all done. We do not read, “he entered in that he might obtain it,” but “having obtained.” Some read, “having found eternal redemption.” He found it in himself, for he could have found it nowhere else. Neither in heaven, nor earth, nor hell could there be found a redemption for the souls of men; but our Lord found the ransom in his own great sacrifice, and he entered into glory with this amazing “Eureka” on his tongue. “Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom.” O glorious Finder, thou couldst well find it, for it was hidden in thyself! Thou hast obtained eternal redemption.

That which he had obtained was redemption. There is no getting redemption out of the Bible. I bless God for this. Many cannot endure the word, but it is there; and it is redemption by price, too—“a mercantile transaction,” as they profanely speak. “Ye are bought with a price.” Redemption is deliverance through payment: in this case, ransom through one standing in another’s stead, and discharging that other’s obligations. Brethren, when the Lord Jesus Christ died, he paid our redemption price; and when he entered within the veil, he entered as one who not only desired to give us redemption, but as one who had “obtained eternal redemption.” He has won for us redemption both by price and by power. We do not fully know what the word “redemption” means, for we were born free; but if we could go back a few years, and mix with the negro slaves of America, they could have told us what redemption meant, if ever, by any good fortune, any one of them was able to buy his freedom. You that have groaned under the tyranny of sin, you know what redemption means in its spiritual sense, and you prize the ransom by which you have been made free. Brethren, we are to-day redeemed from our far-off condition in reference to the Lord God: we do not now stand outside the veil. This is a great redemption. We are also delivered from guilt, for “He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.” This is a great redemption. We are rescued from the power of sin that we should not live any longer therein. We overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb. This also is a great redemption. We are now saved from the curse of sin; for he was “made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” This is, indeed, a great redemption. We are redeemed from all the bondage that ensued from sin. We are no longer the serfs of Satan, nor

the slaves of the world, neither are we subject to bondage through fear of death. That last enemy shall be destroyed, and we know it. The Son hath set us free, and we are free indeed. He entered into the heavenly places with this for his everlasting renown, that he has obtained redemption for his people.

And now think of the nature of that redemption; for here is a grand point. He has obtained “eternal” redemption. If you carefully study the verses around the text, you will find the word “eternal” three times: there is “eternal redemption,” the “eternal Spirit,” and an “eternal inheritance.” Why is redemption said to be eternal? It is a long word, that word “eternal”: notwithstanding all the squeezing and cutting that men give to it nowadays, they cannot make it into a limited period, do what they may. He has obtained eternal redemption—a redemption which entered into eternal consideration. I speak of the Lord God with great reverence, when I say that redemption was from eternity in his thoughts. What if this world was first created myriads of ages ago, as it probably was; yet in the succeeding epochs neither plant nor animal was created without respect to the divine ultimatum, which is redemption! Not a fossil lies in the rock which has not been moulded with a relation to the Lord Christ and his eternal redemption. Christ is the image of God, and all things bear traces of that image. From every act of Deity a finger points to Jesus, the atoning sacrifice. Redemption is the drift of creation, and the hinge of providence. The undertone of all the voices God has created is God in Christ Jesus. In him the transcendent splendor of the Godhead was best beheld, as, veiled in manhood, he bore human guilt, that he might abolish it, and bring to God a blood-washed church. Things created serve as a platform for things redeemed: the temporal creation gives way before eternal redemption. In the everlasting covenant the Lord had always an eye to its seal, which is the blood of its Surety. In the divine decrees everything is shaped and fashioned according to the work of that wondrous Person in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The eternal councils of God have ever had an eye to the everlasting righteousness, and to the everlasting redemption of the everlasting Son of the Father. Redemption is no new thought with God, no expedient to snatch the world from an unexpected accident, no patching-up of a broken-down purpose. Redemption is the center of the divine plan; the focus of the manifestation of God, the summit of the mountain of revelation. Herein is love! Herein is God!

When our Lord entered in, he had by his sacrifice also dealt with eternal things, and not with matters of merely passing importance. He offered himself by the Eternal Spirit, and by that offering he took off the mortgage from the eternal inheritance, and bade us freely enter upon the predestinated possession. Sin, death, hell-these are not temporary things: the atonement deals with these, and hence it is an eternal redemption. Let me cheer the heart of anyone here who is burdened with sin, with this reflection, that the redemption of Christ deals with the whole of past sin. How far back can we trace evil? We may follow it back to the first apostate angel; but as far as we are concerned we trace it to father Adam, and thus our sin runs back in muddy streams to that primeval fault which has brought a taint into our nature. Eternal redemption has removed from us whatever of evil consequences might come on us, because of our portion in the fall. The stain of heredity is washed out by our being created anew in Christ Jesus. From every soul that has by faith part and parcel in this redemption, all the olden curse of the race is gone. You have no cause to fear the ancient past; nothing lies buried there which can ever rise to accuse you. Who shall lay anything to the charge of him for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption?

Now, look forward into eternity. Behold the vista which has no end! Eternal redemption covers all the peril of this mortal life, and every danger beyond, if such there be. You know not how much you are to be tempted and tried before the end cometh. Peradventure, you will live to extreme old age, and you dread the decay of intellect, and the increase of infirmity; and well you may. Nevertheless, be glad that he has obtained eternal redemption for you. You cannot possibly outlive the redemption of Christ, neither can any temptation for which he has not provided by any possibility assail you.

Leap to the end. Think of the future of prophecy. Anticipate the blast of the seven trumpets, the pouring out of the dread vials! You need not fear any of these, seeing your Lord has obtained eternal redemption. We are being informed that great events will happen on such a day and hour. I believe these predictions as much as I believe in the prophecies of the Norwood gipsy, and no more; but if they were all true, what occasion is there for fear to a believer? Our Lord has obtained eternal redemption for his people, and we shall rest contented even though the star Wormwood should fall, and the waters should be turned into blood, and all these things should be dissolved.

When prophecy is all fulfilled, and we pass into the dread future, we fear not death, since our Lord has obtained eternal redemption. "Eternal punishment" is a word of unspeakable terror; but it is met and fully covered by "eternal redemption." Be not afraid, O ye that put your trust in the Lord Jesus as your Sacrifice and Priest! There is nothing in the mystery of eternity that need appal you. Fearlessly you may launch into the deep, and quit the shores of this present being, since you bear with you eternal redemption. How shall you be lost, for whom an eternal ransom has been paid? Oh, leap for joy, ye believers in Jesus; for he has obtained eternal redemption for you! He would not go within the veil unto his Father till he had fully wrought out your redemption. He stayed here till he could cry exultingly, "It is finished"; and then, but not till then, he gave up the ghost, and entered into his Father's presence. Rejoice that ye have no trifle here, but an eternal redemption. This is no thing of to-day, or to-morrow, but of the eternal past and future.

I have done, but let me ask my beloved hearers, one by one, Have you this eternal redemption? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? He that believeth in him hath everlasting life, and that is the outcome of eternal redemption. Dost thou believe in the Son of God? Faith in him is the greatest of all works, even as our Lord said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." All other works are like the chaff on the threshing-floor, if we refuse to believe in God's grandest deed of love and wisdom. God's noblest deed rejected, we reject God himself. He has manifested himself in the sacrifice of Christ as nowhere else; and if we turn our backs upon the cross, if we refuse to believe in the Incarnate God dying for human sin, we show a rebellion of heart against God which must destroy us. No sin can equal the sin of refusing God's way of mercy. If you come confessing sin, and if you accept the great Sin Offering as presented for you, you shall be brought nigh to God. If you, too, by faith can dip your finger in this blood, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, even as Christ, your High Priest, has sprinkled it, then you, too, shall stand within the veil with Jesus. Into the holiest of all you may enter; nay, you have entered there already in Jesus, and you are there permanently, because he abides there for ever. Your Substitute, your Covenant Head, your Representative is in the glory, and there thou shalt be ere long. Wherefore, if thou believest in Jesus Christ the Son of God with all thine heart, comfort thyself with these words. Since the veil is rent, hide not thyself from God who unveils himself to thee. By-and-by thou shalt be with him

where he is. Rejoice that even now he is with thee where thou art. The Lord bless this congregation, and may we all meet within the veil around the great Forerunner, whom we love and adore! Amen.

SOUNDING OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD.

NO. 2076

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 24TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT TILE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.”-
1 Thessalonians 1:8.

PAUL went to Thessalonica from Philippi with a sore back, but with a sound heart. He went resolved to spend and to be spent for his Lord in that city. On the first three Sabbaths he spake to the Jews in the synagogue, but he soon found that they were obstinately resolved to reject Jesus of Nazareth. as the Messiah; and therefore he directed his attention to the heathen of Thessalonica, and among them he had wonderful success. Large numbers of persons, some of honorable rank, turned from their idols to worship the living God, and he soon gathered about him an enthusiastic people. During his stay at Thessalonica, he pretty nearly wore himself out; for he had determined that he would accept no help from the people, who appear to have been in great straits at that time. He toiled night and day at his trade of tent-making, and even then could not earn sufficient, and might have failed to maintain existence had not the believers at Philippi sent once and again to assist him. Thus, being affectionately desirous of winning them to Jesus, the apostle was willing to have given unto them, not the gospel of God only, but even his own life. The Lord accepted the cheerful sacrifice, and gave the apostle the reward he sought. The Thessalonians not only received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost, but became zealous in making it known. Their intensity of faith helped to spread the gospel, for their lives were notably affected by it; and for their earnestness and

godliness, they were everywhere talked of. Living in a trading town, to which many went, and from which many came, their singular devotion to the faith of the Lord Jesus became the theme of conversation all over Greece; and thus enquiry was promoted, and the gospel was sounded out far and wide. In their case, learners speedily became teachers. The Lord Jesus had thus not only given them to drink, but he had made them into a well overflowing, to refresh the thirst of thousands. They had heard the gospel trumpet, and now they had become trumpeters themselves. In their lives the echoes of Paul's preaching were preserved. This was a very happy circumstance for the tried apostle, and greatly cheered his spirit.

These Thessalonians must have been specially gracious people for Paul to praise them so heartily. "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." Many can bear slander better than they could endure praise. Many, when commended, become puffed up; but the Thessalonians were in such a happy spiritual condition that Paul could safely speak of them as "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." That praise was all the more precious because it was not indiscriminate—"not laid on with a trowel," as the proverb puts it. The Thessalonians had faulty ones among them. The best church that ever existed has had in it imperfect members; and the very virtues of the Thessalonians carried them into certain faults. They were notable for their expectation of the coming of the Lord, and certain of them became fanatical, and ceased from work, because of the speedy approach of the last day. The apostle was obliged to talk to them about this in his two epistles, and even to lay down the rule very strongly—"If any man will not work, neither let him eat." Under whatever pretense men might cease from their daily callings, they were not to be maintained by their brethren. These good people were too ready to be deceived by idle rumors of coming wonders. Even the Thessalonian church had its spots. But, then, there are spots on the sun, and yet we do not speak of it as a dark body, since its light so much preponderates. Grave faults in the Thessalonian church did not prevent our honest apostle from awarding praise where praise was due. When a man is sound at heart, praise does not become an intoxicating wine, but an invigorating tonic. Feeling a modest fear that he does not deserve the warm commendation, the good man is anxious to live up to the character imputed to him. This will be the case, however, only with those whose spiritual life is vigorous.

I entreat you, dear friends, practically to learn from these Thessalonians, by being led to imitate them. May it be truly said of us also, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord"! It is true even now in a measure: may it be far more so! The expression to which I would call your attention is this-"From you sounded out the word of the Lord." It reminds us of a trumpet and its far-sounding notes. Having heard the gospel sounding within, they in return sounded it out.

First, let us carefully look at the trumpeters. What sort of men are these who make God's word to sound out? When we have talked about the men, we will look at their trumpets, and see how it is that they give forth so telling a sound. Next, we will speak of the need of such a trumpet-blast just now; and close by enquiring whether we are not called to give forth that trumpet-sound?

I. We begin by looking at THE TRUMPETERS. Who are these by whom the word of the Lord is sounded out? I shall hastily give you a picture of these Thessalonians drawn from Paul's letters to them.

Observe, at the outset, that they were a people whom the three cardinal graces were conspicuous. Kindly look at the third verse: "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." The three divine sisters-Faith, Hope, Love-linked hands in their lives. These were with them in their best condition-faith working, love laboring, hope enduring. Faith without works is dead; faith performing her work with energy is healthily alive. Paul saw the Thessalonian believers to be fulfilling the life-work of a true faith. Nor was faith left to work alone; but at her right hand was love, sweetening and brightening all. Their love did not consist in words, or in mere amiability of temper; but it wrought with a will. They threw their whole hearts into the cause of God; they loved Jesus, and rapturously waited for his appearing; they loved one another, and shared the sufferings of their leaders in the time of persecution. They exhibited a labor of love: it was not work only, but in intensity it deserved to be called "labor." As for hope-that bright-eyed grace, which looks within the veil, and realizes things not seen as yet-it was peculiarly their endowment-this enabled them to bear with patience their suffering for Christ, whether it lay in false accusation, or in the spoiling of their goods. Thus of them it could be said, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." Brethren, it is of no use for us to attempt to sound out the word of the Lord, if we have not the spiritual voice-power, which

lies in those three graces, which are of first importance. Those precious truths, which faith believes, which love delights in, which hope relies upon -these are the truths we shall diligently make known. We believe, and therefore speak; we love, and therefore testify; we hope, and therefore make known.

Next, I note in these Thessalonian believers, that they were a people whose election was clear. Read the fourth verse:—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." Paul said the same of them in the second epistle (2:13): "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." They were not ashamed to believe the doctrine of election, as some professors are. They rejoiced in having been chosen of God from the beginning. They saw the practical nature of the election, for they perceived that they were chosen unto sanctification. Their lives were such as to prove that they were the Lord's chosen men, for they became choice men. They gave evidence of the secret choice of God by their holy lives, Thus, I hope, is true of us as a people: we are old-fashioned enough to rejoice in the electing love of God, and free grace has a sweet sound to our ears. If it be so, we ought to bring forth fruits worthy of it. Gratitude for sovereign grace and eternal love should operate upon us mightily. Let the slaves of law go to their tasks with a lash at their backs; but the chosen of God will serve him with delight, and do ten times more from love than others from hope of wage. None can show forth the praises of God like those who taste his special love, and know the unutterable sweetness of it.

These trumpeters had received the word of God themselves in much assurance, and with much power. Note the fifth verse: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The apostle also says, in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Beloved, it is a poor thing to receive the gospel in word only. Then you say, "Yes, it is true, I believe it "; and there the matter ends. It is a far different matter to feel the power of the word as it comes from the omnipotent Lord, so as to have your heart broken by it, and then healed by it. To receive the gospel as indisputable, infallible, and divine, is to receive it indeed. To receive it, not

because you are of a certain way of thinking, but because it carries conviction with it, and bears you away by its irresistible force; thus is to receive it in its power. Beloved, I do not believe a man will spend his life in spreading a doctrine which has never yet mastered his spirit; but when the truth takes possession of a man, and holds him by force, as a strong man armed keeps his own house, then will he run up his flag, and openly acknowledge the Mighty One who reigns within. He who believes and is sure is the man who will propagate the faith, and desire that others should accept it. What a difference there is between the man who has felt the omnipotence of truth, and another who merely professes to entertain sound opinions! If the almighty word has carried you captive, you will also hold it fast, and nothing will persuade you either to surrender it or to stifle it.

The Thessalonians were a people whose constancy was proved. They received the word "with much affliction." The apostle says, "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews." The assault by the mob, recorded in Acts xvii., was, doubtless, only one of their many trials. They remained steadfast, enthusiastic under all their tribulations; and hence the gospel was sounded out by them. Cowards hold their tongues, but brave men are not to be put down. Having already borne slander, reproach, and misrepresentation of every kind, we are not abashed, but rather are hardened to endurance, and publish our belief more unreservedly than ever. We have nothing to conceal, nothing to fear. Slander can say no more. Wherefore, we the more boldly sound forth the word of God. Brethren, unless you can hold on in rough weather, and bear up under opposition, you will do little in sounding out the word of God. Trumpets must be made of hard metal, and trumpeters must have something of the soldier about them, or little will come of it.

Hence, again, these people really and lovingly served God. Look at the ninth verse: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." I have no doubt many of these folks had been great devotees of their idols, for it is amazing what idolaters will do for their deities! At this day the gifts of Hindoos to idol shrines put to shame the offerings given by Christians to their Lord. Have you not heard how they were wont to throw their very lives away beneath the wheels of the chariot of their demon god? Shall hideous deities of wood and stone command a

zeal which is not shown in the service of the living God? I doubt not that these Thessalonians became as earnest worshippers of the living Jehovah as they had once been earnest votaries of their idols. They turned from idols, but they turned to serve God. They were not turned in opinion only, but in a practical manner. What a pity it is, that to many Christian professors religion is opinion, and conversion a feeling! Do not many live as if God were a myth, and the service of God a sham? If God be God, serve him: service is the due of Godhead. Does not the Lord himself say, "If then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Oh, that to us the service of the Lord may be a delight, and then it will be as natural to us to sound out the word of the Lord as it is to birds to sing!

For one thing the Thessalonians were peculiarly notable: they were enthusiastic expectants of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says of them, in the tenth verse, that they waited for the Son of God from heaven. They really expected Christ to come, and to come speedily. They even carried this expectation beyond its proper bounds, for they grew impatient of the Lord's apparent delay. Some of their number died, and they laid it to heart as though in their case their hope had failed, insomuch that the apostle wrote: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." They would be no losers by death; for those who remained alive till the advent would have no preference over them which slept. In their case, there was no need to write "of the times and the seasons," for they well knew that the Lord would come as a thief in the night. They came so to expect the immediate coming of the Lord as to fall into unhealthy excitement about it; and it was needful for Paul, to prevent their becoming fanatical, to say, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Paul delighted to see them waiting for the coming of Christ; but he also prayed, "The Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ." He wishes rest to the troubled. But this unrest was a virtue carried to excess. We are not, many of us, in danger of exaggeration in that direction. I fear that we are more likely to forget the Lord's coming, or to treat it as an unpractical speculation. If any truth should arouse us, this should do it: yet even the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are all too apt to slumber and sleep because the bridegroom delayeth his coming. Hear ye not the midnight cry?

Does not this startle you? “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” If you hearken to that call, you will be the men to sound out the word of the Lord in every place. If we, as a church and people, are more and more influenced by the expectation of our Lord’s appearing, we shall be more eager to spread his gospel. Remember that now he may come at once. Those things of which Paul spoke as hindering his coming have now come and gone. Eighteen centuries and more have passed away since Paul wrote, and the Lord cometh quickly. Rouse, then, yourselves to use all diligence. Proclaim his word, and according to your ability go forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. O ye that look for your Lord, ye are the men who should herald his coming by a clear testimony to his name in every place.

Thus I have given you hints as to what kind of men are likely to sound forth the word of God. Judge ye, my brethren, whether you yourselves have these qualifications. It is my sincere impression that they are to be found in many of you.

II. Secondly, let us notice THEIR TRUMPETS. “From you sounded out the word of the Lord.” Their testimony was distinct, clear, resonant, and far-sounding. We may find an illustration in the silver trumpets of the sanctuary which were sounded to gather the people together. Let your trumpets ring out the call to assemble to our Lord Jesus, the true Shiloh, unto whom shall the gathering of the people be. We may further think of the Jubilee trumpet, which early in the morning proclaimed clearance of debts, release from bondage, and restoration to lost heritages. Such are the glad announcements of the gospel; let us hasten to make them. Trumpets are also blown in time of war: many are the allusions to this in Scripture, Oh, that the church of God may boldly sound the war-trumpet, at this time, against impurity, intemperance, false doctrine, and loose living! Our Lord has come to send a sword upon earth, in these matters. Oh that from each one of us the war-blast may be sounded, without fear or hesitation! Fain would we also earn the name given to the apostles, “They that turn the world upside down”; for at this present it is wrong-side up. A trumpet is also used simply for musical purposes, and the testimony of the church to her Lord Jesus should be the most melodious sound the ears of man have ever heard.

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”

Oh, to sound forth the glorious name, “with trumpet and sound of cornet,” that multitudes might be compelled to hear it! Oh, to make all earth and heaven ring with that dear name! Somebody writing upon this verse compares the sounding forth to the voices of church bells. I will suppose that you are sojourning among the hills, and have almost lost reckoning of the days. How clearly are you told that it is the Sabbath morning, when you hear the sweet voices of the bells from yonder tower, far away! The call comes through the wood, and over the moor, and it seems to say, “Come hither, and worship; for the day of rest has come.” Each church should find in its living members its best peal of bells. Every individual, great and little, should give forth his sound: not one should be dumb, Oh that it were always so; that everyone would constantly show forth the praises of the Lord! The Lord of hosts is with us; let us lift up the shout of a King. He is all in all to us; let us make him known. God grant us to realize that we may give a loud fanfare upon the silver trumpets to our coming Prince! What was the means by which these excellent people made the gospel to sound out? It was made known by the remarkable conversions which happened among them. These men had been idolaters, and had fallen into divers lusts common in those times. Paul’s preaching had made a change which none could have looked for. They had been brought to worship the true God, and to look for his Son from heaven, and to walk worthy of their high calling. Everybody asked, “Why, what has happened to these Thessalonians? These people have broken their idols: they worship the one God; they trust in Jesus. They are no longer drunken, dishonest, impure, contentious.” Everybody talked of what had taken place among these converted people. Oh, for conversions, plentiful, clear, singular, and manifest; that so the word of God may sound out! Our converts are our best advertisements and arguments. Have you not known a whole town startled by the conversion of one great sinner? A distinct, clear-cut conversion will often astound an entire parish, and compel the crowd to say, “What is this word of the Lord?” Brethren, may your own conversions, and those of many around you, proclaim aloud the power of the word of God, and the efficacy of faith in the precious blood of Jesus.

The attention commanded by their conversion was further secured by their unmistakable, unquestionable character. They became such godly, honest, upright, sober, saintly people, that all who observed them took note of their excellence. They were Christians indeed, for they were Christians in their deeds. Their whole lives were affected by their faith, both at home

and abroad. They were so admirable in character that they had become ensamples to those who were already saved. Notice, in the seventh verse, the remarkable expression, “Ye were ensamples to all that believe.” It is not so difficult to become an example to the ungodly, for their level is a low one; but it is a high attainment to become an example to those who fear God. This needs great grace. If even saints may copy from you, you had need write a good hand. The Thessalonians had attained to this, and it was by this that they were able to give such voice to the gospel. Holy living is a grand pulpit. A godly character has a louder voice in it than the most eloquent tongue. Character is our Chrysostom: holiness has a golden mouth. The apostle says that their lives were so complete a publication of the gospel, that he did not need to call attention thereto. He writes, “We need not to speak anything”: as much as to say, “We have only to point to you.” Shall I ever feel that I have little need to preach in words, since my people preach far better by their lives? Yes, there are many eases among you concerning which I might say—There, watch that friend’s life, and see what the gospel is: there is no need for me to tell you. Nobody stands, on a summer’s day, and points upward, saying, “There is the sun.” No, the great light sheds its radiance everywhere, and nobody mistakes him for the moon or a star. Oh, that all of us were of such a character that none should mistake us! Till we have more grace in the heart, and more holiness in the life, we shall lack the greatest means of making the gospel known. We must shine by our works if men are to see our light. Oh, what a sounding forth of the Word will your holy lives be! Without these, all is vain. If the life contradicts the voice, it will be as when a trumpet is stopped up, and then, blow as you may, no sound is heard.

I have no doubt that the Thessalonians added to their character many earnest efforts for the spread of the truth. They went about telling what they had heard, believed, and enjoyed. Some of them became preachers of the Word at home, and others went abroad to publish the glad tidings. Jesus would be made known to the poor in the back slums of Thessalonica, and talked of to the sailors on board the vessels, and to the merchants on the quays. Are you, beloved, all of you, making Jesus known? Are there none of you silent? Have we not among us some who should now be working in foreign lands? Have we not in these pews many whose voices should be heard in our streets? We shall never be as we ought to be till every talent is utilized. We must be all at it, always at it, and at it with all

our might. We have not come to this yet. May the love of Christ constrain us thereto!

Meanwhile, it was by their faith that their teaching was made so clear and forcible. They were intense believers, so that Paul says, “Your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.” They did not half-heartedly teach what they half-heartedly believed. They accepted the teaching of the apostle as being, not the word of man, but the word of God; and so they spoke with the accent of conviction. Those who heard them felt that they were enfeebled by no doubts, but were filled with full assurance of the eternal verities. Their goods were spoiled, they were themselves brought before magistrates, and yet they stood fast in the faith, and had no secret mistrust. There was no moving them, although the philosophers sneered at them, and the superstitious persecuted them. They stood like rocks amid raging seas. This was as a trumpet for the gospel, giving no uncertain sound. When holy constancy is to the front under reproach and ridicule, the gospel is sounded as with a bugle note, and men are compelled to hear it. Brethren, you possess this confidence. Have it more and more!

May we have among us remarkable conversions, unquestionable character, earnest effort, and intense faith; and these will be to us all the trumpet that we need. We need not blow our own trumpets, nor borrow the whistles of politics or amusement; but the Word of the Lord will by these sound forth all around us. I cannot keep you long upon these points; my aim is not to fill up the time, but to fill you with an eager desire to sound out the truth of God.

III. Oh, that the Holy Ghost would put fire into my sermon, that its live coals may touch your hearts, while I say that THERE IS NEED, AT THE PRESENT TIME, FOR A TRUMPET BLAST OF THIS KIND.

Brethren, the Word of the Lord ought to be sounded out, because it is the Word of God. If it is the word of man, let him spread it as he can; we are not concerned to help him. The word of man comes from a dying source, and it will return to it; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.

*“Waft, waft, ye winds, his story!
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole.”*

The Word of the Lord is so all-important, that it should have free course, run, and be glorified. When he gives the word, great should be the company of them that publish it. If you believe the gospel to be the divine word, you dare not withhold it. The stones would cry out if you were silent.

With many of us, this is a matter of solemn obligation. The Word of God has been to us life from the dead, deliverance out of bondage, food for our hunger, strength for our weakness, comfort for our sorrow, satisfaction for our hearts. Spread it then.

*“Can ye, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can ye, to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?”*

Seeing that God’s Word has come to you with power, and has saved you from all evil, you must sound it abroad.

Remember, too, that this is salvation to the perishing. Did not one dear brother and deacon, on Monday night, pray to the Lord with great fervor, reiterating these words, “They are perishing, they are perishing, they are perishing; Lord, save them!”? You believe that men are diseased with sin, and that Christ is the only remedy: will you not tell them the remedy? You see men dying without hope; will you not tell them where there is hope as to the hereafter? You tremblingly feel that for souls to die without accepting the Savior is eternal woe; will you not pray them, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God? O sirs, by everything that is terrible in the doom of those who die in unbelief, I charge you, sound out the Word of the Lord! As you will shortly appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, be clear of the blood of all men. The gospel has power to save to-day, and to save for ever: sound it out.

This is a time in which the word of the Lord is much abused. Many venture to say that it has lost its power, and has proved unsuitable to the age. They tell us that we need something in advance of it. O you that love it, avenge this insult by manifesting its power in your lives, and by sounding out the old gospel with new vigor. By your holy characters, and by your incessant labors, force men to see the power of the divine word. Let its secret power be embodied in your practical consecration, and proclaimed in your incessant witness-bearing. When I wish to speak best, my tongue fails me; I

am a poor advocate. But oh, I pray you, by the glory of The Ever Blessed, which is tarnished by the foul mouths of ungodly men, seek with sevenfold energy to make known Christ crucified, and the way of salvation by faith in him! If you have slept until now, “Awake, awake; put on strength”! for the enemy is at the gate. I beseech you, now that Christ’s crown and throne are assailed by his adversaries, put on your armor, grasp the sword, and stand up for the sacred cause.

At this time many other voices are clamouring to be heard. The air is full of din. Men have devised new methods by which to elevate the race, and loud are the voices that proclaim the man-invented nostrums. “Shall we be heard?” cries one, “if we lift up our voices?” Yes, if you take the gospel trumpet, you will enforce a hearing. It chanced one evening, when there was a large gathering of friends at the Orphanage, that our boys were sweetly discoursing a hymn-tune upon their bells, the American organ was being played as an accompaniment, and all the gathered company were singing at their best, making a rushing flood of music. Just then I quietly hinted to our friend Mr. Manton Smith to put in a few notes from his silver cornet; and when he placed it to his lips, and threw his soul into it, the lone man was heard above us all. Bells, organ, voices everything seemed to yield before that one clear blast of trumpet music. So will it be with the gospel. Only sound it out as God’s own word, and let the power of the Holy Ghost go with it, and it will drown all music but its own. At any rate, you will have done your part, and will be no longer responsible, even if men do not hear it, if from your very soul you sound out the word of the Lord.

Need I say more to show you how needful it is that just now we should put a tongue into the heavenly doctrine, and let it proclaim salvation to all lands?

V. I want, during my last few minutes, to hint to the members of this church, and to those many friends far and near who have so generously associated with me in holy enterprises, that **WE ARE THE PEOPLE TO GIVE FORTH THIS SOUND.**

It is our duty, first, because of our position. Thessalonica was a well-chosen center, because it was a place of great resort. Ships were always coming into that port and going out again. Whatever was done at Thessalonica would soon be known in all quarters. We are placed in a central position in London. Who does not know the Tabernacle? Hither the

tribes come up, and here the multitudes continually assemble. Friends from the country flock to this spot; and on any Sabbath-day of summertime persons from all countries are in these pews and aisles. I state the simple truth when I speak of this house as known to some of all nations, and therefore what is done here is done in the heart of England, and in the center of the world. If you, as a church, can sound forth by your character and exertions the word of God, you are in the fittest place for it. The position demands it of you; act not unworthily.

Providence has forced us into prominence. We have not desired it; but we are known and observed by multitudes. If, beloved, we keep the fire burning here, it will be a beacon seen afar. If we are consecrated men and women, we have a great opportunity. If my helpers will see to it that nothing fails in this place, we shall encourage many; but we shall dispirit thousands unless we carry on the work here with great vigor, the Lord being our helper.

Nor can I forget our numbers. There may have been churches of larger numbers than ours, but I have never heard of them. In this I do not glory, but I dare not conceal from you the anxiety which it causes me. If little is done by such an assembly, it will be a great disgrace to us. I am overwhelmed with the thought of more than five thousand souls united here in church fellowship. Large numbers may be our weakness; we may become a mere horde of men, without discipline, without unity, without power; but I trust in the great Lord that it shall not be so. If God has caused us to be as large as almost any other ten churches put together, does he not call upon us to exert ourselves with tenfold energy to spread abroad the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? I am sore burdened with this great host: will you allow it to be a burden? Will you not make it a joy? Will all these professed believers make up a crowded hospital? Shall not this house the rather be a barrack of soldiers? Shall not our voice be louder for our Lord than if we were but five hundred, instead of five thousand? How would I plead with you, if I knew how! Do not make this community a gigantic failure. God grant that, remembering our numbers, we may not be satisfied with a thin and feeble voice for Jesus. Our voice should be as the noise of many waters. Is it so? Is it so much so as it ought to be? Oh, for the Spirit of God among us as a rushing mighty wind!

Through our agencies we ought to sound out the word of the Lord very loudly. At this moment you have, by the College, sent out more than seven

hundred preachers of the word, into all countries. Oh, that they were all as faithful as some are! Many are the churches presided over by those trained in your school of the prophets: pray that the Lord may be with them. Your orphan children are growing up: oh, that they may be a seed to serve the Lord! Your colporteurs are going from door to door with holy literature. Oh, for the power of God with their laborious efforts! Your evangelists are heard by tens of thousands; implore the unction from on high for them. The sermons preached in this place are not only printed in our own tongue, but many of them are translated into other languages, and are widely read. This is no mean agency for good. All this, and much more which I will not speak upon, I mention not to boast thereof, but that we may be humbled under our responsibilities, and may cry to God for his power. All this, if the Holy Ghost be with us, must accomplish great results; but without him-and we shall be without him unless we are a holy, godly, earnest, Christ-loving people-nothing will be accomplished. Our agencies will become burdens to us, until that which should be the armor of our warfare will become the sepulcher of our life. I feel this more than anyone else, since the very finding and using of funds for so great a work would crush me if the Lord were not my helper.

Beloved, I press home upon you the duty of sounding out the word of God because of your prayers. If there be a people under heaven that constantly meet in large numbers to pray, we are that people. Albeit, some of you are lax on this point, I am bound to say that I rejoice in your gatherings for prayer. In this you are my joy and crown. God be praised for it! But if any cry to God, and then do not work for him, what hypocrisy it is! What if we ask him to save souls, and never lift a finger to spread the gospel! Is this truthful? Dare we hang the trumpet on the wall, and then pray, "Lord, let it be blown"? No. By the honesty of your hearts, set that trumpet to your lips, if you desire its sound to go forth. Give it your very life-breath. Lift up your voice with strength; lift it up; be not afraid.

Once more, you have stood with me in solemn protest against the declensions of the age. He who knoweth all things knows what this has cost me; but your love has been a great relief to me in the bitter sorrow. We will have no complicity with error: we will not aid the Philistines in shearing away the locks of the gospel's strength. Having protested, we must justify our position by our lives. We shall be dishonored unless we have the power of God specially resting upon us: that may be a small thing; but the truth itself will be dishonored; and this we cannot bear. If the

gospel be indeed true-and we have no doubt about it-we beseech the God of truth to grant us the sign and seal from heaven by baring his holy arm in our midst. To-day, again, I lay the sacrifice upon the altar, by reasserting the old gospel against the down-grade of the times. The God that answereth by fire, let him be God! On you may the tongues of fire descend and rest. May you, who are with me, whether in London or in the utmost parts of the earth, be inflamed with zeal, and fired with love. May the water in the trenches be licked up by the flame, and the whole sacrifice be consumed with heaven's own fire, till the people, once deluded by Baal, shall be forced to cry, "Jehovah, he is the God! Jehovah, he is the God!" May the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ triumph in the midst of the earth, and become, as it always has been, the truth by which the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. The Lord grant it. Labour, all of you to secure it.

I have not preached to sinners; I leave that, for once, to you. I lay on you this burden, that you each one make the word of the Lord to sound out, "so that we need not to speak anything." God grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

NO. 2077

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 31ST, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The light of the glorious gospel of Christ.”-2 Corinthians 4:4.

SHINING in the center of the verse, like a pearl in its setting, you find these words. Literally and accurately translated, they run thus: The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” This is the form given to my text in the Revised Version, and I shall follow it, because it, word for word, follows the original.

Paul was a man of one idea. The gospel of Christ had saturated his soul as the dew saturated Gideon's fleece. He could think of nothing else, and speak of nothing else, but the glory of Christ crucified. Important events in politics transpired in the apostle's day, but I cannot remember an allusion to them. Great social problems were to be solved, but his one and only solution was the preaching of that great Savior who is to cleanse the Augean stables of the world. For Paul there was but one thing worth living for, and that one thing was worth dying for. He did not count even his life dear unto him that he might win Christ, and be found in him. Hence his spirits rose or sank according to the prosperity or decline of the kingdom of Christ. When he writes an epistle, his mood varies according to the spiritual condition of the people to whom he writes. If their faith groweth exceedingly, and if from them sounds forth the word of God, then is he jubilant in his tone; but if they are declining in grace, if there are divisions among them, if false doctrine is ravaging them like a wolf in the sheep-fold, then he is solemn in spirit, and he writes with a heavy hand. In this case Paul laments the condition of those who could not see what was so plain to

himself-namely, the gospel of the glory of Christ. He saw most clearly the glory of his Lord, and that precious gospel which is built up thereon, and he marvelled that others could not see it also. Considering their case with care, he sorrowfully perceived that they must first have shut their eyes by wilful unbelief, and that, therefore, Satan had exercised his evil power, and had utterly blinded them. The blaze of the gospel is so bright that, even with their eyes averted, some measure of light must have entered their minds, unless some special evil power had operated to hold them in darkness. The devil himself must have blinded them, and even he found it a great task to shut out the glorious light, and to accomplish it he had to assume all his power as “the god of this world.” It needed that the cunning with which he apes the Godhead should be put forth to the full to close the perceptive faculties of men against the clear and forcible light of the truth of the gospel. The light of the glorious gospel, like that of the morning dawn, would have been seen even by dim eyes, had not the infernal prince blindfolded the thoughts of men, and made their minds as dark as his own. The light of the gospel is intense, and by a faithful ministry it is flashed in the very faces of men; and therefore, in fear of losing his subjects, the prince of darkness hastens to blind their eyes. Jesus comes to give sight, and Satan comes to destroy it. They each know the value of those eyes by which men look and live. The battle rages at the mental Eye-gate. The conflict between the two champions is raised upon the question-shall men behold the light, or shall they abide in darkness?

I wonder whether there are any here at this time who have long been willing unbelievers, and have at last come to be quite unable to perceive any glory in the gospel of our Lord Jesus. When they hear it faithfully preached, they flippantly criticize the style of the speaker; but the matter of which he speaks appears to them to be of small consequence. They pass by the cross itself, and the sorrow of the Lord is nothing to them. These may be very intelligent men and women in other matters, and yet have no perception of spiritual truth. They can perceive a thousand beauties in nature, but none in grace; they have drunk of the Castalian fountain, but have not even sipped of “the waters of Shiloah that go softly.” They can descant at large upon the sublime and beautiful; but they see neither beauty nor sublimity in him who is all that is lovely, and all that is heavenly. I pray that while I am speaking of the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, that light may penetrate their minds. May God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, speak again the almighty fiat, saying, “Let there

be light”; and there shall be light. May the miracle of the old creation be repeated in the new creation, to the praise of the glory of divine grace.

First, this morning, I shall ask you to think upon Paul’s words, and consider his name for the gospel—it is “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” Secondly, let us consider the light which streams from that gospel of the glory of Christ. When we have thought of these two things, let us consider what to do with this light, this marvellous light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

I. At the outset, LET US CONSIDER PAUL’S NAME FOR THE GOSPEL: “the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

It is very evident that the apostle felt that the gospel was solely and altogether of Christ. The Anointed was, in his view, the one subject of the glad tidings, from beginning to end. When he was born, the angels proclaimed good tidings of great joy to the sons of men; and after his death, his human messengers went forth to all nations with messages of love. His death is the birth of our hope; his resurrection is the rising of our buried joy; his session at the right hand of God is the prophecy of our eternal bliss. Christ is the author of the gospel, the subject of the gospel, and the end of the gospel. His hand is seen in every letter of that wonderful epistle of divine love called the New Testament, or New Covenant. He, himself, is glad tidings to us in every point, and the gospel is from him in every sense. That is not gospel which does not relate to Jesus. If there is no bloodmark upon it, the roll of tidings may be rejected as a forgery. As Christ is the subject, so is he the object of the gospel: his glory is promoted by the gospel. It is the gospel of his glory among the sons of men in all ages, and it will be so throughout eternity. The gospel and the sinners saved by it will glorify the Son of God for ever.

To Paul the gospel was always a glorious gospel. He never had dim views of its excellence. He never spoke of it as though it stood in doubtful competition with Judaism, or heathenism, or the philosophies of the Stoics and the Epicureans. These things were but dross to him in comparison with the “much fine gold” of the gospel. He spoke of it in glowing terms: he felt it to be a great privilege and responsibility to be put in trust with it, and to be allowed to preach it. It was the joy of his heart to live upon it himself, and it was his one aim to proclaim it to others. “The glorious gospel of the blessed God” was his one absorbing science, and he determined to know nothing else. O you that are beginning to think lightly of the old gospel,

and dream that it is becoming powerless, may the Spirit that rested upon the apostle rest on you, till you also shall perceive the glory of the divine method of grace, and shall speak of it fervently as “the glorious gospel of Christ”!

Returning to the literal translation, we remark that the apostle saw that the excellence of the gospel lay in the glory of Christ. I shall try to show you this. The glorious Savior is the substance of the glorious gospel. In speaking of this theme, I can only repeat what you know already, and in that repetition I shall not strive after elaborate expressions, but tell the story simply, after the manner of the apostle, who says, “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” The glory of Christ would be insulted by attempts to set it forth with finery of words. Let it be seen in its own light.

The glory of the gospel, then, lies very much in the glory of our Lord’s person. He who is the Savior of men is God—“God over all, blessed for ever.” Is it not written, “When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him”? With the angels of God we worship Jesus Christ as God. Our Redeemer is also man—man like ourselves, with this exception, that in him there is no taint of natural depravity, and no act of sin has ever stained his character. Behold the glory of him who is God and man mysteriously united in one Person! He is unique: he is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the brother born for adversity. This is the gospel—that the Son of God himself gloriously undertook the salvation of men, and therefore was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. If we had here a vast hospital full of sick folk, it would be the best of news for those languishing therein, if I could tell them that a great physician had devoted himself to their healing; and the more I could extol the physician who had come to visit them, the more would there be of good news for them. If I could say to them, “The physician who is coming to succor you is possessed of infallible wisdom and unerring skill, and in him are united loving tenderness and infinite power,” how they would smile upon their beds! Why, the very news would half restore them! Should it not be much more so with desponding and despairing souls when they hear that he who has come to save is none other than the glorious Christ of God? The mysteriously majestic person of Christ is the mainstay of the gospel. He who is able to save is no angel, and no mere man; but he is “Emmanuel, God with us.” Infinite are his resources, boundless is his grace. O ye guilty ones, who lie

upon beds of remorse, ready to die of grief, here is a Savior such as you need. When you think of what you are, and despair; think also of what he is, and take heart. If I made you doubt the Deity of the Savior, I should cut away the foundation of your only hope; but while you see him to be God, you remember that nothing is too hard for him. If I caused you to doubt his proper manhood, I should also rob you of comfort, since you would not recognize in him the tender sympathy which grows out of kinship. Beloved, the Lord Jesus stands before you, commissioned by the eternal God, with the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him without measure; and thus, being in nature and person the first and the best, his message of salvation is to you most full and sure, and his glory is gospel to you.

The glory of Christ lies not only in his person, but in his love. Remember this, and see the gospel which lies in it. From all eternity the Son of God has loved his people: even from of old "his delights were with the sons of men." Long before he came on earth he so loved the men whom his Father gave him that he determined to be one with them, and for their redemption to pay the dreadful price of life for life. He saw the whole company of his chosen in the glass of his fore-knowledge, and loved them with an everlasting love, Oh the love which glowed in the heart of our Redeemer "in the beginning"! That same love will never know an end. Herein to us is his glory. He loved us so, that heaven could not hold him; he loved us so, that he descended to redeem us; and having come among us amid our sin and shame, he loves us still. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Love, thou hast reached thine utmost glory in the heart of the divine Savior! And the glory of this love, which is without beginning, boundary, change, or close, is the very life-blood of the gospel. The love of Jesus is the glad tidings of great joy. Our great Physician loves the sick, and delights to heal them. He comes into the wards among the palsied and the plague-stricken with an intense longing to bless them. Jesus is the sinner's Friend. How rapturously does my soul sing of him as "Jesu, lover of my soul"! A gracious gospel lies in the glory of the love of Christ!

This being so, beloved, we next see the glory of his incarnation. To us it was the glory of Christ that he was born at Bethlehem, and dwelt at Nazareth. It looks like dishonor that he should be the carpenter's son; but throughout all ages this shall be the glory of the Mediator, that he deigned to be partaker of our flesh and blood. There is glory in his poverty and shame; glory in his having nowhere to lay his head; glory in his weariness

and hunger. Surpassing glory springs from Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, from Calvary and the death of the cross. All heaven could not yield him such renown as that which comes from the spitting and the scourging, the nailing and the piercing. A glory of grace and tenderness surrounds the incarnate God; and this, to those convinced of sin, is the gospel. When we see God in human flesh we expect reconciliation. When we see that he took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses, we hope for pardon and healing. Born of a virgin, our Lord has come among us, and has lived on earth a life of service and of suffering: there must be hope for us. He came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. See, I pray you, the glory of his life of doing good, of working miracles of mercy, of tender care for the fallen; and ask yourselves whether there is not in his life among men good news for all sad hearts. Did God himself cover his glory with a veil of our inferior clay? Then he means well to men. Humanity, thus honored by union with the Godhead, is not utterly abhorred. In the Word made flesh we see the glory of God, and noting how love predominates, how condescending pity reigns, we see in this a gospel of grace for all believing men.

The glory of Christ is further seen in his atoning sacrifice. But you stop me and say, "That was his humiliation and his shame." Yes, it is true, and therefore it is his glory. Is not the Christ to every loving heart most of all glorious in the death of the cross? What garment doth so well become our Beloved as the vesture dipped in his own blood? He is altogether lovely, let him be arrayed as he may; but when our believing hearts behold him covered with the bloody sweat, we gaze upon him with adoring amazement and rapturous love. His flowing crimson bedecks him with a robe more glorious than the imperial purple. We fall at his feet with sevenfold reverence when we behold the marks of his passion. Is he not most of all illustrious as our dying substitute? Beloved, here lies the marrow of the gospel. Jesus Christ suffered in our stead. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." That glory of his cross, which we again aver to be greater glory than any other, is gospel to us. On his cross he bore the whole weight of divine justice in our place; the iron rod of Jehovah, which must have broken us in pieces like potters' vessels, fell on him. He "became obedient to death, even the death of the cross," and in that act he slew death, and overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

*“His cross a sure foundation laid
For glory and renown,
When through the regions of the dead
He passed to reach the crown.”*

But the glory of his sacrificial death, by which he blotted out our sin and magnified the law, is the gospel of our salvation.

We will now travel a little further, to his resurrection, wherein his glory is more palpable to us. He could not be holden by the bonds of death. He was dead: his holy body could die, but it could not see corruption; so, having slept a little while within the chamber of the tomb, he arose and came forth to light and liberty-the living Christ glorified by his resurrection. Who shall tell the glory of the risen Lord?

*“Rising, he brought our heaven to light,
And took possession of the joy.”*

Rising, he sealed our justification. Rising, he rifled the sepulcher and released the captives of death. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.” Let us rejoice that he is not dead, but ever liveth to make intercession for us. This is the gospel to us; for because he lives we shall live also. “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Oh the glory of our risen Lord! Consider it deeply, meditate upon it earnestly; and, as you do so, hear the clear sound of glad tidings of great joy. For our greatest consolation we do not look to this precept or to that promise, so much as to Jesus himself, who has by his rising from the dead given us the surest pledge and guarantee of our deliverance from the prison of guilt, the dungeon of despair, and the sepulcher of death.

Once more, lift up your eyes a little higher, and note the glory of our Lord’s enthronement and of his second coming. He sits at the right hand of God. He that once was hung up upon the tree of shame now sitteth on the throne of universal dominion. Instead of the nail, behold the scepter of all worlds in his most blessed hand. All things are put under his feet. Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is now crowned with glory and honor, and this is the gospel to us. For thus it is plain that he has conquered all our enemies, and has all power in heaven and in earth on our behalf. His acceptance with God is the acceptance of all whom he loves; and he loves all who trust him. His sitting in glory is a

pledge that the whole of the redeemed by blood shall sit there in due time. His second coming, for which we daily look, is our divinest hope. Mayhap, before we fall asleep the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God; and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then will our weary days be ended: the strife of tongues, the struggle against sin, the stratagems of error, all will be finished, and truth and holiness shall reign supreme. O my brethren, if I could but break loose from the impediments of mouth and tongue, and speak my heart without these cumbrous organs, then would I make you rejoice in the glory of my divine Master upon his throne to-day, and in his glorious appearing at the appointed hour. If we could see him as John did in Patmos, we might swoon at his Feet; but it would be with the rapture of hope, and not with the chill of despair.

Mark this: the less you make of Christ, the less gospel you have to trust in. If you get rid of Christ from your creed, you have at the same time destroyed all its good news. The more gospel we would preach, the more of Christ we must proclaim. If you lift up Christ, you lift up the gospel. If you dream of preaching the gospel without exalting Christ in it, you will give the people husks instead of true bread. In proportion as the Lord Jesus is set up on a glorious high throne, he becomes salvation to the sons of men. A little Christ means a little gospel; but the true gospel is the gospel of the glory of Christ.

II. Secondly, LET US CONSIDER THE LIGHT or THIS GOSPEL. Our apostle speaks of “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

That light is, first of all, unveiled. Whatever light there was in the law-and there was much-it was latent light. The veil on the face of Moses was typical of the way in which the ceremonials of the law were hidden from the sight of men. We forget that a great majority of those things whereof we read in the law were never seen by the Israelites as a people. Do not suppose that any Israelite ever looked within the veil: none but the high priest ever entered there. Even the holy place outside the veil was reserved for the priests. The most of the sacrificial types were as much matters of faith to the Israelites as the meaning is a matter of faith to us. They did not see even the patterns of the heavenly things: they had to be told of them; and in the hearing, they had to exercise faith, as we also do. But, my brethren, our gospel is one, not of the veil which hides, but of the lamp which shines. We use no reserve among you. I solemnly declare before

God that I believe nothing which I do not preach among you openly, and I give no sense to the words which I use but that which is natural to them. "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." We have heard of preachers who, under the rose, believe very differently from what they openly say. The trust-deed requires some little consonance with evangelical doctrine, but they loathe it in their souls, and tell their brethren so in private. But as for us, "we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully." We dare preach everything that we believe, and preach it as plainly as possible. The more you know us through and through, the more glad we shall be. Our gospel is one which may be advertised on every hoarding: we have nothing to conceal. I have heard of William Gadsby, of Manchester, that, travelling on a coach one day, he asked two heretical divines to tell him how a sinner is justified in the sight of God. "No," said they, "you don't catch us in that fashion. Whatever answer we gave you, would be repeated all over Manchester within a week." "Oh," says he, "then I will tell you. A sinner is justified in the sight of God by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Go and tell that all over Manchester, and all over England, as quickly as you like; for I believe nothing that I am ashamed of." Light rejoices to proclaim itself. The gospel is a light, and lights are not meant to be hidden under bushels or beds. If they are buried in that way they will burn their way to resurrection, and the bushels and the beds will be consumed, and make all the greater light. The gospel of the blessed God is intended to be conspicuous as the lighthouse on the rock, which is seen afar. It is so illuminating that everyone in the house may see by it. The gospel which is not known is of no value: it is as much intended to be understood as light is meant to be seen.

This light, in the next place, is all its own. You cannot illuminate the gospel: it is itself an illumination. Should I not be an idiot if I were to say to my deacon behind me, "Dear friend, kindly get me a candle, I want to show these people the sun. I do not see the sun just now, but I will lead them into the street, and by the help of this candle we will search the sky till we find him out"? I think I hear you say, "Our pastor is out of his mind." Such conduct might well justify the suspicion. It is not by human light that we can show the gospel of God. Not by rhetoric and reasoning do men perceive the light of the gospel. There is a self-manifesting and a self-evidencing power in the gospel. It runs on its own feet, and needs no

crutches. If men would read their Bibles they would, as a rule, believe their Bibles; but they will not read them. If men would hear the gospel attentively, they would, as a general rule, believe the gospel; but they will not give it the attention it deserves. It needs no effort to see a bright light. If men would only open their eyes to the light of the gospel, they would see it. If they would only think upon the glory of the gospel of Christ, its light would find its way into their souls. Where the gospel shines in all its brilliance, men have to put up their shutters to keep out its light; and they do even worse, for they call in the devil to gouge out their eyes, that they may not be forced to see. In itself the gospel has such a wonderful power of making itself felt, that, if men did not resist its influence, it would reveal divine things to them. I wish I could induce unbelievers here to read the story of the crucifixion every morning, and to keep on reading it and studying it; for I am persuaded that the light which streams from the cross would, by the blessing of God, open their eyes, and enter their souls savingly.

For, mark you, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ is divine light. Paul tells us this when he says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The gospel is either divine, or it is a lie: it has a supernatural power about it, or else it is an imposture. The true power of the gospel of Christ lies not in its natural reasonableness, nor in its adaptation to human need, nor in its moral beauty, but in the attendant power of the Spirit of God. God is in the gospel, and therefore it is mighty. We may preach to you for a thousand years together, and never a soul of you will receive Christ, unless the same Spirit that spake light into the primeval dark shall say, "Let there be light." Salvation is a supernatural process. God himself must come upon the scene before the eyes of a man born blind will see. How this truth exalts God and lowers man! Yes; and the lower we are brought, the better. When we get to feel our utter helplessness, then will our extremity prove to be the opportunity of the grace of God. O heavenly light, shine now into the soul of all who hear or read this sermon!

This light is a revealing light. Whenever the light of the glory of Christ comes streaming into the heart, it reveals the hidden things of darkness. When the glory of Christ is seen, then we see our own shame and sinfulness. Did it need God himself to redeem us? then we must have been in dire bondage. Did it need that the incarnate God should die? then sin

must be exceeding sinful, That is a deep pit which needs that God should come from heaven to lift us out of it. We never see the impotence and depravity of human nature so well as in the light of the glory of Christ; but when he is seen as under. taking this tremendous work, and as putting his almighty shoulder to it, then we clearly perceive what help man needed, and how great was his fall. What a revelation it is when the light shines into the secret chambers of imagery, and the idol gods are made manifest in all their hideousness! May God send this light to many, that their ruin, their doom, their remedy, and their way of obtaining it, may be plainly perceived.

The light of the gospel also enlivens. No other light will give life to the dead. You may make the strongest light in the world flash frequently upon a corpse, but there will be neither breath nor pulse. But the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ brings life with it. "The life was the light of men." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Darkness is death, but the light of God is life. Let but this Sun of Righteousness arise, and he not only brings healing, but life. Shine, glorious Lord: let thy glory shine forth, and as it pours its brilliance into the minds of men, their dead hearts shall beat with the life of hope and holiness, and they will see the Lord!

This light is photographic-you get that in the neighborhood of the text, in the last verse of the third chapter. See the Revised Version: "But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." The light of the gospel of the glory of Christ imprints Christ's image upon the character of believers. We see him, and, seeing his love, we learn to love; seeing his life, we learn to live; seeing his full atonement, we hate evil; seeing his resurrection, we rise to newness of life. By the power of the Spirit working from day to day, we are quietly transformed from our old likeness, and conformed to the likeness of Christ, till our deformity is lost in a blessed comeliness of conformity to him. If we saw him more clearly and more constantly, we should grow into his likeness more rapidly. No sanctification is worth having but that which comes of communion with the holy Lord through the power of the Holy Ghost. You may read the biographies of good men, and you may copy them in all simplicity, and yet in the end you may become a caricature of perfection, and not the very image thereof. The perfect character of Jesus is yet the most easy to imitate. It is safe to copy Jesus; for in him is no

excess or defect; and, strange to say, that character which is in some aspects inimitable is in others the most imitable of all. I have often been depressed in view of the high character of certain saints whom I honor, because I have felt that I could never be like them, under any circumstances. I know one who is full of faith and of all goodness; but he is always solemn, and constantly absorbed “in meditations high.” I never could grow exactly like him; for there are certain mirthful elements in my constitution; and if they were taken away, I should not be the same man. When I look at my Lord, I see much in him that is supernatural, but nothing that is unnatural. We see in him humanity in perfection; but the perfection never conceals the humanity. He is so holy as to be a perfect model; so human as to be a model available for poor creatures such as we are. Beloved, the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ is photographic.

Yet, further, it creates peace and joy. This light brings delight. I cannot imagine a man unhappy who clearly perceives the light of the glory of Christ. Is Christ glorious? Then it does not much matter what becomes of me. Have you never heard of dying and wounded soldiers in Napoleon’s wars who still clung to their emperor with an idolatrous love in the hour of death? Lifting himself upon his elbow, the soldier of the Old Guard gave one more cheer for the great captain. If the dying warrior saw Napoleon riding over the field, he would with his last gasp cry, “Vive l’Empereur!” and then expire. We read of one, that when the surgeons were trying to extract a bullet from his chest, he said, “Go a little deeper, and you will find the Emperor.” He had him on his heart. Infinitely more commendable is the loyalty of the believer to the Lord Christ. Though we die in a ditch, what does it matter so long as “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”? It makes the sick saint well to think of the triumphs of his Lord. Have you never, when you have been sitting here heavy in heart, been borne aloft on wings of delight when we have been singing:

*“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all”?*

Surely there is a gospel in the glory of Christ to our sad hearts. That gospel lifts us out of the damps of doubt and fear into the clear blue of heavenly

fellowship. God grant that we may feel this uplifting more and more! Thus have I tried to describe the qualities of this light; but you must see it for yourselves.

III. And now I close by saying, LET US CONSIDER WHAT WE SHALL DO WITH THIS LIGHT.

Do with it! Look towards it. Let us first indulge ourselves with a long and steady gaze upon it. No man can look long at the sun, for it would blind him; but you may look at Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, as long as you please, and your eyes will grow stronger the longer you gaze on his perfections. I beseech you, beloved in the Lord, to get alone, and give yourself to meditate upon the glory of the once-despised Jesus. Track him from the cradle to the cross, from the cross to the crown. I cannot suggest to you any subject more instructive, more comforting, more ennobling than this. Look at this light; for it is a pleasant thing to behold this sun. Have you never heard how the Laplanders climb the hills when the sun is at last about to appear after the weary winter months? How they rejoice in the first beams of the rising sun! So let us rise to lofty meditation, and look to our Lord and Master, till we perceive his mediatorial glory, and are blessed thereby. Have you no time? Give up your newspaper for a week that you may sanctify the time to the noble end of considering the glory of your Lord; and I will warrant that you shall get a thousand times more out of such thought than from skimming the daily journal. Look unto Jesus, and the light within will grow like the glory of heaven.

Next, if you say that a man cannot always stand looking at the sun, I admit the statement, and change the advice. See all things by this light. How differently things look in sunlight to what they do by gaslight or candle-light! Let us regard all things by their appearance in the light of the glory of Christ. Then, if you hear a sermon which does not glorify Christ, it will be a lost discourse to you. Do not endure to see your Lord set in a low place. Hear no more of that talk which makes little of his blood and of his substitution. You read a book, a very clever book, but instead of honoring Christ, it glorifies human nature, and you have soon had enough of it. Only that is good gospel which glorifies Christ. In this light you see things truly. Many of the wise men of the period ought to be treated as Diogenes treated Alexander. The conqueror of the world said to the man in the tub, "What can I do for you?" He thought he could do everything for the poor philosopher. Diogenes only replied, "Get out of the sunlight." These wise

people cannot do us a greater favor than to remove their learned selves from standing between us and the sunlight of the ever-blessed gospel of the glory of Christ. These Alexanders may go on ruling the Christian world and the infidel world, but they have not conquered us; for our faith and joy lie outside the world, in yonder Sun of Righteousness, whose light is the rejoicing of our eyes.

Beloved, when asked what we should do with this light, I answer again, value it. Esteem the glorious gospel of Christ more than all besides. See at what rate the devil reckons it! He takes the trouble himself to come up from the bottomless pit to blind men's eyes, for fear they should see it. When he perceives the blaze of the gospel of the glory of God, he saith to himself, "Ah! they will be seeing the truth, and so they will escape from me. I must go myself, and blind them." So the "God of this age," as he esteems himself, comes to unbelievers, and blindfolds them in one way or another. He thrusts the hot iron of fatal unbelief upon men's inward eyes, and seals them in blackest night, lest they should see "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." Since, then, he thinks so much of this light, let us spread it with all diligence. If Satan hates it, let us love it. If this is the great gun which he dreads, let us wheel it to the front, and keep up a constant cannonade from it.

The gospel is our Mons Meg, the biggest gun in the castle; but it is not out of date: it will carry a ball far enough to reach the heart of the sinner who is furthest from God. Satan trembles when he hears the roar of the gospel gun. Let it never be silent.

Let us also hold it out with the greatest confidence. This light must win in the long run. If you came to this building in the middle of the night, somebody might say to you, "How can we get the darkness out of this building?" It would be a hopeless task. How could it be done? You cannot pump out the darkness; but if you fill the house with light the darkness will vanish of itself. Preach Christ, and away goes the god of this world. Exalt Christ, and down goes the devil. Beloved, let us persuade men to let this light shine around them. They cannot see it because of unbelief; but if it shines around them, it may bring them eyes. God the Holy Spirit blessing it, light will beget sight. Induce your friends to hear the gospel and read the Word of God, and who can tell but they will be saved?

And, lastly, let all who try to preach and teach keep Christ always in the front. The gospel must have Christ as its center and its circumference; in

fact, as its all in all. The gospel is not the gospel without Christ. The gospel will have no dominant idea in it but Christ. It is a noble steed, but it will bear no rider but him whose vesture is dipped in blood. I have read of the famous horse Bucephalus, that when he was brought out with his royal trappings upon him, he would not allow one even of the highest nobles of the court to mount him; he would carry no one but Alexander, the king. The gospel is glorious in its going when it bears Jesus in the saddle; but if you preach yourself, or human philosophy, the gospel will fling you over its head. Let us sing with the blessed Virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Savior." This is a gospel sonnet: this is a song which our Well-Beloved deserves of us. O ye preachers and teachers, lift up Christ! He is as the serpent on the pole, and all ho look to him shall live for ever. Look to him, all ye that are dying of serpent-bites; for looking ye shall live. God bless these words in which I have desired to glorify my Lord! Amen.

THE BELIEVING THIEF.

NO. 2078

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 7TH, 1 889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—Luke 23:42, 43.

SOME time ago I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief. I do not propose to do the same to-day, but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save, and of his abundant willingness to receive all that come to him, in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of grace as a solitary instance, any more than the salvation of Zacchaeus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular: no two are exactly alike, and yet any one conversion is a type of others. The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar; in point of fact, his case may be regarded as typical, rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair!

Remember, beloved friends, that our Lord Jesus, at the time he saved this malefactor, was at his lowest. His glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane, and before Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate; but it had now reached the utmost low-water mark. Stripped of his garments, and nailed to the cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd, and was dying in agony: then was he “numbered with the transgressors,” and made as the offscouring of all things. Yet, while in that condition, he achieved this marvellous deed of grace. Behold the wonder wrought by the Savior when emptied of all his glory, and hanged up a spectacle of shame upon the brink

of death! How certain is it that he can do great wonders of mercy now, seeing that he has returned unto his glory, and sitteth upon the throne of light! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If a dying Savior saved the thief, my argument is, that he can do even more now that he liveth and reigneth. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; can anything at this present time surpass the power of his grace?

It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable; it is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place, and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could you readily believe him to be the Lord of glory, who would soon come to his kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the apostle Paul were here, and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief, who believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ, and cried to him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief's faith was the more remarkable because he was himself in great pain, and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did, and seeing the Savior in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen.

Recollect, also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to swim with the current, and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord, and the great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning; his comrade caught the spirit of the hour, and mocked also, and perhaps he did the same for a while; but through the grace of God he was changed, and believed in the Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings; but he, dying thief as he was, made sure his confidence. Like a jutting rock, standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor, and defend his Lord. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold

confession. I am not going to praise the thief, or his faith, but to extol the glory of that grace divine which gave the thief such faith, and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Savior—that Savior to the uttermost, who, at such a time, could save such a man, and give him so great a faith, and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely, and in a climate so unpropitious.

Let us enter at once into the center of our sermon. First, note the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth; secondly, note that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of paradise; and then, thirdly, let us note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of grace. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when he was here He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees, but he was known as "the friend of publicans and sinners." How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that he will not refuse to associate with me. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me, he certainly did not make a choice which brought him credit. Do you think he gained any honor when he made a friend of you? Has he ever gained anything by us? No, my brethren; if Jesus had not stooped very low, he would not have come to me; and if he did not seek the most unworthy, he might not have come to you. You feel it so, and you are thankful that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." As the great physician, our Lord was much with the sick: he went where there was room for him to exercise his healing art. The whole have no need of a physician: they cannot appreciate him, nor afford scope for his skill; and therefore he did not frequent their abodes. Yes, after all, our Lord did make a good choice when he saved you and me; for in us he has found abundant room for his mercy and grace. There has been elbow room for his love to work within the awful emptinesses of our necessities and sins; and therein he has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

Lest any here should be despairing, and say, "He will never deign to look on me," I want you to notice that the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner, and no ordinary sinner. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him "a brigand"; and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their

robberies: he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government, making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested, and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just; for he himself confesses the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict, who had lain in the condemned cell, and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is he! What a stoop he makes to the very lowest of mankind! To this most unworthy of men the Lord of glory, ere he quitted life, spoke with matchless grace. He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the law, or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty; but if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart though our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to him, whoever you may be; for this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extreme of guilt, and who acknowledged that he had done so; he made no excuse, and sought no cloak for his sin; he was in the hands of justice, confronted with the death-doom, and yet he believed in Jesus, and breathed a humble prayer to him, and he was saved upon the spot. As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here, that none may mistake me. None of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ, however great your iniquity: if you believe in Jesus, he will save you.

This man was not only a sinner; he was a sinner newly awakened. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists, he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus: if he did not actually himself use opprobrious words, he was so far consenting thereunto, that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." Yet, now, on a sudden, he wakes up to the conviction that the man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over his head, and believes it to be true—"This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to his hands. My hearer, do you see this truth, that the moment a man knows Jesus to be the

Christ of God he may at once put his trust in him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose gospel was very doubtful, said, "Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years, believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?" I answer, "Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We do believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven, and that the old nature, which has gone on growing worse and worse, can receive its death-wound in a moment of time, while the life eternal may be implanted in the soul at once." It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side, and, believing, he looked to him and lived.

So now, my brothers, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction, if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life, yet if now you will believe that God's dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin, and will unfeignedly confess your sin and trust in him, you shall be immediately saved. Ay, while I speak the word, the deed of grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into the heaven with omnipotent power to save.

I desire to put this case very plainly: this man, who was the last companion of Christ upon earth, was a sinner in misery. His sins had found him out: he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons in this condition: they have lived a life of wantonness, excess, and carelessness, and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh; they dwell in an earthly hell, a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them, and set their blood on fire: they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. "Be sure your sin will find you out." It has found them out, and arrested them, and they feel the strong grip of conviction. This man was in that horrible condition: what is more, he was in extremis. He could not live long: the crucifixion was sure to be fatal; in a short time his legs would be broken, to end his wretched existence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live—only the space between noon and sundown; but it was long enough for the Savior, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ, if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with truth, but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again, but drop dead on the road, if you will now believe in the

Lord Jesus, you shall be saved: saved now, on the spot. Looking and trusting to Jesus, he will give you a new heart and a right spirit, and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ's grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before his death in company with a convicted felon, to whom he spoke most lovingly. Come, O ye guilty, and he will receive you graciously!

Once more, this man whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works. If salvation had been by good works, he could not have been saved; for he was fastened hand and foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two, but that was all; he could perform no acts; and if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was a sinner also, who could not exhibit a long-enduring repentance for sin, for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions, lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments, and he was on the borders of the grave. His end was very near, and yet the Savior could save him, and did save him so perfectly, that the sun went not down till he was in paradise with Christ.

This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colors none too black, was one 'who believed in Jesus, and confessed his faith. He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man, and he called him so; but he knew that he was also Lord, and he called him so, and said, "Lord, remember me." He had such confidence in Jesus, that, if he would but only think of him, if he would only remember him when he came into his kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of him. Alas, my dear hearers! the trouble about some of you is that you know all about my Lord, and yet you do not trust him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus, but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate: he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord's Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief, but he turned it into trust and prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Oh, that in his infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall: if you are not saved when you trust, I must myself also renounce all hope. This is all that we have done: we looked, and we lived, and we continue to live because we look to the living Savior, Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trusting him, and confessing that trust! Owning that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, you must and shall be saved.

In consequence of having this faith which saved him, this poor man breathed the humble but fitting prayer, "Lord, remember me." This does not seem to ask much; but as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom, he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Savior, that he felt that if the Lord would think of him his eternal state would be safe. Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power; but he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to him in the low dungeon; in his kingdom he remembers the moanings and groanings of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning, and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus?

Thus I have tried to describe the man; and, after having done my best, I shall fail of my object unless I make you see that whatever this thief was, he is a picture of what you are. Especially if you have been a great offender, and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things, you are like that malefactor; and yet you, even you, may do as that thief did; you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and commit your souls into his hands, and he will save you as surely as he saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." This means that if you come and trust him, whoever you may be, he will for no reason, and on no ground, and under no circumstances, ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you, and that if you come to him, you shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the truth.

Few persons have so much intercourse with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor cast down ones write to me continually. I scarce know why. I have no special gift of consolation, but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed, and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness would come to my Lord, and trust him, and enter into rest! Has he not said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Come and try him, and that rest shall be yours.

II. In the second place, NOTE, THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD'S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when he quitted the body which

hung on the cross. It would seem, from some Scriptures, that he descended into the lower parts of the earth, that he might fill all things. But he very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that he died, perhaps an hour or two before the thief, and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld, and was flashing through the gates of paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world. Who is this that entereth the pearl-gate at the same moment as the King of glory? Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honored martyr? Is it a faithful apostle? Is it a patriarch, like Abraham; or a prince, like David? It is none of these. Behold, and be amazed at sovereign grace. He that goeth in at the gate of paradise, with the King of glory, is a thief, who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way, and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily, there are last which shall be first!

Here I would have you notice the condescension of our Lord's choice. The comrade of the Lord of glory, for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire, is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Savior took him with him as a specimen of what he meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with me; he is a sample of the rest." Have you never heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of heaven, and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to glory? They entered the celestial portals, and there were great rejoicing and shouts. Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the prophets. He sighed, and said, "Alas! I am not one of those." He waited a while, and another band of shining ones drew nigh, who also entered heaven with hallelujahs, and when he enquired, "Who are these, and whence came they?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the apostles." Again he sighed, and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men white-robed, and bearing palms in their hands, who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs; and again he wept, and said, "I cannot enter with these." In the end he heard the voices of much people, and saw a greater multitude advancing, among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, and he espied especially the thief, who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in-a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by

grace.” Then was he exceeding glad, and said, “I can go with these.” Yet, he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company, and that they would enter heaven without song; instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of love; for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent.

I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners, in the company of Jesus, who now sets before us an open door.

While we are handling this text, note well the blessedness of the place to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Paradise means a garden, a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of heaven. We know that paradise means heaven, for the apostle speaks of such a man caught up into paradise, and anon he calls it the third heaven. Our Savior took this dying thief into the paradise of infinite delight, and this is where he will take all of us sinners who believe in him. If we are trusting him, we shall ultimately be with him in paradise.

The next word is better still. Note the glory of the society to which this sinner is introduced: “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” If the Lord said, “To day shalt thou be with me,” we should not need him to add another word; for where he is, is heaven to us. He added the word “paradise,” because else none could have guessed where he was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul; you are to dwell with the Altogether-lovely One for ever. You poor and needy ones, you are to be with him in his glory, in his bliss, in his perfection. Where he is, and as he is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning, and he says, “Poor sinner, thou shalt one day be with me.” I think I hear you say, “Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am”; but he replies—I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness will I draw thee, till thou shalt be with me where I am.

The stress of the text lies in the speediness of all this. “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” “To day.” Thou shalt not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years; but thou shalt be ready for bliss at once, and at once thou shalt enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of hell, but almighty mercy lifted him up, and the Lord said, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” What a change from the cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the

New Jerusalem! In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner, loathsome in his iniquity, when the sun was high at noon, to that same sinner, clothed in pure white, and accepted in the Beloved, in the paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Savior, what marvels thou canst work! How rapidly canst thou work them!

Please notice, also, the majesty of the Lord's grace in this text. The Savior said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Our Lord gives his own will as the reason for saving this man. "I say." He says it who claims the right thus to speak. It is he who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. He speaks royally, "Verily I say unto thee." Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose word there is power. What he says none can gainsay. He that hath the keys of hell and of death saith, "I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who shall prevent the fulfillment of his word?

Notice the certainty of it. He says, "Verily." Our blessed Lord on the cross returned to his old majestic manner, as he painfully turned his head, and looked on his convert. He was wont to begin his preaching with, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; and now that he is dying he uses his favourite manner, and says, "Verily." Our Lord took no oath; his strongest asseveration was, "Verily, verily." To give the penitent the plainest assurance, he says, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In this he had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in paradise with his Lord.

I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate in company with one to whom he had pledged himself. Why should not you and I pass through that pearl-gate in due time, clothed in his merit, washed in his blood, resting on his power? One of these days angels will say of you, and of me, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter heaven, what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian church Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted; but he had reached so great an age, and had been so gross a sinner, that the pastor and church doubted him. He gave,

however, clear proof of having undergone the divine change, and then there were great acclamations, and many shouts of “Victorinus has become a Christian!” Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day; would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, “Hallelujah! hallelujah!” if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvellous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus, and it is so.

III. Now I come to my third and most practical point: NOTE THE LORD’S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS.

The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you; but he cannot be allowed. Avaunt, thou deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at certain of you when the sermon is over, and whispers, “You see you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith; you may be forgiven on your death-bed.” Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching. Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because he is patient. Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent; but how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved-but the other thief was lost. One is saved, and we may not despair; the other is lost, and we may not presume. Dear friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, your damnation will be just; you will have brought it upon yourselves.

Consider now the teaching of our Lord; see the glory, of Christ in salvation. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away; his foot was on the doorstep of the Father’s house. Up comes this poor sinner the last thing at night, at the eleventh hour, and the Savior smiles and declares that he will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate he declares that this seeking soul shall enter with him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before: you know how apt we are to say, “You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off, and I cannot attend to you now.” Our Lord had his dying pangs upon him, and yet he attends to the perishing criminal, and permits him to pass

through the heavenly portal in his company. Jesus easily saves the sinners for whom he painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved, but you will not be one half so happy as he will be when he saves you. See how gentle he is!

*“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow;
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”*

He comes to us full of tenderness, with tears in his eyes, mercy in his hands, and love in his heart. Believe him to be a great Savior of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, “He is a great forgiver;” and I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away, and your sins pardoned once for all, if you now trust him.

The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is faith in its permitted attachment. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, “Lord, remember me.” Jesus might have said, “What have I to do with you, and what have you to do with me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One?” Many of you, good people, try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh! Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God we are degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, in the world, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Savior, seize upon him as your Savior. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, “*Latro laudabilis et mirabilis*,” a thief to be praised and wondered at, who dared, as it were, to seize the Savior for his own. In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours, and you have him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who make bold to take him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take him by force, as robbers take their prey; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth the violence of daring faith. Get him, and he will never get himself away from you. If you trust him, he must save you.

Next, notice the doctrine of faith in its immediate power.

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

“To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with him for ever in his glory. O dear hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning! God grant that you, by his rich grace, may be brought into salvation here, on the spot, and at once!

The next thing is, the nearness of eternal things. Think of that a minute. Heaven and hell are not places far away. You may be in heaven before the clock ticks again, it is so near. Could we but rend that veil which parts us from the unseen! It is all there, and all near. “To day,” said the Lord; within three or four hours at the longest, “shalt thou be with me in paradise;” so near is it. A statesman has given us the expression of being “within measurable distance.” We are all within measurable distance of heaven or hell; if there be any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length.

*One gentle sigh the fetter breaks,
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne.”*

Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things, because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them, since they are so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some hearer, now sitting in this place, may see, in his own spirit, the realities of heaven or hell. It has frequently happened, in this large congregation, that some one of our audience has died ere the next Sabbath has come round: it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near.

Furthermore, know that if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for heaven. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ; and, if so, be thankful for the privilege; but if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believeth in the Son of God is meet for heaven. Surely, if

anything beyond faith is needed to make us fit to enter paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here; but no, he is, in the morning, in the state of nature, at noon he enters the state of grace, and by sunset he is in the state of glory. The question never is whether a death-bed repentance is accepted if it be sincere: the question is-Is it sincere? If it be so, if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith, he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ, you will be admitted into paradise, even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets, and he will accept you through Jesus Christ, even though no act of grace has been visible to the eye of man.

I conclude by again saying that this is not an exceptional case. I began with that, and I want to finish with it, because so many demi-semi-gospellers are so terribly afraid of preaching free grace too fully. I read somewhere, and I think it is true, that some ministers preach the gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles, namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse free-grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin himself by perverting the gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent; but mine it is to set forth the gospel in all its fullness of grace, and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case-and our Lord does not usually act in such a way- there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Savior have whispered quietly to the dying man, "You are the only one I am going to treat in this way"? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favor to a person, I have to say, "Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me." If the Savior had meant this to be a solitary case, he would have faintly said to him, "Do not let anybody know; but you shall to day be in the kingdom with me." No, our Lord spoke openly, and those about him heard what he said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case, it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Savior had this wonder of grace reported in the daily news of the gospel, because he means to repeat the marvel every day. The bulk shall be equal to sample, and therefore he sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the

uttermost, for he saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which he cannot fulfill. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus, come and trust in him now. Trust him wholly; trust him only; trust him at once. Then will you sing with me-

*“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.”*

MAN UNKNOWN TO MAN.

NO. 2079

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 14TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.”-Proverbs 14:10.

YOU lift up your eyes, and you behold the stars. Surely, it is no idle imagination that these heavenly lights are distant worlds; but they are entirely separated from the inhabitants of this globe. You may peer at them through the telescope as long as you will, but you cannot enter into the feelings and pursuits of the dwellers in those worlds. You know nothing of the nearest planet, nor even of the world's own satellite. Some look up and declare that they see a man in the moon; it is the fancy of the ignorant. Others gaze at it till they discover huge volcanoes; it is the belief of the astronomer. But do what you will, you cannot enter into converse with the moon-dwellers; you cannot sympathize with their politics, nor share their domestic experiences. There is a great gulf fixed, and we who would pass to them, cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come from thence. In a great measure, such is our relation to our fellow-men. Men are microcosms, or little worlds: each man has his distinct sphere, wherein he dwells apart. We are so many worlds, and no one world of man exactly overlaps another. You cannot completely know your fellowman. All that you know concerning your fellows, and there is much which we can know, yet leaves a great deal as unknown to us as the fixed stars. There is a bitterness which each man feels alone, and a sweetness with which none can intermeddle. Every man is, in a measure, self-contained. His being is detached from other beings in certain matters. There are bonds which unite us to our fellow-man, and there is a solidarity about the race; but, for all that, each man is a distinct atom and item, and there are portions of his nature in which he does not touch his fellow-men at all, but displays his

own individuality and personality. Alone are we born, one by one; alone do we die, one by one. Though we shall stand with the great multitude before the throne of God, yet that judgment will be of individuals, and the sentence will be passed upon us one by one. Heaven will be an enjoyment which the believer himself possesses, or hell a misery which the impenitent himself endures. No one can merge himself in another man, nor so blend himself with the mass as to cease to be an individual existence. For weal or woe we are each one launched on the ocean of life in his own vessel. "Every man shall bear his own burden."

It is not surprising that we must be, in a measure, unknown to others, since we do not even fully know ourselves. Mysteries exist within our own bosoms, and abysses which we have never yet explored. Their own personal humanity is to many an utterly unknown land; and none know themselves so fully as they think. "Man, know thyself," is a precept much more profound than it appears. If we do not know ourselves, how shall we know our fellows?

Besides, there are points of individuality in each man which render him distinct from every other. No two women, although they be born of the same parents, have been trained in the same home, and have lived together in close companionship, will be found to be precisely alike. No man could find his exact counterpart among all the millions of the race. In some point or points each man is inscrutable by his companions. Either from one peculiar element which is in him, or from the peculiar proportions in which qualities are blended in his constitution, each man is a being after his own kind. How can we know beings so strangely diverse from each other?

Remember, also, that men in their highest and deepest conditions are remarkably secretive. The extreme heights and depths lie in darkness. A man may openly show himself in his ordinary life, and "wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at"; but when he reaches a special grief, the deep waters are still. The keenest griefs cut a narrow but deep channel, and as they wear into the inmost soul they flow without noise. The grief that babbles is a shallow brook. Silent sorrow is profound. Great misery is dumb with silence: it opens not its mouth. It is precisely the same in the higher ranges of joy. When once we soar into the heavenlies we are alone. As I rode along in the South of France, the driver, turning to me, exclaimed, "See, there are eagles!" "No," I said, "not eagles, for eagles fly alone." Seven or eight large birds together might be hawks, or falcons, or

kites, but not true eagles. A royal eagle soars alone into the blue: his mate may bear him company, but he has no crew of comrades around him. The child of God, the true eagle of the skies, when he rises into the diviner ranges of his spiritual life, is, and must be, alone. Like their Lord, all saints will have a winepress, which they must tread alone; even as they will have a Pisgah to which they will climb unattended. I marvel not that men hide those lives which God has hidden in Christ, and that their fellows see not the part of them which lives upon the invisible.

What is the practical use of these facts? We learn, I think, first, that we may not judge our brethren as though we understood them, and were competent to give a verdict upon them. Do not sit down, like Job's friends, and condemn the innocent. They, seeing Job covered with sores, and hearing him speak in bitterness, and knowing that God had taken away from him his property and his children, rushed to the conclusion that he was a hypocrite, abhorred of God, and that his heart was proudly rebellious against Jehovah. Never a more cruel judgment than that of men who are but half-informed upon the matter, and see before them a great man in adversity, a good man in dire distress. Had it not been for Job's prayers, they would not have escaped the anger of God; and yet they had dared to condemn the patient saint. Why do you sit down and write bitter things against your fellow-man? Be not sure that you can accurately judge any of his actions. Seen upon its surface, and by itself, his act may appear blameworthy; but the motive behind, ii known to you, would soften your censure, or even win your praise. Before the great Searcher of all hearts, things are not what they seem. As our law condemneth no man before it hears him, so let us not hasten to give sentence, since we have not yet heard, and in all probability never shall hear, all the ins and outs of his behavior. Well said our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Especially judge not the sons and daughters of sorrow. Allow no ungenerous suspicions of the afflicted, the poor, and the despondent. Do not hastily say they ought to be more brave, and exhibit a greater faith. Ask not-why are they so nervous, and so absurdly fearful? Nay, in this thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. I beseech thee, remember that thou understandest not thy fellow-man.

The next practical lesson is-if we desire to show sympathy to our brethren, let us not dream that this is an easy task. It is not a simple matter to square two unknown quantities-yourself and your friend. It would take me long to

learn to correspond with the inhabitants of the planet Mars: in all probability I should never achieve the task. I doubt not that there are many people so peculiar, both in their sorrows and in their joys, that I shall no more be able to commune with them in real sympathy than with the people of the aforesaid planet. Study the art of sympathy. It is easy enough for a captain of a steam-vessel to lay his ship alongside the quay; but if I had the doing of it I should probably break down the wall of the dock, and injure the vessel too. It is not easy to lay your soul side by side with another man's soul. It is difficult to do as Elijah did, when he laid himself upon the dead child, putting his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his hands upon the child's hands, and his feet upon the child's feet, and so, by God's power, breathing life into the cold form. It is not easy to be effectively sympathetic: some cannot manifest tenderness even when they have a mind to do so. I once knew a minister who had never suffered pain or illness in his life. I was unwell in his house, and he most kindly tried to sympathize with me. He did it almost as wonderfully as an elephant picks up a pin. It was a marvel that he could attempt a thing so altogether out of his line. Many of the trials which are experienced by Christians are sent as an education in the art of sympathy. Be thankful for that which enables you to be a minister of consolation to your fellow-men; but feel that in this matter you are a learner yet, and will frequently meet with sorrows and with joys into which you cannot enter.

One other lesson, and that is the great one we want, all of us, to learn. We all need sympathy; and as it is impossible that we should ever perfectly obtain it from our fellow-men, there remains but One who can give it to us. There is One who can enter the closet where the skeleton is locked up; One who is in touch with our unmentionable grief. He weighs and measures that which is too heavy for us to bear. That blessed One! Oh, that we may each one have him for our friend! Without him we shall lack the great necessity of a happy life! A personal Savior is absolutely needful to each of us to meet our individual personality. Jesus alone can intermeddle with our joy, and make it still more gladsome. He alone can understand our grief, and remove its wormwood. We must each one have Christ for himself. What is another man's Christ to me? What is the Christ who dies for all the world to anyone in that world until he takes a personal hold on him? "He loved me, and gave himself for me": that is the point of rest. What joy to touch the nail-print with your finger, and to cry, "My Lord, and my God"! This is the heart of the matter. The general doctrine of the gospel has great power

in it, but the sweetness lies in the particular application of it. What though the city be full of bread? if there be none upon thy table, thou wilt starve! What though the coffers of the bank should overflow with gold? yet, if thou hast nothing wherewith to purchase the necessities of life, thou wilt perish in thy poverty! We must have, not a national religion, but a personal religion; not a share in the ecclesiastical privileges of a church, but the privilege, each one for himself, of becoming a child of God. We must personally open the door to our Lord, and he must enter into us, and fill our entire nature with his divine indwelling. He must be formed in each one of us the hope of glory, or glory will never be ours. Be not deceived into joint-stock godliness: each man must come into individual relation with the living God in Christ Jesus.

Having already handled its general principle, we will now come close to our text in its two parts: the heart knows a bitterness peculiar to itself; and, secondly, the heart also knows a sweetness peculiar to itself.

I. THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS. This is true in a natural, common, and moral sense. I shall, as a rule, confine myself to the more spiritual application.

“The heart knoweth its own bitterness.” Concerning any man this is true. The shoe pinches on every foot, and that foot only knows where the pinch is felt by itself. Every shoulder bears its load, and that load is its own. Envy no man. He who seems most happy may be more fit for pity than for envy. His heart knows its own bitterness. Do not intrude into the hidden sorrows of any: it is enough for one heart to know its bitterness. May be, thou wilt increase misery if thou meddle with it. Leave that alone which thou canst not relieve. If thou canst help, lend thine attentive ear; but if thou canst not help, keep thy finger from the wound. Yet in thy very quietness feel inwardly a sense of brotherhood; for since this man’s heart has its own bitterness, and thou hast thine, it proves that thou and he are of the same fallen family, and both citizens of that world which brings forth thorns and thistles to all the fallen race. Thou art evidently sprung of the same Adam, since in the sweat of thy face thou must eat bread. You cannot bear another man’s burden, so as to take the weight from his shoulder. If a man had to carry a hundredweight of material upon his back, you could take fifty-six pounds of it for him, and he would have just so much the less to carry; but it is not so with mental and spiritual loads. You may cheer the heart of the burden-bearer, but his trouble is still the same—there is no

dividing his grief. When a heart is full of bitterness, thou mayest sip the wormwood, but the cup will still be nauseous to him that drinketh it. We cannot diminish the pain of another's wound, even though we should be wounded ourselves. Rest you certain that everywhere throughout this world every foot has its blister, every shoulder has its sore, every lot has its crook, every rose has its thorn.

Most solemnly this is true concerning the godless man. Of the irreligious man, the unbelieving man, it is surely true that "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." In the verse which precedes the text we read, "Fools make a mock at sin." Why do they so? It is to hide the uneasiness within their bosoms. Why does a man blaspheme? Why does he sneer at the truth? Why does he say evil things against the Christ of God? Why does he persecute godly people? Simply because these good things are a protest against his evil condition. He is disturbed by them, and is vexed by an uneasy feeling within his heart. The boy going through the churchyard at night, whistles to keep his courage up; and many of the braggart speeches of infidels are merely an attempt to conceal the unrest of heart which they would not like to confess. They are not happy: they cannot be happy. Can a creature be happy at war with its Creator? Can the breaker of the law be happy when justice pursues his every step? They are ill at ease, and we may truly say of each one of them, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." Be not afraid to approach them with the gospel: they are more ready to receive it than we imagine. When they roar most loudly there is little of the lion about them except the skin. Fear them not. They need the gospel even more than other people, and their attempt to bully their own consciences proves that they are somewhat aware of their want. Approach them without fear, and press them home with the word of the Lord; for this is true of them, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Next, how true this is concerning an awakened man! When conscience at last starts up from its dream, when the Holy Spirit begins to convince the man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; ah! then, beloved, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." I could not have told you, if you had bribed me to disclose the secret, the inward grief I felt when day and night God's hand was heavy upon me on account of sin. Before I found a Savior, the agony of my mind was at times indescribable, for I felt the pressure of the wrath of God, justly incurred by my iniquity. That verse which precedes my text, which we read as "Fools make a mock at sin," may be interpreted, "Fools mock at the sin offering"; or even "The sin offering is a mock to

fools.” Not only does the fool mock at the sin offering, but the sin offering becomes a vain thing to the fool. Religion refuses to yield comfort to godless men. When under deep conviction of sin I have known a sinner seek the Lord with hunger of spirit, and for a while he has been left in his hunger. He has turned to Jesus for comfort, and for a season he has thought that even Jesus repelled him. It is an awful time with the heart when it is obliged to confess, “I remembered God, and was troubled.” Have you never looked to the Cross, and even there beheld darkness, and not light? Have you never heard a voice saying, “Thou hast done despite to the precious blood, and it avails thee no more”? That voice is a lying voice; but, all the same, when it pierces the ear of conscience, it brings on an indescribable agony, and then with emphasis, “The heart knoweth its own bitterness.” Have any of you to whom I now speak at last conic to your senses; and do you wish to escape from the wrath of God, but cannot? Do you feel like a poor worm upon the ground, surrounded by a ring of fire, which you cannot overleap? I am grieved for you, my brother; but yet I am thankful that by such self-despair men are brought at last to trust in Jesus, cut off from sin by a terrible discovery of its evil, cut off from self by utter despair, and driven to cast themselves on the merit of the Savior. Fly to Jesus, and you shall be saved; but till you do so, your heart will be filled with a bitterness beyond expression.

Our text is certainly true concerning the backslider “The heart knoweth its own bitterness.” The proverbs appear at first sight to be thrown together without connection, but it is not so: when you come to close reading you will discover that they are threaded pearls, and that they are in proper position with regard to each other. In the 14th verse we read: “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.” So, whenever a backslider goes away from God, and plunges into sin, you may not dare to think that he is happy. In his case “The heart knoweth its own bitterness.” One of the most intense bitteresses that is ever experienced out of hell, is that of one who is awakened to see his heinous criminality, when having known the truth, and enjoyed meetings for prayer, and having been accustomed to speak about his own conversion, and to labor for the salvation of others, having known rapt fellowship with God, and having stood to the front in holy effort, after all, he has turned aside to filthiness, and dishonored the sacred name by which he was called. To dive from communion with God into gross sin! Ah, it were better for him that he had never been born! Even in the present

anguish of his heart he will often feel himself set up as a target for the arrows of the Almighty till they seem to drink his blood. When the gracious Lord grants him repentance, and he comes back, as I am persuaded he will, he will return with weeping, and with supplication, and eat again of the paschal lamb .with abundance of bitter herbs. Alas! even when he is restored, and grace has cleansed the stain, his old wounds will be sadly apt to bleed afresh. As men that break a bone in their youth will find strange pains in bad weather visiting the limb, so do old men feel the sins of their youth in their bones. Some go softly all their days, because of one grievous fall. Many a sigh and many a tear will start unawares because of former transgressions. Even the restored and pardoned heart knoweth its own bitterness.

Concerning the tried believer, this is very true. The afflicted is one whose heart knows its own bitterness. Brethren, many of the excellent of the earth are constitutionally sorrowful. Certain of our friends are always happy, not so much as the result of grace as the effect of nature. Some can bear a very much larger amount of pain than others without being depressed in spirit: this is a great boon. Many plants flourish best in the sunshine, but others love the shade. I have seen a fern which grows best in drip and gloom. God has made each one for its place. Some of the most beautiful flowers in the garden of the Lord grow under the shade of the tree of life. Bid all those who are timorous and sad to lift up their hearts and rejoice in God. But oh, do not condemn them while you encourage them! Cheer them, but do not censure them. The Lord knows that there may, in each case, be something about the body, something about the mind, or something about the condition, which makes it far less evil in these persons to be desponding than it might be in our cases—"The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Possibly there may be present among us servants of God who are wading through rivers of trouble. We do not know, dear friends, in the heyday of our joy, how closely we may be sitting to "a woman of a sorrowful spirit," or, "a man that hath seen affliction." We little know the burdens which are bowing our neighbors' backs. Patience gives them smiling faces, but pain wrings their hearts. Great losses and great crosses fall to the lot of great saints. Sickness is often a means of grace: those who have much grace may be called to endure much disease. There is a bitterness which some of you can scarcely understand: it is the loss of beloved children, especially the loss of an only child. Call to mind that word of Holy Scripture—"They shall be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his only son." Evidently this

is singled out as the keenest trial. The widow of Nain was feeling this grief, and this led our divine Master to bid the bearers stand still while he made the dead young man sit upright on the bier, and then delivered him to his mother. Bereavement of our loved ones is a heavy trial.

I must add here that your spiritual children can also make you feel a bitterness of the most intense order. This sorrow I know better than most men. Ah me! I bow in the dust when I think of those over whom I watched carefully and lovingly, who have turned against the cause I love as my own life. I thought that they would always preach to the glory of our Lord; but they have denied the faith, or sided with those who pervert the gospel of Christ. There may be sharper troubles, but I deeply pity those who have to endure them. In proportion as we have loved we mourn over Judas when he lifts up his heel against us, and Demas, who quits us for the present evil world. Cutting to the very marrow of the bone is the cruel spirit which, in its infatuation with evil, forgets not only the ties of gratitude, but even of common decency. Truly, days have passed over me in which the ploughers made deep their furrows; but I forbear: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

You see, then, that in the whole range of human society each heart knoweth its own bitterness; and I want to say this to you—the singularity of sorrow is a dream of the sufferer. Thou sittest alone and keepest silence, and thou sayest in thy heart, "I am the man that hath seen affliction"; but a host of others have seen affliction as well as thyself. Come down from thine elevation of special woe; indulge no longer the egotism of despair. Thou art but one pilgrim along the well-trodden Via Dolorosa. The stairway of grief is never without its passengers, and at their head is he whose name is "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Next, let me say, know thy sorrow well. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." It is always well when it does know it. If you can write down your grief in black and white, and describe it to yourself, the half of it will evaporate. A large proportion of our despondency is mythical: it is a kind of smoke or mist, which will disappear as the light falls on it. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me?" If you are wise, you will press home those two "whys," till you say to yourself, "There is no reason for being disquieted: hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him!"

Above all, remember that the cure for bitterness of heart is to take it to your Lord at once. Remember this word: "In all their affliction he was afflicted." No drop of gall was too bitter for his mouth: he tasted death itself. There is no corner in thy heart so dark but Christ hath been in as dark a room as that. All the thorns that pierce thy feet once pierced his head. Go thou to him with the full vessel of thy woe. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." Then shall you sing for joy of heart.

Enough, perhaps too much, upon that side of the text.

II. I wish I had an hour in which to speak to the full upon the second part of our subject. THE HEART KNOWS A SWEETNESS WHICH IS ALL ITS OWN. I will go into one or two of the forms of this sweetness.

You have tasted, many of you, the joy of pardoned sin. Do you remember when you were, for the first time, sure that God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven you? Could you tell anybody the joy you then felt? If you had tried to tell it out, you would have been compelled to use your legs to dance with, your hands to clap with, your eyes for tears of joy, and your countenance for beams of delight, as well as your tongue for speech. You would have had to speak by signs and gestures, as well as by words. In proportion as you were burdened before, you felt the bliss of rest. In proportion as the iron had entered into your soul before, the joy came leaping into your heart. You felt as if you wanted every pore of your skin to become a mouth for song to praise the redeeming Christ. Truly a stranger intermeddled not with such joy. Only the pardoned know the joy of pardon. I dare say, when you were first saved, others said that you were off your head. In the family it was suspected that poor John was not himself at all; he was so different from what he used to be. Oh, yes, the joy of pardoned sin is one with which a stranger cannot intermeddle.

Some time after your pardon you knew the bliss of vanquished evil. To be forgiven was not enough; you longed to be free from the dominion of sin. I do not know what your peculiar sin may have been, but, after a struggle, you overcame it, and you felt that the very desire for that sin was dead: you loathed it now as much as you loved it before. What a joy that was to you! It was like the triumph of Israel when they had come out of Egypt, and Egypt itself had been overthrown at the Red Sea. The depths had covered them, there was not one of them left. The mighty waters swept away Pharaoh and his captains. Do you recollect when the habit of

drunkenness went down into the sea? Do you remember when another vile propensity sank as lead in the mighty waters? Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore; then sang Moses and the children of Israel, saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." No Arabian in the wilderness could have entered into the joy of Miriam that day. No Edomite in the rock city could have joined in the ecstasy of the tribes who had newly come up dryshod from the depths of the sea. Joy over a conquered evil is a joy worth worlds, and no stranger can deprive us of it.

Beloved, since then you have known the joy of perfect reconciliation with God. When the prodigal laid his head in his father's bosom and his father's kiss was warm on his cheek, he could not have told how happy he felt. He was as a child which nestles down in its mother's bosom; or as a lamb which has been lost amidst the brake, and has been found by the shepherd, and carried home. What a joy to be "reconciled to God by the death of his Son"! I was once his enemy, and now I am his friend. He loveth me. With an everlasting love he loveth me. I will not attempt to describe the joy this confidence creates, because I should break down in the endeavor. The only way for anybody to understand the bliss of reconciliation is to be reconciled himself. I have told you, I think, the story of the boy at the mission-house to whom the missionary gave a piece of white sugar. He had never seen it before, and when he reached home, he told his father about this sweet stuff. His father said, "Is it like so-and-so?" The boy could not answer his father's questions, and so he ran down the street to the teacher, and said, "Teacher, please give me a lump of the white stuff for my father; he wants to know how sweet it is, and I cannot tell him. He must eat it for himself." Reconciliation to God has a sweetness in it which he only knows who enjoys it.

One of the most intense joys I have ever known is the joy of accepted service. The best picture I can show you of what that joy must be is Abraham. You have thought of Abraham going up to Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, bearing the fire, and the knife, and the wood. What a heavy heart the patriarch carried up that hill! You have sympathized with him. Will you try to realize his feeling when he comes down from the mount? Isaac is alive, God has revealed himself, Abraham is accepted. The man of God has been proved, and he has not been found wanting. What joy he feels to think that he has not withheld his son, his only son, from God! He has fulfilled to the utmost the divine command, painful as it was. There is no self-righteousness about the old man; but what an intense satisfaction in

feeling God has blessed him now with a sevenfold blessing, because, when brought to the test, he did not withhold his only son! Now, if you have served God, and you have felt the witness of the Spirit within you, that God has accepted you, your joy is such as nobody can damp or diminish. You will not say much about it, for other people would say, "He is proud of what he has done"; but for all that, you know what you know, and are not to be beaten out of the rest which comes of that knowledge.

Another great joy is that of answered prayer. When the Lord has heard our petitions, and given us the desire of our hearts, what joy fills our souls! Perhaps it is a personal prayer, like that of Hannah. She sat in the sanctuary, a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and the Lord granted her desire, and, in due time, she came thither a glad mother. Samuel was the reward of the travail of her prayer as well as the travail of her flesh. "For this child I prayed," said she. With what eyes she looked at him! There is never such a child as that which comes by the way of prayer. She added, "Therefore he shall be the Lord's as long as he liveth." This is a joy which a stranger cannot touch at all. It must also have been a stern joy which filled Elijah when he stood at the altar, after the priests of Baal and their clatter had all failed; when he stood up and said, "Let it be known, O Lord, that I have done all these things at thy word." When the live lightning leaped from heaven, and the sacrifice went up in sheets of flame, then I do not wonder that Elijah girded up his loins and ran, old man as he was, before the chariot of Ahab; for God had heard him, and he was great that day. A wonderful exhilaration lifted him out of himself, and he could do anything in the joy of his heart, because of his answered prayer. A stranger to prayer cannot know the joy of its success. He who knows what it is to wrestle will understand what it is to prevail. None can praise God like the man who has prevailed in prayer.

Further, dear brethren, there is a very extraordinary joy about usefulness. This is a joy which, thank God, I do know; but unless you know it, I cannot communicate its sweetness to you. It was but a poor child, or a humble servant girl, or a working-man in his fustian jacket; but as he took my hand and looked into my face, he said, "God Almighty bless you! You brought me to the Savior." I get registered letters containing money for the Lord's work; but the letters which are most precious are those which tell of conversions from great sin to the Lord Jesus, through the printed sermons. These are my golden wages. If I say much about this, some one will charge me with blowing my own trumpet; but truly this sacred bliss is one which

the successful worker has all to himself, and a stranger intermeddles not therewith. You Sunday-school teachers and other workers know what I mean. Pray that you may have more of it! This makes us eat bread in secret, meat which the world knows not of. Blessed be the name of the Lord who gives us this choice delight! As a shepherd rejoiceth when he brings back the sheep that was lost, so doth the winner of souls rejoice with a joy that he cannot communicate to others when he is the means of saving a soul from death, and covering a multitude of sins.

There is a joy in the heart, with which no stranger intermeddles, of another kind, namely, peace in the time of trouble. A painful operation is needful, and the patient hears the sad news without a murmur. I remember the picture of "the sleep of Argyle," who is to be executed in the morning, and he is found fast wrapt in sweet slumber when the gaoler enters the cell. Remember the martyr who had to be burned early in the morning, but needed to be shaken to awake him. Fancy being shaken in the morning with, "Get up, and be burned"! How blessed to leave all with the Lord, and bear his will with gladsome readiness. To be calm in the presence of pain, bereavement, slander, ridicule! This is delightful. The Lord breathes into his people his own peace. Many saints have their highest joy in their deepest trial: the Son of God is most with them in the burning fiery furnace. They are not disturbed in prospect of the worst of evils: their heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. God gives them a divine serenity, so that they can say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." The worldling cannot understand this! The saint is neither careless nor callous; he has both sense and sensitiveness; and yet he lives apart from carking care, and throws aside the fret which else would eat into his heart. The deeper the waters, the higher our ark mounts towards heaven. The darker the night, the more we prize our lamp. We have learned to sing in the dark with the thorn at our breast. This peace is a blessing with which no stranger intermeddles: this world cannot give it, and the world to come will not remove it. Nothing can disturb, much less destroy, the peace which Jesus gave us as his last legacy. It passes all understanding.

One other joy I must not overlook, it is the highest of all, and that is, the joy of communion with God. About this I hardly dare to speak. If you have ever read Rutherford's Letters, I will very much judge of you by how you

judge of them. If you know nothing at all about communion with God you will say, "The man is fanatical, carried away with rhapsodies. He almost utters blasphemy at times in his daring language." But if you have trodden the crests of the mountains of fellowship, and have bathed your forehead in the eternal sunlight, you will know that he does not exaggerate, but that he even falls short of the indescribable bliss of fellowship with God. Yes, we even now behold the Invisible and enjoy the Infinite. We pass the boundary which separates us from Immanuel's land, and enter into the ivory palaces, wherein our Lord doth make us glad. When the gales blow from the right quarter, they waft us odours from the beds of spices in the heavenly land, and then our abode is indeed the hill Beulah. Do you know what this means? If you do not, I could not tell you, for I should seem as one that talketh in a dream. Yet, whether you know it or not, some of us find heaven begun below. If you have ever tasted fellowship with God then there is a joy, as you know, with which no stranger intermeddles.

Beloved, if it be so, be much in the enjoyment of these delights! There is a secret parlour in the house of manhood, into which none can go but yourself and your Lord. Be sure that you enter there! Lock yourself in. I wish I might do so, and never come out again. Why should you always be moping down in the cellar? If you have a good house, why do you grope in the basement among the coals and the rats? If there be a room in the house that has a fine view, make it your sitting-room. I remember at Newcastle a person said, when letting a house, "You can from the upper window see Durham Cathedral on a Sunday." "Why on a Sunday? Cannot you see it on a Monday?" "No, because then the smoke of the furnaces darkens the air." There is a room in my heart from which I can see heaven at choice Sabbatic times, when I can get alone with my God, and forget the cares both of the church and of the world. A glimpse of heaven is a rare joy. Why should we not have it often? Come out of the cellar! Come upstairs! Come to the highest place upon the housetop, and look toward the New Jerusalem.

*"Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?"*

May the Comforter come and cheer us this morning with that joy which a stranger cannot know!

If you have never known these joys, I pray you seek them for yourself, each man, each woman of you. Remember, you must come to God alone,

by the exercise of personal faith and personal repentance; for neither in your sorrow, nor in your joy, can another man exactly fit with you. Therefore, come alone to the Lord Jesus, and come at once. Amen.

THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION.

NO. 2080

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 21ST, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.”-Philippians 3:10.

PAUL, in the verses before the text, had deliberately laid aside his own personal righteousness. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law.” It is insinuated in these days that a belief in the righteousness of faith will lead men to care little for good works, that it will act as a sedative to their zeal, and therefore they will exhibit no ardor for holiness. The very reverse is seen in the case of the apostle, and in the case of all who cast aside the righteousness of the law, that they may be clothed with that righteousness “which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Paul made a list of his advantages as to confidence in the flesh, and they were very great; but he turned his back upon them all for Christ’s sake; but accepting Christ to be everything to him, did he, therefore, sit down in self-content, and imagine that personal character was nothing? By no manner of means. A noble ambition fired his soul: he longed to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from the dead. He became a holy walker, and a heavenly runner, because of what he saw in Christ Jesus. Be you sure of this, that the less you value your own righteousness, the more will you seek after true holiness; the less you think of your own beauty, the more ardently will you long to become like the Lord Jesus. Those who dream of

being saved by their own good works are usually those who have no good works worth mentioning; while those who sincerely lay aside all hope of salvation by their own merits, are fruitful in every virtue to the praise of God. Nor is this a strange thing; for the less a man thinks of himself, the more he will think of Christ, and the more will he aim at being like him. The less esteem he has of his own past good works, the more earnest will he be to show his gratitude for being saved by grace through the righteousness of Christ. Faith works by love, and purifies the soul, and sets the heart a running after the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus; hence it is a purifying and active principle, and by no means the inert thing which some suppose it to be.

What, then, was the great object of the apostle's ardor? It was "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Paul already knew the Lord Jesus by faith; he knew so much of him as to be able to teach others. He had looked to Jesus, and known the power of his death; but he now desired that the vision of his faith might become still better known by experience. You may know a man, and have an idea that he is powerful; but to know him and his power over you, is a stage further. You may have read of a man so as to be familiar with his history and his character, and yet you may have no knowledge of him and of his personal influence over yourself. Paul desired intimate acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, personal intercourse with the Lord to such a degree that he should feel his power at every point, and know the effect of all that he had wrought out in his life, death, and resurrection. He knew that Jesus died, and he aspired to rehearse the history in his own soul's story: he would be dead with him to the world. He knew that Jesus was buried, and he would fain be "buried with him in baptism unto death." He knew that Jesus rose, and his longing was to rise with him in newness of life. Yes, he even remembered that his Lord had ascended up on high, and he rejoiced to say, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." His great desire was to have reproduced in himself the life of Jesus, so as to know all about him by being made like him. The best Life of Christ is not by Canon Farrar, or Dr. Geikie: it is written in the experience of the saint by the Holy Ghost.

I want you to observe, at the very outset, that all Paul desired to know was always in connection with our Lord himself. He says, "That I may know HIM, and the power of his resurrection." Jesus first, and then the power of his resurrection. Beware of studying doctrine, precept, or experiences apart

from the Lord Jesus, who is the soul of all. Doctrine without Christ will be nothing better than his empty tomb; doctrine with Christ is a glorious high throne, with the King sitting thereon. Precepts without Christ are impossible commands; but precepts from the lips of Jesus have a quickening effect upon the heart. Without Christ you can do nothing; but, abiding in him, you bring forth much fruit. Always let your preaching and your hearing look towards the personal Savior. This makes all the difference in preaching. Ministers may preach sound doctrine by itself, and be utterly without unction; but those who preach it in connection with the person of the blessed Lord have an anointing which nothing else can give. Christ himself, by the Holy Ghost, is the savor of a true ministry.

This morning we will confine our thoughts to one theme, and unite with the apostle in a strong desire to know our Lord in connection with the power of his resurrection. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was in itself a marvellous display of power. To raise the dead body of our Lord from the tomb was as great a work as the creation. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each one wrought this greatest miracle. I need not stay to quote the texts in which the resurrection of our Lord is ascribed, to the Father, who brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep; nor need I mention Scriptures in which the Lord is said to have been quickened by the Holy Spirit; nor those instances in which that great work is ascribed to the Lord Jesus himself; but assuredly the sacred writings represent the divine Trinity in Unity as gloriously co-operating in the raising again from the dead the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was, however, a special instance of our Lord's own power. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He also said, concerning his life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." I do not know whether I can convey my own thought to you; but what strikes me very forcibly is this—no mere man going to his grave could say, "I have power to take my life again." The departure of life leaves the man necessarily powerless: he cannot restore himself to life. Behold the sacred body of Jesus, embalmed in spices, and wrapped about with linen; it is laid within the sealed and guarded tomb; how can it come forth to life? Yet Jesus said, "I have power to take my life again"; and he proved it true. Strange power! That spirit of his, which had traveled through the underlands, and upwards to the eternal glory, had power to return, and to re-enter that holy thing which had been born of the virgin, and to revivify that flesh which could not see corruption. Behold the dead and buried One

makes himself to live! Herein is a marvellous thing. He was master over death, even when death seemed to have mastered him: he entered the grave as a captive, but left it as a conqueror. He was compassed by the bonds of death, but he could not be holden of them; even in his cerements he came to life; from those wrappings he unbound himself; from the close-fastened tomb he stepped into liberty. If, in the extremity of his weakness, he had the power to rise out of the sepulcher, and come forth in newness of life, what can he not now accomplish?

I do not think, however, that Paul is here thinking so much of the power displayed in the resurrection, as of the power which comes out of it, which may most properly be called, "the power of his resurrection." This the apostle desired to apprehend and to know. This is a very wide subject, and I cannot encompass the whole region; but many things may be said under four heads. The power of our Lord's resurrection is an evidencing power, a justifying power, a life-giving power, and a consoling power.

I. First, the power of our Lord's resurrection is AN EVIDENCING POWER. Here I shall liken it to a seal which is set to a document to make it sure. Our Lord's resurrection from the dead was a proof that he was the Messiah, that he had come upon the Father's business, that he was the Son of God, and that the covenant which Jehovah had made with him was henceforth ratified and established, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Thus said Paul at Antioch: "The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Nobody witnessing our Lord's resurrection could doubt his divine character, and that his mission upon earth was from the eternal God. Well did Peter and John declare that it was the Prince of life that God had raised from the dead. Our Lord had given this for a sign unto the cavilling Pharisees, that as Jonah lay in the deep till the third day, and then came forth, even so would he himself lie in the heart of the earth till the third day, and then arise from the dead. His rising proved that he was sent of God, and that the power of God was with him. Our Lord had entered into a covenant with the Father before all worlds, wherein he had on his part engaged to finish redemption and make atonement for sin. That he had done this was affirmed by his rising again from the dead: the resurrection was the attestation of the Father to the fulfillment on the part of the Second Adam of his portion in the eternal

covenant. His blood is the blood of the everlasting covenant, and his resurrection is the seal of it. "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" as the witness of the Eternal God to the glory of the Son.

So much is the resurrection the proof of our Lord's mission, that it falls to the ground without it. If our Lord Jesus had not risen from the dead, our faith in him would have lacked the corner-stone of the foundation on which it rests. Paul writes most positively: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." He declares that the apostles would have been found false witnesses of God, "Because," says he, "we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." The Resurrection of Jesus is the key-stone of the arch of our holy faith. If you take the resurrection away, the whole structure lies in ruins. The death of Christ, albeit that it is the ground of our confidence for the pardon of sin, would not have furnished such a foundation had he not risen from the dead. Were he dead still, his death would have been like the death of any other person, and would have given us no assurance of acceptance. His life, with all the beauty of its holiness, would have been simply a perfect example of conduct, but it could not have become our righteousness if his burial in the tomb of Joseph had been the end of all. It was essential for the confirmation of his life-teaching and his death-suffering, that he should be raised from the dead. If he had not risen, but were still among the dead, you might well tell us that we preach to you a cunningly devised fable. See, then, the power of his resurrection: it proves to a demonstration the faith once delivered to the saints. Supported by infallible proofs, it becomes itself the infallible proof of the authority, power, and glory of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

I beg you further to notice that this proof had such power about it to the minds of the apostles, that they preached with singular boldness. These chosen witnesses had seen the Lord after his resurrection; one of them had put his finger into the print of the nails, and others had eaten and drunk with him: they were sure that they were not deceived. They knew that he was dead, for they had been present at his burial: they knew that he lived again, for they had heard him speak, and had seen him eat a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. The fact was as clear to them as it was wonderful. Peter and the rest of them without hesitation declared, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." They were sure that they saw the man who died on Calvary alive again, and they could not

but testify what they had heard and seen. The enemies of the faith wondered at the boldness with which these witnesses spake; theirs was the accent of conviction, for they testified what they knew of a surety. They had no suspicion lurking in the background; they were sure that Jesus had risen from the dead, and this unquestionable certainty made them confident that he was indeed the Messiah and the Savior of men. The power of this fact upon those who believe it is great; but upon those who saw it as eye-witnesses it must have been inconceivably mighty. I wonder not that they defied contradiction, persecution, and even death. How could they disbelieve that of which they were so certain? How could they withhold their witness to a fact which was so important to the destiny of their fellow-men? In the apostles and the first disciples we have a cloud of witnesses to a fact more firmly attested than any other recorded in history; and that fact is the witness to the truth of our religion. Honest witnesses, in more than sufficient number, declare that Jesus Christ, who died on Calvary, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, did rise again from the dead. In the mouth of many witnesses the fact is established; and this fact established, proves other blessed facts.

If the cloud of witnesses might not seem sufficient in itself, I see that cloud tinged with crimson. Reddened as by the setting sun, the cloud of witnesses in life becomes a cloud of martyrs in death. The disciples were put to cruel deaths asserting still the fact that Jesus had risen from the grave. They and their immediate followers, nothing doubting, "counted not their lives dear to them" that they might witness to this truth. They suffered the loss of all things, were banished, and were accounted the offscouring of all things; but they could not, and would not, contra diet their faith. They were nailed to a cross, or bound to a stake to be burned; but the enthusiasm of their conviction was never shaken. Behold an array of martyrs reaching on through the centuries! Behold how they are all sure of the gospel, because sure of their Lord's endless life! Is not this a grand evidence of "the power of his resurrection"? The Book of Martyrs is a record of that power.

The resurrection of Christ casts a side-light upon the gospel by proving its reality and literalness. There is a tendency in this generation to spirit away the truth, and in the doing thereof to lose both the truth and its spirit. Our Lord's resurrection is a literal fact: when he rose from the dead he was no spectre, ghost, or apparition; but as he was a real man who died the cruel death of the cross, so he was a real man who rose again from the dead, bearing in

his body the marks of the crucifixion. His appearance to his familiar companions was to them no dream of the night, no fevered imagination of enthusiastic minds: for he took pains to make them sure of his real presence, and that he was really among them in his proper person.

*“A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died,
That same blest man arose from death:
The mark is in his side!”*

There was as much reality about the rising of our Lord as about his death and burial. There is no fiction here. This literal fact gives reality to all that comes from him and by him. Justification is no mere easing of the conscience, it is a real arraying of the soul in righteousness: adoption into the family of God is no fancy, but brings with it true and proper sonship. The blessings of the gospel are substantial facts, and not mere theological opinions. As the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was a plain visible matter of fact, so are the pardon of sin and the salvation of the soul matters of actual experience, and not the creatures of religious imagination.

Brethren, such is the evidencing power of the resurrection of Christ, that when every other argument fails your faith, you may find safe anchorage in this assured fact. The currents of doubt may bear you towards the rocks of mistrust; but when your anchor finds no other hold, it may grip the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This must be true. The witnesses are too many to have been deceived; and their patient deaths on account of their belief, proved that they were not only honest men, but good men, who valued truth more than life. We know that Jesus rose from the dead; and, whatever else we are forced to question, we have no question on that score. We may be tossed about upon the sea in reference to other statements, but we step to shore again, and find terra firma in this unquestionable, firmly-established truth: “The Lord is risen indeed.” Oh, that any of you who are drifting may be brought to a resting-place by this fact! If you doubt the possibility of your own pardon, this may aid you to believe, for Jesus lives. I read the other day of one who had greatly backslidden, and grievously dishonored his Lord; but he heard a sermon upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and it was life to him. Though he had known and believed that truth before, yet he had never realized it vividly. After service he said to the minister, “Is it so, that our Lord Jesus has really risen from the dead, and is yet alive? Then he can

save me.” Just so. A living Christ can say assuredly to you, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” He is able now to breathe into you the life eternal. The Lord is risen indeed: in this see the evidence of his power to save to the uttermost. From this first solid stone of the resurrection, you may go, step by step, over the stream of doubt, till you land on the other side, fully assured of your salvation in Christ Jesus.

Thus, you see, there is an evidencing power in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that you may feel it now. You cannot have too much holy confidence. You cannot be too sure. He that died for you is alive, and is making intercession for sinners. Believe that firmly, and realize it vividly, and then you will be filled with rest of heart, and will be bold to testify in the name of your Lord. The timid by nature will become lion-like in witnessing when the resurrection has borne to them overwhelming evidence of their Redeemer’s mission and power.

II. We will dwell next UPON THE JUSTIFYING POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, Under the first head I compared the resurrection to a seal; under this second head I must liken it to a note of acquittance, or a receipt. Our Lord’s rising from the dead was a discharge in full, from the High Court of Justice, from all those liabilities which he had undertaken on our behalf.

Observe, first, that our Lord must have fully paid the penalty due to sin. He was discharged because he had satisfied the claim of justice. All that the law could possibly demand was the fulfillment of the sentence, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” There is no getting away from that doom: life must be taken for sin committed. Christ Jesus is our substitute and sacrifice. He came into the world to vindicate the law, and he has achieved it by the offering of himself. He has been dead and buried, and he has now risen from the dead because he has endured death to the full, and there remaineth no more to be done. Brethren, consider this, and let your hearts be filled with joy: the penalty which has come upon you through breaches of the law is paid. Yonder is the receipt. Behold the person of your risen Lord! He was your hostage till the law had been honored and divine authority had been vindicated: that being done, an angel was sent from the throne to roll back the stone, and set the hostage free. All who are in him—and all are in him who believe in him—are set free by his being set free from the prison-house of the sepulcher.

*“He bore on the tree the ransom for me,
And now both the sinner and Surety are free”*

Our Lord has blotted out the record which was against us, and that in a most righteous way. Through the work of Jesus, God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Jesus died for our sins, but rose again for our justification. As the rising of the sun removes the darkness, so the rising of Christ has removed our sin. The power of the resurrection of Christ is seen in the justifying of every believer; for the justification of the Representative is the virtual justification of all whom he represents.

When our Lord rose from the dead, it was certified that the righteousness, which he came to work out, was finished. For what remained to be done? All was accomplished, and therefore he went up unto his Father's side. Is he toiling there to finish a half -accomplished enterprise? Nay, “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Our righteousness is a finished one, for Jesus quits the place of humiliation, and rises to his reward. He cried upon the cross, “It is finished”! and his word was true. The Father endorsed his claim by raising him from the dead. Put on, therefore, O ye faithful, this matchless robe of perfect righteousness! It is more than royal, it is divine. It is for you that this best robe is provided. Wear it, and be glad. Remember that in Christ Jesus you are justified from all things. You are, in the sight of God, as righteous as if you had kept the law; for your covenant Head has kept it. You are as justified as if you had been obedient unto death; for he has obeyed the law on your behalf. You are this day justified by Christ who is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Because he is delivered from the tomb, we are delivered from judgment, and are sent forth as justified persons. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Oh, that a deep peace, profound as the serenity of God, may fall upon all our hearts as we see Jesus risen from the dead.

His resurrection did not only prove our pardon and our justification, but it proved our full acceptance. “He hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Christ is never separated from his people, and therefore whatever he is, they are in him. He is the head; and as is the head, such are the members. I will suppose that a dead body lies before us. See, the head comes to life; it opens its eyes; it lifts itself; it rises from the ground; it moves to the table. I need not tell you that the arms, the feet, and the whole body must go with the head. It cannot be that there shall be a risen head, and yet the members

of the body shall still be dead. When God accepted Christ my head, he accepted me; when he glorified my head, he made me a partaker of that glory through my Representative. The infinite delight of the Father in his Only-begotten, is an infinite delight in all the members of his mystical body. I pray that you may feel the power of his resurrection in this respect, and become flooded with delight by the conviction that you are accepted, beloved, and delighted in by the Lord God. The resurrection will make your heart dance for joy if you fully see the pardon, justification, and acceptance which it guarantees to you. Oh that the Holy Spirit may now take of the things of Christ's resurrection, and apply them to us with justifying power!

III. Thirdly, let us now notice THE LIFE-GIVING POWER or THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

This will be seen if we perceive that our Lord has life in himself. I showed you this just now, in the fact that he raised himself from the dead. He took up the life which he laid down. He only hath immortality, essential and underived. Remember how he said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Do not say, "I believe in Christ, and desire life." You have it. Christ and life are not two things. He says, "I am the resurrection, and the life." If you have Jesus Christ, you have the resurrection. Oh, that you might now realize what power lies in him who is the resurrection and the life! All the power there is in Christ is there for his people. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell," and "of his fullness have all we received." Christ has a life in himself, and he makes that life to flow into every part of his mystical body, according to his own word, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Triumph, therefore, that you possess as a believer this day that same life which is inherent in the person of your glorious covenant Head.

Moreover, our Lord has power to quicken whom he will. If the Lord Jesus Christ will this morning speak to the most clay-cold heart in this assembly, it will glow with heavenly life. If the salvation of souls depended upon the preacher, nobody would be saved; but when the preacher's Master comes with him, however feeble his utterance, the life flashes forth, and the dead are raised. See how the dry bones come together! Behold how, at the coming of the divine wind, they stand upon their feet an exceeding great army! Our risen Redeemer is the Lord and Giver of life. What joy to Christian workers is found in the life-giving power of the resurrection! The

warrant of Jesus will run through the domain of death and set dead Lazarus free. Where is he this morning? Lord, call him!

This life, whenever it is imparted, is new life. In reading the four evangelists, have you never noticed the difference between Jesus after resurrection and before? A French divine has written a book entitled "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory." When I bought it, I hardly knew what the subject might be; but I soon perceived that it was the life of Jesus on earth after he was risen from the dead. That was, indeed, a glorious life. He feels no more suffering, weakness, weariness, reproach, or poverty: he is no more caviled at or opposed by men. He is in the world, but he scarcely seems to touch it, and it does not at all touch him. He was of another world, and only a temporary sojourner on this globe, to which he evidently did not belong. When we believe in Jesus, we receive a new life, and rise to a higher state. The spiritual life owes nothing to the natural life: it is from another source, and tends in another direction. The old life bears the image of the first and earthy Adam; the second life bears the image of the second and heavenly Adam. The old life remains, but becomes to us a kind of death: the new life which God gives is the true life, which is part of the new creation, and links us to the heavenly and divine. To this, I say, the old life is greatly opposed; but that evil life gets not the upper hand. Wonderful is the change wrought by the new birth! Faculties that were in you before are purged and elevated; but, at the same time, new spiritual faculties are conferred, and a new heart and a right spirit are put within us. Wonder at this—that the risen Christ is able to give us an entirely new life. May you know, in this respect, the power of his resurrection! May you know the peace, the repose, the power of your risen Lord! May you, like him, be a stranger here, soon expecting to depart unto the Father! Before his death our Lord was straitened, because his work was unaccomplished: after his death he was at ease, because his work was done. Brethren, we may enter into his rest, for we are complete in him! We are working for our Lord, as he was for his Father during the forty days; but yet the righteousness in which we are accepted is finished, and therefore we find rest in him.

Once more, the resurrection of Christ is operating at this present time with a quickening power on all who hear the Word aright. The sun is, to the vegetable world, a great quickener. In this month of April he goes forth with life in his beams, and we see the result. The buds are bursting, the trees are putting on their summer dress, the flowers are smiling, and even the seeds which he buried in the earth are beginning to feel the vivifying

warmth: they see not the lord of day, but they feel his smile. Over what an enormous territory is the returning sun continually operating! How potent are his forces when he crosses the line and lengthens the day! Such is the risen Christ. In the grave he was like the sun in his winter solstice, but he crossed the line in his resurrection; he has brought us all the hopes of Spring, and is bringing us the joys of Summer. He is quickening many at this hour, and will yet quicken myriads. This is the power with which the missionary goes forth to sow; this is the power in which the preacher at home continues to scatter the seed. The risen Christ is the great harvest-producer. By the power of his resurrection men are raised from their death in sin to eternal life.

I said eternal life, for wherever Jesus gives life, it is everlasting life. "Christ being risen from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him"; and as we have been raised in the likeness of his resurrection, so are we raised into a life over which death has no more dominion. We shall not die again, but the water which Jesus gives us shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

I wish I could venture further to unveil this secret force, and still more fully reveal to you the power of our Lord's resurrection. It is the power of the Holy Ghost; it is the energy upon which you must depend when teaching or preaching; it must all be "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." I want you to feel that power to-day. I would have you feel eternal life throbbing in your bosoms, filling you with glory and immortality. Are you feeling cast down? Are your surroundings like those of a charnel-house? When you return will you seem to go home to endure the rottenness and corruption of profanity and lewdness? Your remedy will lie in eternal life flooding you with its torrents, and bearing you above these evil influences. May you not only have life, but have it more abundantly, and so be vigorous enough to throw off the baneful influences of this evil world!

IV. The last point is THE CONSOLING POWER OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

This consoling power should be felt as to all departed saints. We are often summoned to the house of mourning in this church; for we seldom pass a week without one or two deaths of beloved ones. Here is our comfort—Jesus says, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise."

*“As the Lord our Savior rose
So all his followers must.”*

He is the first-fruits from among the dead. The cemeteries are crowded, precious dust is closely heaped together; but as surely as Jesus rose from the tomb of Joseph, all those who are in him shall rise also. Though bodies may be consumed in the fire, or ground to powder, or sucked up by plants, and fed upon by animals, or made to pass through ten thousand changeable processes, yet difficulties there are none where there is a God. He that gave us bodies when we had none, can restore those bodies when they are pulverized and scattered to the four winds. We sorrow not as those that are without hope. We know where the souls of the godly ones are: they are “for ever with the Lord.” We know where their bodies will be when the clarion blast shall wake the dead, and the sepulcher shall give up its spoils. Sweet is the consolation which comes to us from the empty tomb of Jesus. “God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.”

Here, too, is comfort in our inward deaths. In order that we should know the resurrection of Christ, we must be made conformable unto his death. Have we not to die many deaths? Have you ever felt the sentence of death in yourself that you might not trust in yourself? Have you not seen all your fancied beauty decay, and all your strength wither “like the leaves of the forest when autumn has blown”? Have not all your carnal hopes perished, and all your resolves turned to dust? If any of you are undergoing that process to-day, I hope you will go through with it, till the sword of the Spirit has slain you; for you must die before you can be raised from the dead. If you are undergoing the process of crucifixion with Christ, which means a painful, lingering death within, remember that this is the needful way to resurrection. How can you know your Lord’s resurrection except by knowing his death? You must be buried with him to rise with him. Is not this sweet consolation for a bitter experience?

I think there is here great consolation for those of us who mourn because the cause of Christ seems to be in an evil case. I may say to the enemy, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Alas! I cry with the holy woman, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him”! In many a pulpit the precious blood no longer speaks. They have taken the heart out of the doctrine of propitiation, and left us nothing but the name of it. Their false philosophy has overlaid the gospel, and crushed

out its life, so far as they are concerned. They boast that we are powerless: our protest is despised, error shows her brazen forehead, and seizes the strongholds of truth. Yet we despair not; nay, we do not even fear. If the cause of Christ were dead and buried, and the wise men had fixed the stone, and set their seal, and appointed their guards, yet, at the appointed hour, the Lord's truth would rise again. I am not uneasy about ultimate issues. The mischief for the time being grieves me; but the Lord will yet avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him. Jesus must live if they kill him; he must rise if they bury him: herein lieth our consolation.

This truth affords choice consolation to persecuted saints. In Paul's day to be a Christian was a costly matter. Imprisonment was the lightest of their trials: stripes and tortures of every kind were their portion. "Christians to the lions!" was the cry heard in the amphitheatre; and nothing pleased the people better, unless it was to see saints of God smeared with pitch from head to foot, and set on fire. Did they not call themselves the lights of the world? Such were the brutal pleasantries of the Romans. Here was the backbone of saintly comfort—they would rise again and share in the glory of their Lord for ever. Though they might find a living grave between a lion's jaws, they would not be destroyed: even the body would live again, for Jesus lived again, even the Crucified One in whom they trusted.

My brethren, my text is like a honeycomb dripping with honey. It has in it comfort for the ages to come. There will be a living issue for these dead times. Do you see that train steaming along the iron way? See, it plunges into a cavern in yonder hill! You have now lost sight of it. Has it perished? As on an angel's wing, you fly to the top of the hill, and you look down on the other side. There it comes steaming forth again from the tunnel, bearing its living freight to its destined terminus. So, whenever you see the church of God apparently plunging into a cavern of disaster or a grave of defeat, think not that the spirit of the age has swallowed it up. Have faith in God! The truth will be uppermost yet.

*"The might with the right,
And the right with the might shall be:
And, come what there may
To stand in the way,
That day the world shall see."*

The opposition of men might have proved a dark den in which the cause of God should have been hopelessly buried; but in the resurrection of our

Lord we see a cavern turned into a tunnel, and a way pierced through death itself. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" The Alps are pierced; God's way is made clear; he triumphs over all difficulties. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

That is my close. I desire that you should feel resurrection power. We have many technical Christians, who know the phrases of godliness, but know not the power of godliness. We have ritualistic Christians, who stickle for the outward, but know not the power. We have many moral religionists, but they also know not the power. We are pestered with conventional, regulation Christians. Oh, yes, no doubt we are Christians; but we are not enthusiasts, fanatics, nor even as this bigot. Such men have a name to live, and are dead. They have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it. I pray you, my hearers, be not content with a truth till you feel the force of it. Do not praise the spiritual food set before you, but eat of it till you know its power to nourish. Do not even talk of Jesus till you know his power to save. God grant that you may know the powers of the world to come, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION.

NO. 2081

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 30TH, 1886,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”-Joel 2:25.

LOST years can never be restored literally. Time once past is gone for ever. Let no man make any mistake about this, or trifle with the present moment under any notion that the flying hour will ever wing its way back to him. As well recall the north wind, or fill again the emptied rain-cloud, or put back into their quiver the arrows of the lord of day. As well bid the river which has hastened onward to the sea, bring back its rolling floods, as imagine that the years that have once gone can ever be restored to us. It will strike you at once that the locusts did not eat the years: the locusts ate the fruits of the years' labor, the harvests of the fields; so that the meaning of the restoration of the years must be the restoration of those fruits and of those harvests which the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time; but there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours. It is a pity that they should have been locust-eaten by your folly and negligence; but if they have been so, be not hopeless concerning them. “All things are possible to him that believeth.” There is a power which is beyond all things, and can work great marvels. Who can make the all-devouring locust restore his prey? No man, by wisdom or power, can recover what has been utterly destroyed. God alone can do for you what seems impossible; and here is the promise of his grace: “I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.”

By giving to his repentant people larger harvests than the land could naturally yield, God could give back to them, as it were, all they would have had if the locusts had never come; and God, by giving you larger grace in the present and in the future, can make the life which has hitherto been blighted, and eaten up with the locust, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm of sin, and self, and Satan, yet to be a complete, and blessed, and useful life, to his praise and glory. It is a great wonder; but Jehovah is a God of wonders, and in the kingdom of his grace miracles are common things.

We shall go into this subject, which I think must be very full of interest to those here present, who have wasted years to mourn over, since they have hitherto done nothing for God, nor even for themselves. The locust hath eaten everything. The prospect of recovering the wreckage of a life must be full of interest to them.

I. I shall first speak upon locust-eaten years. YEARS WHICH THE LOCUST HATH EATEN: what sort of years are these?

Well, first and darkest of all, there are the dead years of sin, of unregeneracy, impenitence, and unbelief. Without God, and without Christ, without life as to spiritual things! What a condition to be in! Oh, how many, many years have some passed in this horrible state! We all of us—those of us with whom God has dealt very graciously—always feel sorry that even our most early days should have been spent in sin. I was brought to know the Lord when I was fifteen years of age, and I have often said that I could wish I had known him fifteen years before. Oh, that one could, from the very earliest openings of one's eyes, have seen the light of the Eternal! Oh, that the first pulsing of life had been with Jesus! Oh, that the first flowing of the blood had been consecrated with the life of God within the soul! But yet I fear me there are very many to whom the idea of conversion in boyhood and youth seems almost too good a thing to be true, for they have now reached thirty, forty, fifty years of age, and are still unreconciled, unrenewed. I could weep over you! We frequently meet with people older still, whose many years have all been graceless, locust-eaten years. Ah me! how sad to be old and unsaved, feeble with age, and yet without strength unto God!

Now, remember that eating of the locust—that devouring of everything by the caterpillars—meant a laborious year, because that year the people ploughed and sowed, and watched their crops; although the labor was all in

vain. So, he that does nothing for God, and has no spiritual blessing, yet has to work and to labor. None toil harder than those who are the slaves of lust, pleasure, self, and Satan. These people often labor as in the very fire. The way of transgressors is hard. They have to toil and slave, and tug and strive; for the yoke of the world is not easy, and its burden is not light. But nothing comes of it; and this is the gall of the bitterness. One does not mind working when there is good reward for it; but to plough and sow, and then to reap nothing, because the locust hath eaten it! This is misery. The wage sweetens the toil; but when the wages is death, the toil is horrible. Yet this is the way of unregenerate men: they spend years in laboriously rebelling, and the harvest is not after their desire. They toil under the impulse of some strong desire, and their desire perishes. They work, they slave, but nothing comes of it. It is a year of labor, but it is labor in vain.

The locust year was particularly a year of great disappointment. They looked for a harvest; in fact, they seemed to see it spring up, and then it was devoured before their eyes. Even so the ungodly man, the man who has no faith in Christ, is often charmed with the prospect of a happiness which he never reaches. A little more, and he will be content. He gets a little more; and this increases his thirst for yet another draught from the golden cup. Run as we may, when the heart shoots with its far-reaching bow, still the arrows are beyond us. The student must know a little more; the ambitious must climb a little higher upon the ladder of honor, and then he will be at ease. He learns, he reaches the honor: but the ease is still as distant as ever-perhaps it is even further off. Earth's cups, when they seem most sweet, only hold brine-draughts, which beget a growing thirst. We swallow the horse-leech when we drain the chalice at the feasts of this world, and an insatiable craving follows. The locust-eaten years of sin are years of labor, and years of bitter disappointment.

And, alas! they are fruitless years. O sirs, what have some of you ever done in this world yet? I heard of one who had made a half a million of money, and he died, and a Christian man said, "Now, I call that man's life a dead failure. What has he done? He has accumulated what he could not enjoy. He has scraped it together, and he has made no use of it whatever." Such persons remind me of jackdaws, who will hoard I know not what-all kinds of treasures and trash; and what do they do but hide them in a hole behind the door? They cannot do anything with them. They have no sense to use them: whether they steal the abbot's ring or a bit of wire it is all the same to jackdaws; and to misers what can be the difference between a thousand

pounds or a thousand pins, since they use neither? Alas! many have the power to get, but have not the faculty to use what they have gotten. Their years are eaten with the locust.

Think again, are there not numbers of men that are just living strainers of bread and meat and beer, and that is all that you can say of them? They go to and fro in the world, but if they were tied neck and heels together, and flung into the Atlantic, nobody would miss them, except perhaps the poor wife and children, who would be more comfortable without them than with them. I speak not too severely, for we meet with many such persons, who are nature's blot, creation's blank. These are clouds without rain, wells without water: the wrappings and packings of what should have been useful lives. Why have they burdened the earth at all?

Others who are decent, respectable, quiet people, yet, what does their whole life come to? It is like some of those sponge plants, which appear very large when you have them in your hand, but you can compress them into the tenth part of nothing. Are not many mere blown-up appearances? It is a biggish sort of life, especially when the man himself describes it; but if it comes to the reality of it, the good that is done is nothing. God is not glorified, broken hearts are not healed, holiness is not extended: nothing is in the whole performance but the very reverse of what should have been. It is a drawback rather than an addition to that which is good in the world. What an awful thing for a man to have lived to be five-and-forty, and to have done nothing! If we will not spare a fruitless tree in the orchard, which, year after year, has brought forth nothing-if we quite understand the justice of the verdict, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"-surely such a sharp sentence, followed up by a swift blow of the axe, might go out against many here present, for hitherto they have been wasters, cumberers, doing nothing worth the doing. The locust hath eaten up every year that which they have ploughed and sown. Nothing has come of the whole of their lives. Yet, hearken to me. If you are led by grace to confess your sin, and turn unto the Lord your God, and "rend your hearts, and not your garments," even to you God can restore the years which the locust hath eaten. I beseech you, do hear this marvellous promise; and think of it, and do not miss of it from want of effort.

Now, very briefly let me mention that there is another sense in which the text can be used. There are some whose years have been eaten by the locust, through great dolor, and depression, and disappointment. They

remember those happy days of spring-tide when they greatly rejoiced in God; but by some means they dropped their confidence, and lost their hope; their sky was darkened, and the wintry winds of despair howled around them. I am grieved for dear friends on whom the chill of long depression has fallen with terrible power. I frequently meet with these sons and daughters of melancholy, and my sorrow is that I am so often unable to deal wisely with them. It has been my privilege in many cases to be the bearer of comfort, but in the very act my own soul has full often been heavily burdened. Very precious children of God may fall into the slough of doubt. Diamonds may be hidden away in dark mines. Some of God's rarest pearls lie deep in the dark waters. Now, you that are thus losing year after year, and sighing,

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?”*

do not lose all heart about it. Prisoners who have been immured till it almost seemed that the moss would grow on their eyelids, have yet been set free. Do not utterly despair, for here stands this gracious promise: “I will restore unto you the years which the locust hath eaten.” God can give you back all those years of sorrow, and you shall yet be the better for them. You shall have to thank God for all this sadness of heart. It is a strange story that I tell you. Peradventure you will not believe me to-night, but you shall live to see it true: God will grind sunlight for you out of your black nights: in yonder oven of affliction grace will prepare the bread of delight. I said this to a friend with whom I have often conversed—an earnest Christian woman, who for three years had defied all attempt to comfort her. We had prayed with her. Her godly, gracious husband, a minister of Christ, had laid out his heart to cheer her, but she had refused to be comforted; and yet, to my great joy, the other day I received a letter saying, “The Lord has opened the gates of my dungeon. My captivity has ended; and though I am sick in body, that does not matter, for I am restored in spirit.” Yes, the Lord can loose the captives, and he does it. There are dear children of God who have been ten or twenty years the victims of despair, to whom, nevertheless, this promise has, in the fullness of time, been sweetly fulfilled, “I will restore unto you the years which the locust hath eaten.”

And now, having given you those two versions of the text, let me give you another. I speak of those whose years have been wasted by their being in a

low state of grace. Many Christians are barely Christians. We may not be judges of our brethren; but if some professors are Christians, it is in a very small way. They remind me of the answer given by the American boy when he went to Sunday-school, and the teacher asked him, "Is your mother a Christian?" "Yes, sir," he said, "she is a Christian." "Is your father a Christian?" The boy answered, "Well, sir, he may be a Christian, but he has not worked at it much lately." We know quite a company of that kind: perhaps they fear the Lord, but they have not worked at it much: their religion has no practical power over them. Salvation is not by works; but when a man is saved, then straightway he begins to work for the Lord; and hence, where nothing is done for Jesus, we are apt to fear that nothing has been done by Jesus. There are talkers around us whose years are eaten up by the locust of idleness, the palmer-worm of worldliness, the canker-worm of frivolous amusement. They seem to be like Hosea's "silly dove," without heart. I do not judge them: but I look at them with pitying wonder. How can they be content to be such useless things? How can they be satisfied to be so neutral, so double-minded, when all around them the stern conflict rages? I wish they would give us a little more evidence upon which to judge whether they are for us or for our enemies. They do attend a place of worship, except it should be wet. They come to a prayer-meeting once in twelve months if any friend calls in and asks them to do so. They are glad that there is a Sunday-school connected with the church: they do not know what it is doing; they have never entered it. They love their minister, but do not contribute to his maintenance. They admire the doctrines of grace, but never attempt to spread them. In fact, they spend their time in diligently doing nothing, and in quietly wearing the cloak of a profession which has nothing in it. Well, now, dear friend, this is a wretched kind of thing. If you be a Christian, be a Christian. Let your heart be warm towards holy things, or else let them alone. Cold meats are well enough, but cold religion is the sickliest diet upon which a man can live. Serve up religion hot, sir, or not at all! If it grows lukewarm, neither God nor man will have it; for Jesus, who is both God and man, hath said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He cannot endure it, who is the most patient of all beings. The years which the locust hath eaten in some professors are far too many; and I would earnestly exhort any brother here who has had the locusts at him for a long time, and remind him that the promise stands, if he will avail himself of it, "I will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten." It is high time that he saw to it, for his case is a bad

one. It is ill to be trading so ill, when a merchandise so precious as time is being lost.

Once more only, lest by these varied instances I should weary you. There are some in whom their years have been eaten up by the locusts in a worse way than that of mere idleness, namely, by the sin of open backsliding. This is one of the plagues of the church of God. Alas, for the many who did run well, but have suddenly stopped, and run no longer in the divine road! This is our frequent sorrow, even to heartbreak. We believe in the perseverance of the saints, but many are not saints, and therefore do not persevere. Nominal saints exhibit no final perseverance. Saints who have only the name of saints, last but for a time, and then die away. In too many the life of God rather lingers than grows: their religion is so very weakly, that they exhibit rather the signs of disease than of health. They wander away from their Lord and Master, because they do not sufficiently feel his attractive power. Oh, that the Lord would be gracious in restoring such wanderers! Do I address any who have almost given up attendance on the means of grace? I know you have no comfort in such a course. I am sure, if you are a child of God, you cannot be happy in the world, you cannot be content while leaving Christ, but you are in a miserable way. Grace has spoiled you for the world, and it is of no use your attempting to get comfort out of it. Your only hope of happiness lies Godward. You must come back; you must come back to the good old way. Do not linger; but return at once. Every hour that you linger the locusts are eating up every green and fruitful thing within your spirit: why give the destroyer so much space? You are doing no good; you are getting no good; why remain as you are? You are doing mischief; you are grieving the Spirit of God; awake from so deplorable a state. You are not winning souls, but you are ruining souls by your inconsistency. God have mercy upon you! Come and receive his restoring mercy. He will not cast you away, but he bids me say to you, that if you turn to him according to the teaching of this chapter, he will yet restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. It is a great wonder; but you shall see it, if you will seek the Lord yet again.

So much then about locust-eaten years, for I want to get at a happier subject.

II. What does God say? “I will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten.” This is our second head: LOCUST-EATEN YEARS RESTORED.

Notice, this is divine work, "I will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten." You cannot get them back. Nobody can give them back to you. But the omnipotent Jehovah says, "I will restore them to you." Can you believe that? All things are possible with God. Those dead years, those doleful years, those desponding years, those idle years, those backsliding years-all the harvests of them, God can give them back to you. Look away from yourself, and trust in the miracle-working God, while you hear this word of promise, "I will restore unto you the years which the locust hath eaten."

But notice that this restoration follows upon a true and genuine repentance. Let me read the word of the Lord to you, and do you listen to it and obey it. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people."

Repent, then. This is the great teaching and operation of the gospel at its commencement upon the heart. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you," is its first cry from the wilderness. "Turn ye every man from his evil ways." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" To go on in impenitence is to miss the blessing of my text. To go on in spiritual deadness-to go on in backsliding- will never bring the restoration of lost years. But he that shall unfeignedly confess his sin, shall heartily hate it, and shall turn unto God through Jesus Christ, trusting in the precious blood of his atonement, shall receive the unspeakably precious benediction of the Lord, the Restorer. Such a man shall plead this promise with God, and have it graciously fulfilled to him: "I will restore unto you the years that the locust hath eaten." It is a very remarkable promise, but you see to whom it is given.

Yet linger a moment over this mystery of love. Picture the spirits of evil, year after year bearing away from the fields of human life all their harvests. Whither have they borne the precious products? Ask whither has the fire carried the forests it has devoured? or whither has the flood borne away

the navies it has swallowed up? To call back these harvests would be a task which only madness could attempt. Fly, swift-winged angels! but ye cannot overtake the spoilers, neither could your eyes of fire detect the caverns in which the robbers have stored their wealth. The fruits of wasted years are gone, gone past hope. Yet, behold, the Lord who called light out of darkness, and will yet bring forth life from the tomb, declareth that these long-lost spoils shall be restored! And shall it not be done? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Does not the very difficulty, yea impossibility of the enterprise, make it the more worthy of the Almighty? Herein is a marvellous thing, and herein is, therefore, a work fit for him who doeth great marvels. To him that believeth, all things are possible, and this also among the all things. Never was fairy tale more strange, or dream of Arabian nights more romantic; yet here it stands in sober words, and many a time in solid fact these words have been true. When we come into the region where the Lord worketh, we come at once into contact with miracles, and walk in the midst of marvels. Then, as we see grace upon grace, we have to cry, "O world of wonders! I can say no less."

This promise is only fulfilled by the exceeding grace of God; and it shall be my business for a minute to show you how the grace of God works it out. We take, for instance, a man or a woman who has been living for many years in known sin. Those years have all been wasted. How can God give us back the fruit of those wasted years? He can. He can. Seest thou that woman? She is a sinner, a common sinner of the town. She has spent her days, her nights, in wantonness. She comes into the room where the Savior lies reclining at the dinner table, and his feet are not far from the door. She bears a choice box of ointment; she has, besides that, eyes full of tears, and she stands behind him weeping. She washes his feet with those tears. She loosens the luxuriant tresses of her head, those nets in which she had entangled many a living soul, and she bows down, and wipes those feet which with her tears she washed. While she kisses them with her lips, she wipes them with her hair. Now, that woman, in that day, had through grace restored to her the years which the locust had eaten. Who shall dare to say that she stands second to anybody in the service of her Lord and Master? She loves much, because she has had much forgiven. And though I say not that the greatness of her sin could ever be an advantage, yet I do say that the greatness of her love, that springs out of the greatness of her Lord's forgiveness, did put her in the very front rank of those who served and loved him. She had been last, but mighty grace placed her among the first,

and she has never lost that leading position. And you, too, my hearer, though you may have been so many years a sinner, can yet be so transformed as to overtake the saints. God can give you such a true repentance, such a burning love, such an enthusiastic consecration, that during the rest of your days you shall make up for all those wasted years. The prey shall be taken from the mighty; years seized by evil shall be dragged back from the devil's den, and all the memory and outcome of them, transformed by the action of grace and gratitude, shall be laid as treasure at your Redeemer's feet. By giving you a deeper love, an intenser passion, a fuller consecration on account of the greatness of your sin, the Lord can restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. Did Paul lose those years in which he was a persecutor and injurious? Did not his quickened pace, and his deeper self-knowledge, make all the after years of his life ten times more full of power for good.

I will suppose the locust has eaten many years by your being in great sorrow: and I believe that the Lord can easily make up to you that grievous loss. The wear and fret of grief are very great, but there is a remedy. Have I not seen some that have passed through years of deep soul-distress, who have been all their lifetime much the better for it? They have been more able to sympathize with poor, tried saints. They have had a truer, deeper, richer experience; and, as a rule, they have known the gospel of Christ better, and they have had a tenderer love to him who brought them up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. Personally I have been much the gainer by my sad hours, and my sick days. I reckoned those times lost in which I was unfit for service; but I think I was in error, for I perceive that the fields which have lain fallow repay the unfertile season sevenfold when the bearing time returns. Do not think, dear children of God, if you have been for years in despondency, that it need turn out to be a total loss to you. It is a great evil and mischief; but God can restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. Your ills may become wells of comfort for others. The Lord can bring so much good out of the evil, so much light out of the darkness, so much joy out of the sorrow, that you shall one day say, "I thank God that I was shut up in Doubting Castle. I thank God I did sink in the deep mire where there was no standing, for he has restored to me the years that the locust hath eaten."

And if, again, the locust has eaten up your years through your being cold, and indifferent, and idle, God can recover you from this sad mischief. He will give you to repent bitterly of this great sin; for a great sin it is to lose a

moment which should be used for Jesus. But yet, if the Lord shall visit you with an intense hatred of such idleness, and sting you into action, and at the same time draw you by the cords of love into full consecration, you will, perhaps, by redoubled zeal, recover the lost seasons. Oh, that God would make it so with those who hitherto have sadly loitered in the race! Oh, that our smouldering logs would become flaming firebrands! Oh, that our sluggards could be aroused into enthusiasts!

I have known men living orderly and regular lives for many years, and yet they have done nothing for their Lord. Such sober people move on and on, and on and on; but make small progress. Steady, steady, steady, steady, jog-trot: life has no fire in it for them, and they know no reason for ardor. They never get out of breath with zeal. They never exhaust themselves with excitement. They accomplish little from want of fire. I have known a great many Christians, about whom I have never had any fear of their being consumed by their vehemence. They are such proper people, that even if the Lord himself were to come they would never cry "Hosanna!" in the street. They are never warmed into anything like enthusiasm: as soon hope to warm a marble statue. These are the folks who, after a while, grow negligent, and the locusts eat up the years of their regularity, and all the gains of their sobriety. I am sorry, indeed, to hear of a broken reputation, or a profession openly disgraced; but what a mercy it is when, even by this terrible means, dead professors are driven to turn to God with full purpose of heart! When these, who slept in all the chill propriety of spiritual death are aroused to seek the Lord penitently, we see no more of their jog-trot and dull common-place. If restored by a renewal of spiritual strength before they have openly declined into sin, the change is equally manifest. Now, they must fly like the wind, though before they could creep like the snail. They must do everything at a great heat, with all their heart, and soul, and strength. A month or so of such quickened, intense work full often effects more result than years of a slow, feeble, formal routine. Oh, to live while we live! Once fully charged with the divine power, we can achieve as much in a day as aforetime we performed in a year. If you, as a preacher, come back to God, and get the Holy Ghost to anoint you, one sermon preached in the power of the Holy Ghost will be worth ten thousand preached without it. If you, as a worker, go to your Sunday-school class with a divine anointing resting upon you, there will be more children brought to Christ by a little of your living, loving teaching than ever would have been by whole years of your unspiritual talk. Thus the Lord God can,

by his endowing us with greater power, and firing us with fuller zeal, restore to us the years that the locust hath eaten. The strong swimmer will soon recover the space through which he has drifted: when omnipotence is in every stroke, the man is soon back to his right place, and before long he is ahead of where he would have been.

Do not invite the locusts to come, I pray you, in the hope of getting back that which they devour. No; no; no-a thousand times No. We do not want the locusts at all: we cannot endure sin, or doubt, or trifling. We want every year to be fruitful-fruitful with a hundred-fold increase. But if the evils have come, let us turn to God with penitence and faith, and he can yet restore to us the losses they have caused.

I think I said, also, that, in certain cases, the locust has eaten up much of the fruitage of life, through backslidings. Many are in this case; but if they will return from their backslidings, the Lord can give them back whatever they have lost. I have known persons backsliding very sorrowfully, very much to the grief of the church; but God has visited them in grace, and brought them back, and they have been better men ever afterwards. Yes, I venture to say, even better men than before they actually offended. I have not been thankful for their open offense; but I have been very thankful for their restoration, and for the humility, and other graces which have been the result of their bitter experience. They used to be very top-lofty once; but now they carry no flags and banners. Such grand fellows they were! But after their wandering, when they came back, they were willing to be in the rear rank, and to do commonplace work. They were once very reserved, you could not get near them; but now they value a kind word, and return a loving salutation very gratefully. They are now more like their brethren, and more willing to be on a level with them, and yet their religion is a great deal deeper, and more sincere. They do not carry so much sail; but they have more cargo.

I have known some that, at first conversion, have not been very clear in the gospel, who have been made evangelical by their discoveries of their own need of mercy. They could not spell the word "grace." They began with a G, but they very soon went on with an F, till it spelt very like "freewill," before they had done with it. But after they have learned their weakness, after they have fallen into serious fault, and God has restored them, or after they have passed through deep depression of mind, they have sung a new song. In the school of repentance they have learned to spell. They began to

write the word “free,” but they went on from free, not to “will,” but to “grace,” and there it stood in capitals, “FREE GRACE.” By coming to know themselves, they came also to understand what grace meant, and they began to read their title written in the blood of Christ, instead of reading it in themselves; and they became clearer in their divinity, and truer in their faith than ever they were before. I do not want you to know the locusts of backsliding, but if they have ever come, and you have been eaten up by them, I pray that God may restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. I want you to lay hold of this promise, and go home, and plead with God that it may be fulfilled to you, so that the rest of your life may be so bright, and so clear, with the light of the Spirit of God, that, as much as possible, you may make up for lost time. God grant that your desire may be fulfilled!

III. I have done, when I have said just a word or two upon a third point, Here are locust-eaten years, and here are those locust-eaten years restored: and now, WHAT IS TO COME OF IT? If God restores to us the years that the locust hath eaten, he has done a great deal for us; but notice that he is able to do yet more, and will do it, for what doth he say? He says, in the twenty-sixth verse, “And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.” What a promise! You half-starved professors- you that are moping and mourning, who rise from the tables of the world unsatisfied-devoured with a griping hunger, if you turn to God with full purpose of heart, he will fill you with heavenly bread, and give you as real enjoyment as ever he gave to the best of his people. You, too, shall have your mouth satisfied with good things, and your youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s. The Lord does nothing by halves: if he receives a prodigal back, he does not send him down into the kitchen to be fed with broken victuals, but he receives him into the best parlour, and puts on him the best robe, and kills for him the fatted calf. O you cast-down and troubled ones, you do not know how near you are to joy! O sad hearts, the morning is breaking in the east for you! You are heavy to-night; and well you may be! You know your sin, and that may well make you mourn. But ring the bells of heaven, the sinner is repenting; and if he turns with repentance to God, the richest joy, the choicest covenant blessings, that belong only to the chosen family, shall be his portion at once. Is it not written, “Ye shall eat in plenty, and shall be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord.”

What shall come of it? Why this shall come of it-that you who have had the most to mourn over shall be among the loudest singers. You shall praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you. You will cry, with tears running down your cheeks, "Who is a God like unto thee, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?" I was a sinner up to the neck in filth; a despairing soul shut up in the densest darkness; but he has washed me, and he has brought me out into the light, and put a new song into my mouth. He is a glorious God-this God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray you may have intense enjoyment of his marvellous grace, and may pour forth your whole souls in his praise.

Next, you shall have most clear and sweet communion with God. Hear what the prophet further says, "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else, and my people shall never be ashamed." Wonderful! wonderful! that a far-off, outcast sinner should know his covenant God, and should say, "He is my God," and should enter into fellowship with him, and should enjoy all the privileges of a friend of God. Wonderful that all his fear should be gone, and that he should instead be full of holy confidence, and have a right to hold up his head and never be ashamed! It shall be so, dear hearer. True repentance shall bring rest to you. Only trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and your fellowship shall be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ henceforth and evermore.

And then, best of all, the anointing shall come upon you. You remember how the chapter goes on to say that God would pour out his spirit upon all flesh, so that even the handmaiden and the servant, the very least of the people of God, should be moved by the Spirit of God to speak in God's name, and should be enabled to realize things which before had been deemed mere visions and dreams. I hope that the Lord has some here, at this hour, who did not know him when they came within these walls, who, at this time, shall be called by his grace, and before long shall begin to tell to others what the Lord has done for them. O Lord, find ministers among these miserable sinners! Raise up for thyself witnesses from among these careless youths! I think I see the angel even now, and hear the voice from off the throne, crying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Oh, that one of the seraphims might take from off the altar the living coal, and touch some unclean lip, and inflame some cold heart, and make the purified man to answer, "Here am I, send me." Then shall you be sent to tell abroad the riches of the grace of which you have tasted- the freeness of the love

which has been manifested to you. May the Lord grant it! May the locusts all be blown away by a strong north wind, and never darken the air again! May these wasted years all be given back to you, and may you become the Lord's living, loving servants from this time forth. Oh, for the highest form of spiritual life! Oh, for the greatest possible usefulness! Oh, for grace to fill out our poor shrivelled lives till they arrive at a heavenly fullness! Oh, for the sacred breath of God to fill out all the canvas of our capacity! Lord, the sail flaps; the boat scarcely moves; we lie becalmed in indolence! Send us a breeze, we pray thee. Grant us the wind of thy Spirit to fill out every sail, that we may fly over the waves. Amen.

A FREE GRACE PROMISE

NO. 2082

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 5TH, 1888.

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING,
OCTOBER 11TH, 1888.

*“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call
on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” — Joel 2:32.*

VENGEANCE was in full career. The armies of divine justice had been called forth for war: “They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war.” They had invaded and devastated the land, and turned the land from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. All faces gathered blackness: the people were “much pained” The sun itself was dim, the moon was dark, and the stars withdrew themselves: the earth quaked, and the heavens trembled. At such a dreadful time, when we might least have expected it, between the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning, was heard this gentle word, “It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” Let us carefully read the passage: “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” In the worst times that can ever happen, there is still salvation for men. When day turns to night, and life becomes death, and the staff of life is broken, and the hope of man has fled, there still remains in God, in the person of his dear Son, deliverance to all those who will call upon the name of the Lord. We do not know what is to

happen: reading the roll of the future, we prophesy dark things; but still this light shall always shine between the rifts of the cloud-wrack:
 “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

This passage was selected by the apostle at Pentecost to be set in its place as a sort of morning star of gospel times. When the Spirit was poured out upon the servants and the handmaids, and sons and daughters began to prophesy, it was clear that the wondrous time had come, which had been foretold so long before. Then Peter, as he preached his memorable sermon, told the people, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”; thus giving a fuller and yet more evangelical meaning to the word “delivered.” “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered” from sin, death and hell — shall, in fact, be so delivered as to be, in divine language, “saved” — saved from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin, saved from the wrath to come. These gospel times are still the happy days in which “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” In the Year of Grace we have reached a day and an hour in which “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To you at this moment is this salvation sent. The dispensation of immediate acceptance proclaimed at Pentecost has never ceased: its fullness of blessing has grown rather than diminished. The sacred promise stands in all its certainty, fullness, and freeness: it has lost none of all its breadth and length: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I have nothing to do to-night but to tell you over again the old, old story of infinite mercy come to meet infinite sin — of free grace come to lead free will into a better line of things — of God himself appearing to undo man’s ruin wrought by man, and to lift him up by a great deliverance. May the Holy Spirit graciously aid me while I shall talk to you very simply, thus: —

I. First, THERE IS SOMETHING ALWAYS WANTED. That something is deliverance, or “salvation.” It is always wanted. It is the requisite of man, wherever man is found. As long as there are men on the face of the earth, there will always be a need of salvation. I could wish that some of you had the instructive schooling which I received last Tuesday, when I was sitting to see enquirers. I had a very happy time in seeing a very large number of persons who had joyfully put their trust in Christ; but among them were some who could not trust — poor hearts, conscious of sin, though they did not think they were. These seemed bound hand and foot, shut up in the prison of despair, and darkened in heart. I tell you, I felt dismayed as they

baffled me: I felt a fool as they refused to be comforted. I could do nothing for them so far as argument and persuasion were concerned. I could pray with them: I could also set them praying, and they did pray: but they were cases in which, unless the arm of God were revealed, I was as powerless with them as when a man stands weeping over the body of his dead wife, and would restore her to life even at the cost of his own life, and yet he could produce neither hearing nor motion. Dear friends, while we mingle only with those who are saved, we forget how much need there is still of a divine salvation. If we could go through London, into its dens and slums, we should think very differently of human need from what we do when we simply come from our own quiet domestic circle, and step into our pew and hear a sermon. The world is still sick and dying. The world is still corrupting and rotting. The world is a ship in which the water is rising fast, and the vessel is going down into the deep of destruction. God's salvation is wanted as much to-day as when the spirit preached it in Noah's day to the spirits in prison. God must step in, and bring deliverance, or there remains no hope.

Some want deliverance from present trouble. If you are in this need to-night through very sore distress, I invite you to take my text as your guide, and believe that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Depend upon it, in any form of distress, physical, mental, or whatever it may be, prayer is wonderfully available. "Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." If you are so down at the heel that your foot is on the bare pavement; if you have come to this place in bodily sickness, and feel as if you should die on the seat in which you sit; if there be no physician to help you, and no friend to stretch out a generous hand, call upon God, I beseech you. You have come to the end of men; you are now at the beginning of God. See whether your Maker will forget you. See whether the great, generous heart of God does not still beat tenderly towards the sorrowful and the afflicted. If I saw you lying wounded on a battle-field, bleeding to death, I would say, "Call upon God." If I knew that you had not a house to go to, but must walk these streets all night, I would say, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." I will take the text in the broadest sense, and bid you, nay, command you, to test your good and gracious God in the day of your calamity.

This is true whenever you come into a position of deep personal distress, even though it should not be of a physical kind. When you do not know

how to act, but are bewildered and at your wits' end, when wave of trouble has followed wave of trouble till you are like the sailor in the storm who reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man; if now you cannot help yourself, because your spirit sinks and your mind fails, call upon God, call upon God, call upon God! Lost child in the wood, with the night fog thickening about you, ready to lie down and die, call upon your Father! Call upon God, thou distracted one; for "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." In the last great day when all secrets are known, it will seem ridiculous that ever persons took to writing tales and romances; for the real stories of what God has done for those who cry to him are infinitely more surprising. If men and women could but tell in simple, natural language how God has come to their rescue in the hour of imminent distress, they would set the harps of heaven a-ringing with new melodies, and the hearts of saints on earth a-glowing with new love to God for his wonderful kindness to the children of men. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! Oh that we could abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness to ourselves in the night of our weeping!

The text holds good concerning deliverance from future troubles. What is to happen in the amazing future we do not know. Some try to startle and alarm you with prophecies of what will soon happen; concerning whom I would warn you to be well upon your guard. Take small heed of what they say. Whatever is to happen according to the Word of God — if the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood — if God shall show great wonders in the heavens, and the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, yet remember that though you will then assuredly want deliverance, deliverance will still be near at hand. The text seems put in a startling connection in order to advise us that when the worst and most terrible convulsions shall occur, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The star Wormwood may fall, but we shall be saved if we call upon the name of the Lord. Plagues may be poured out, trumpets may sound, and judgments may follow one another as quickly as the plagues of Egypt, but "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." When the need of deliverance shall apparently increase, the abundance of salvation shall increase with it. Fear not the direst of all wars, the bitterest of all famines, the deadliest of all plagues; for still, if we call upon the Lord, he is pledged to deliver us. This word of promise meets the most terrible of possibilities with a sure salvation.

Yes, and when you come to die, when to you the sun has turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, this text ensures deliverance in the last dread hour. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. Amid the pains of death, and the gloom of departure, you shall enjoy a glorious visitation, which shall turn darkness into light, and sorrow into joy. When you wake up amid the realities of the eternal future there will be nothing for you to dread in resurrection, or in judgment, or in the yawning mouth of hell. If you have called upon the name of the Lord, you shall still be delivered. Though the unpardoned are thrust down to the depth of woe, and the righteous scarcely are saved, yet you who have called upon the name of the Lord must be delivered. Stands the promise firm, whatever may be hidden in the great roll of the future; God cannot deny himself, he will deliver those who call upon his name.

What is wanted, then, is salvation; and I do think, beloved brethren, that you and I who preach the Word, and long to save souls, must very often go over this grand old truth about salvation to the guilty, deliverance to all who call upon the name of the Lord. Sometimes we talk to friends about the higher life, about attaining to very high degrees of sanctity; and all this is very proper and very good; but still the great fundamental truth is, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." We urge our friends to be sound in doctrine, and to know what they do know, and to understand the revealed will of God; and very proper is this also; but still, first and foremost, this is the elementary, all-important truth — "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To this old foundation truth we come back for comfort. I sometimes rejoice in God, and joy in the God of my salvation, and spread my wings and mount up into communion with the heavenlies; but still there are other seasons when I hide my head in darkness, and then I am very glad of such a broad, gracious promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I find that my sweetest, happiest, safest state, is just as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner, to call upon the name of the Lord, and take mercy at his hands as one who deserves nothing but his wrath, while I dare hang the weight of my soul on such a sure promise as this, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Get where you may, however high your experience; be what you may, however great your usefulness, you will always want to come back to the same ground upon which the poorest and weakest of hearts must stand, and claim to be saved by almighty grace, through simply calling upon the name of the Lord.

Thus have I said enough upon what is always wanted — this deliverance, this salvation.

II. Now, secondly, let us attentively observe THE WAY IN WHICH THIS DELIVERANCE IS TO BE HAD. Help us, blessed Spirit, in this our meditation. It is to be had, according to the text, by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Is not the most obvious sense of this language, prayer? Are we not brought to the Lord by a prayer which trusts in God — by a prayer which asks God to give the deliverance that is needed, and expects to have it from the Lord, as a gift of grace? It amounts to much the same thing as that other word, “Believe and live”; for how shall they call on him of whom they have not heard? And if they have heard, yet vain is their calling if they have not believed as well as heard. But to “call on the name of the Lord,” is briefly to pray a believing prayer; to cry to God for his help, and to leave yourself in his hands. This is very simple, is it not? There is no cumbersome machinery here, nothing complex and mysterious. No priestly help is wanted, except the help of that great High Priest, who intercedes for us within the veil. A poor, broken heart pours its distress into the ear of God, and calls upon him to fulfil his promise of help in the time of need — that is all. Thank God, nothing more is mentioned in our text. The promise is — “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

What a suitable way of salvation it is to those who feel that they can do nothing! Ah, dear hearts! if we had to preach to them a very difficult and elaborate salvation, they would perish. They have not the mind, some of them, to follow our directions if they were at all intricate; and they have not enough hope to venture upon anything that looks at all difficult. But if it be true that “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” this method is simple and available, and they catch at it. He can pray to God who can do nothing else. Thank God, he need not want to do anything else; for if he can call for help, he gets deliverance, and, in that deliverance, he gets all that he will ever want between this place and heaven. He has called upon the name of the Lord, and all that is deficient in him will be supplied for time and for eternity. He will be delivered, not only now, but throughout all the future of his life, until he sees the face of God in glory everlasting.

The text, however, contains within it a measure of specific instruction: the prayer must be to the true God. “Whosoever shall call on the name of

Jehovah shall be saved.” There is something distinctive here; for one would call on Baal, another would call on Ashtaroth, and a fourth on Moloch; but these would not be saved. The promise is special: “Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” You know that triune name, “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost “ — call upon it. You know how the name of Jehovah is set forth most conspicuously in the person of the Lord Jesus — call upon him. Call upon the true God. Call upon no idol, call on no Virgin Mary, no saint, dead or living. Call on no image. Call on no impression of your mind! Call upon the living God — call upon him who reveals himself in the Bible — call upon him who manifests himself in the person of his dear Son; for whosoever shall call upon this God shall be saved. You may call upon the idols, but these will not hear you: “Ears have they, but they hear not. Eyes have they, but they see not.” You may not call upon men, for they are all sinners like yourselves. Priests cannot help their most zealous admirers; but, “Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” Mind, then, it is not the mere repetition of a prayer as a sort of charm, or a piece of religious witchcraft, but you must make a direct address to God, an appeal to the Most High to help you in your time of need. In presenting true prayer to the true God you shall be delivered.

Moreover, the prayer should be intelligently presented. We read, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.” Now, by the word “name” we understand the person, the character of the Lord. The more, then, you know about the Lord, and the better you know his name, the more intelligently will you call upon that name. If you know his power, you will call upon that power to help you. If you know his mercy, you will call upon him in his grace to save you. If you know his wisdom, you feel that he knows your difficulties, and can help you through them. If you understand his immutability, you will call upon him, as the same God who has saved other sinners, to come and save you. It will be well, therefore, for you to study the Scriptures much, and to pray the Lord to manifest himself to you that you may know him; since, in proportion to your acquaintance with him, will you with greater confidence be able to call upon his name. But, little as you may know, call on him according to the little you do know. Cast yourself upon him, whether your trouble to-night be external or internal; but especially if it be internal, if it be the trouble of sin, if it be the burden of guilt, if it be a load of horror and fear because of wrath to come, call upon the name of the Lord, for you shall be delivered. There stands his promise. It is not, “He may be delivered,” but he “shall be.” Note well the

everlasting “shall” of God — irrevocable, unalterable, unquestionable, irresistible. His promise stands eternally the same. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This way of salvation, by calling upon the name of the Lord, glorifies God. He asks nothing of you but that you ask everything of him. You are the beggar, and he is the benefactor. You are in the trouble, and he is the Deliverer. All you have to do is to trust him, and beg of him. This is easy enough. This puts the matter into the hands of the Lord, and takes it out of your hands. Do you not like the plan? Put it in practice immediately! It will prove itself gloriously effectual.

Dear friends, I speak to some whom I know to be now present, who are under severe trial. You dare not look up. You seem to be given up; at any rate you have given yourself up; and yet, I pray you, call upon the name of the Lord. You cannot perish praying; no one has ever done so. If you could perish praying, you would be a new wonder in the universe. A praying soul in hell is an utter impossibility. A man calling on God and rejected of God! — the supposition is not to be endured. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” God himself must lie, he must quit his nature, forfeit his claim to mercy, destroy his character of love, if he were to let a poor sinner call upon his name, and yet refuse to hear him. There will come a day, but that is not now — there will come a day in the next state when he will say, “I called, but ye refused” ; but it is not so now. While there is life there is hope. “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart,” but call upon God at once; for this warrant of grace runneth through all the regions of mortality, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I recollect a time when, if I had heard a sermon on this subject, putting it plainly to me, I should have leaped into comfort and light in a single moment. Is it not such a time with you? I thought, I must do something, I must be something, I must in some way prepare myself for the mercy of God. I did not know that a calling upon God, a trusting myself in his hand, an invocation of his sacred name, would bring me to Christ, the Savior. But so it stands, and happy, indeed, was I when I found it out. Heaven is given away. Salvation may be had for the asking. I hope that many a captive heart here will at once leap to loose his chains, and cry, “It is even

so. If God has said it, it must be true. There it is in his own Word. I have called upon him, and I must be delivered.”

III. Now I come to notice, in the third place, THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THIS PROMISE AND THIS DELIVERANCE WILL BE GIVEN. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

According to the connection, the people had been greatly afflicted — afflicted beyond all precedent, afflicted to the very brink of despair; but the Lord said, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Go down to the hospital. You may select, if you please, the hospital which deals with the effects of vice. In that house of misery you may stand at each bed and say, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” You may then hasten every door of every cell, yes, even at the grating of the condemned cell, if there lie men and women there given up to death, and you may with safety say to each one, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

I know what the Pharisees will say — “If you preach this, men will go on in sin.” It has always been so, that the great mercy of God has been turned by some into a reason for continuing in sin; but God (and this is the wonder of it) has never restricted his mercy because of that. It must have been a terrible provocation of Almighty grace when men have perverted his mercy into an excuse for sin, but the Lord has never even taken the edges off from his mercy because men have misused it: he has still made it stand out bright and clear: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Still he cries, “Turn and live.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Undimmed is that brave sun that shineth on the foulest dunghills of vice. Trust Christ, and live. Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be pardoned; yea, you shall be rescued from the bondage of your sin, and be made a new creature, a child of God, a member of the family of his grace. The most afflicted, and the most afflicted by sin, are met with by this gracious promise, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Yes, but there were some, according to Joel, who had the Spirit of God poured out upon them. What about them? Were they saved by that? Oh no! Those who had the Spirit of God so that they dreamed dreams and saw visions, yet had to come to the palace of mercy by this same gate of

believing prayer — “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Ah, poor souls! you say, to yourselves, “if we were deacons of churches, if we were pastors, oh, then we should be saved!” You do not know anything about it: church officers are no more saved by their office than you are by being without office. We owe nothing to our official position in this matter of salvation: in fact, we may owe our damnation to our official standing unless we look well to our ways. We have no preference over you plain folks. I do assure you, I am quite happy to take your hand, whoever you may be, and come to Christ on the same footing as yourself.

*“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”*

Often, when I have been cheering up a poor sinner, and urging him to believe in Christ, I have thought, “Well, if he will not drink this cup of comfort, I will even drink it up myself.” I assure you, I need it as much as those to whom I carry it. I have been as big a sinner as any of you, and therefore I take the promise to myself. The divine cordial shall not be lost: I will accept it. I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and faint, and sick, and full of sin, and I trusted him on my own account, and found peace — peace on the same ground as my text sets before all of you. If I drink of this consolation, you may drink it too. The miracle of this cup is that fifty may drink, and yet it is just as full as ever. There is no restriction in the word “Whosoever.” You maidens that have the Spirit of God upon you, and you old men that dream, it is neither the Spirit of God nor the dreaming that will save you; but your calling on the sacred name. It is, “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Also, there were some upon whom the Spirit of God did not fall. They did not speak with tongues, nor prophesy the future, nor work miracles; but though they did none of these marvels, yet it stood true to them — “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What though no supernatural gift was bestowed, though they saw no vision and could not speak with tongues, they called upon the name of the Lord, and they were saved. There is the same way of salvation for the little as well as for the great, for the poorest and most obscure as well as for those that are strong in faith, and lead the hosts of God to the battle.

But some were terribly afraid. I should think that a good many must have been sadly alarmed when there were in the earth blood and fire and pillars

of smoke, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood: but, afraid as they were, if they called upon the name of the Lord, they were delivered. Now, Mrs. Much-afraid, what do you say to that? Mr. Ready-to-halt, did I hear your crutches sounding in the aisle just now, or was it an umbrella? Never mind, if you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved. You that are so feeble in mind, so weak, so wounded that you hardly dare to trust, still it is written for your sakes also, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Ah!" says another, "but I am worse than that. I have no good feelings. I would give all that I have to own a broken heart. I wish I could even feel despair, but I am hard as a stone." I have been told that sorrowful story many times, and it almost always happens that those who most mourn their want of feeling are those who feel most acutely. Their hearts are like hell-hardened steel, so they say; but it is not true. But if it were true, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Do you think that the Lord wants you to give yourself a new heart first, and that then he will save you? My dear soul, you are saved when you have a new heart, and you do not want him to save you then, since you are saved. "Oh, but I must get good feelings!" Must you? Where are you going for them? Are you to rake the dunghill of your depraved nature to find good feelings there? Come without any good feeling. Come just as you are. Come, you that are like a frozen iceberg, that have nothing about you whatever, but that which chills and repels; come and call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be saved. "Wonders of grace to God belong." It is not a small gospel that he has sent us to preach to small sinners, but ours is a great gospel for great sinners. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Ah, well!" says one, "I cannot think it is meant for me, for I am nobody." Nobody, are you there? I have a great love for nobodies. I am worried with somebodies, and the worst somebody in the world is my own somebody. How I wish I could always turn my own somebody out, and keep company with none but nobodies! Then I should make Jesus everybody. Nobody, where are you? You are the very person that I am sent to look after. If there is nothing of you, there shall be all the more of Christ. If you are not only empty, but cracked and broken; if you are done for, destroyed, ruined, utterly crushed and broken, to you is this word of salvation sent: — "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I have set the gate wide open. If it were the wrong track, all the sheep would go through; but as it is the right road, I may set the gate open as long as I will, but yet the sheep will shun it, unless thou, Great Shepherd, shall go around the field to-night, and lead them in. Take up in thine own arms some sheep that thou hast purchased long ago with thy dear heart's blood — take him upon thy gracious shoulders, rejoicing as thou doest it, and place him within the field where the good pasture grows.

IV. I want you to dwell for a minute upon THE BLESSING ITSELF.

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” I need not say much about it because I have already expounded it. It is a very good rule, when a man makes you a promise, to understand it in the narrowest sense. It is fair to him that you should do so. Let him interpret it liberally, if he pleases; but he is actually bound to give you no more than the bare terms of his promise will imply.

Now, it is a rule which all God's people may well practice, always to understand God's promises in the largest possible sense. If the words will bear a bigger construction than at the first sight they naturally suggest to you, you may put the larger construction upon them. “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.” God never draws a line in his promise, that he may go barely up to it; but it is with the great God as it was with his dear Son, who, though he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet spent the greater part of his time in Galilee, which was called, “Galilee of the Gentiles”; and went to the very verge of Canaan to find out a Canaanitish woman, that he might give her a blessing. Thou mayest put the biggest and most liberal sense, then, on such a text as this, for Peter did so. The New Testament is wont to give a broader sense to Old Testament words; and it does so most rightly, for God loves us to treat his words with the breadth of faith.

Come, then, if you are the subject of the judgments of God; if you believe that God's hand has visited you on account of sin, call upon him, and he will deliver you both from the judgment, and from the guilt that brought the judgment — from the sin, and from that which follows the sin. He will help you to escape. Try him now, I pray you.

And if your case should be different: if you are a child of God and you are in trouble, and that trouble eats into your spirit, and causes you daily wear of spirit and tear of heart — call upon the Lord. He can take away from you the fret and the trouble too. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the

Lord shall be delivered.” You may have to bear the trouble, but it shall be so transformed as to be rather a blessing than an evil, and you shall fall in love with your cross, since the nature of it has been changed.

If sin be the great cause of your present trouble, and that sin has brought you into bondage to evil habits, if you have been a drunkard and do not know how to learn sobriety, if you have been unchaste and have become entangled in vicious connections; call upon God, and he can break you away from the sin, and set you free from all its entanglements. He can cut you loose to-night with the great sword of his grace, and make you a free man. I tell you that, though you should be like a poor sheep between the jaws of a lion, ready to be devoured immediately by the monster, God can come and pluck you out from between the lion’s jaws. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Only call upon the name of the Lord! Call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered.

Yes, and I repeat what I said just now. If you have come under the power of disease, if you are near to die, if already death has written his name legibly upon your body, and you are afraid of death and hell; yet call upon the name of the Lord, and you shall be delivered at this last moment. Even now, when the pit gapes wide for you, and like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, you are ready to go down alive into it, call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered.

If I were telling you what I had made up, or hammered out of my own brain, I could not expect you to believe me; but, as this Book is inspired, and as Joel spoke in the name of God, and as the apostles spoke in the name of Jehovah, this is the very truth of the God that made the heavens and the earth. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

V. In conclusion, I must remind you of one mournful thought. Let me warn you OF THE SADLY COMMON NEGLECT OF THIS BLESSING. You would think that everybody would call upon the name of the Lord; but read the text, “For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said.” It shall be there as the Lord hath said. Will they not have it then? Notice! “And in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” It seems to shrivel me up altogether, that word “remnant.” What! Will they not come? Are they madmen? Will they not come? No, only a remnant; and even that remnant will not call upon the name of the Lord until first God calls them

by his grace. This is almost as great a wonder as the love which so graciously invites them. Could even devils behave worse? If they were invited to call upon God, and be saved, would they refuse?

Unhappy business! The way is plain, but “few there be that find it.” After all the preaching, and all the invitation, and the illimitable breadth of the promise, yet all that are saved are contained “in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” Is not our text a generous invitation; the setting open of the door, yea, the lifting of the door from off its hinges, that it never might be shut? And yet “broad is the gate, and wide is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.” There they come, streams of them, hurrying impatiently, rushing down to death and hell — yes, eagerly panting, hurrying, dashing against one another to descend to that awful gulf from which there is no return! No missionaries are wanted, no ministers are needed to plead with men to go to hell. No books of persuasion are wanted to urge them to rush onward to eternal ruin. They hurry to be lost: they are eager to be destroyed. As when the wild bisons of the prairie hasten onward in their madness, until they come to a great gulf, and then rush down headlong, a cataract of life leaping to death, so is it with the sons of men! They choose their own delusions, and covet their own damnations, and that without end. This is all that sovereign mercy rescues after all — a remnant, and that remnant only because the arm of the Lord is revealed, and a miraculous power exerted upon their wills. This is the misery of it, that the guilty are not willing to be parted from their sins. They will not seek that which alone is their life, their joy, their salvation. They prefer hell to heaven, sin to holiness. Never spake the Master a word which observation more clearly proves than when he said, “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” You will attend your chapels, but you will not call on the Lord. Jesus cries, “Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; but ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” You will do anything rather than come to Jesus. You stop short of calling upon him. O my dear hearers, do not let it be so with you! Many of you are saved; I beseech you intercede for those who are not saved. Oh, that the unconverted among you may be moved to pray. Before you leave this place, breathe an earnest prayer to God, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I need to be saved. Save me. I call upon thy name.” Join with me in prayer at this moment, I entreat you. Join with me while I put words into your mouths, and speak them on your behalf — “Lord, I am guilty. I

deserve thy wrath. Lord I cannot save myself. Lord, I would have a new heart and a right spirit, but what can I do? Lord, I can do nothing, come and work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure.

*“Thou alone hast power, I know,
To save a wretch like me;
To whom, or whither should I go
If I should turn from thee?”*

But I now do from my very soul call upon thy name. Trembling, yet believing, I cast myself wholly upon thee, O Lord. I trust the blood and righteousness of thy dear Son; I trust thy mercy, and thy love, and thy power, as they are revealed in him. I dare to lay hold upon this word of thine, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Lord, save me to-night, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Joel 2:11-32.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK” — 282, 544, 275.

ONE LOST SHEEP.

NO. 2083

DELIVERED ON LORD' S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 28TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them he gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”-

Matthew 18:12, 13.

THIS passage occurs in a discourse of our Savior against despising one of those little ones that believe in him. He foretells a dreadful doom for those who, in their contempt for the little ones, cause thorn to stumble; and he forbids that contempt by a variety of forcible arguments, upon which we cannot now dwell. There is a tendency, apparent at this present time, to think little of the conversion of individuals, and to look upon the work of the Holy Spirit upon each separate person as much too slow a business for this progressive age. We hear grand theories of a theocracy of a kind unknown to Holy Scripture: a semi-political dominion of the Lord over masses wherein the individuals are unregenerate. We listen to great swelling words about the uplifting of nations and the advancement of the race; but these lofty ideas do not produce facts, nor have they any moral power. Our “cultured” teachers, weary of the humdrum work of bringing individual souls into light; they pine to do it wholesale, by a far more rapid process than that of personal salvation. They are tired of the units, their great minds dwell upon “the solidarity of the race.” I am bold to assert that if ever we despise the method of individual conversion, we shall get into an unsound order of business altogether, and find ourselves wrecked upon the rocks of hypocrisy. Even in those right glorious times when the gospel shall have the freest course, and shall run the most quickly, and be the most

extensively glorified, its progress will still be after the former manner of the conviction, conversion, and sanctification of individuals, who shall each one believe and be baptized, according to the Word of the Lord.

I fear lest in any of you there should be even the least measure of despising the one lost sheep, because of the large and philosophical methods which are now so loudly cried up. I would not have you exchange the gold of individual Christianity for the base metal of Christian Socialism. If the wanderers are to be brought in, in vast numbers, as I pray they may be, yet must it be accomplished by the bringing of them in one by one. To attempt national regeneration without personal regeneration is to dream of erecting a house without separate bricks. In the vain attempt to work in the gross, we may miss the practical result which would have followed working in detail. Let us settle it in our minds that we cannot do better than obey the example of our Lord Jesus, given us in the text, and go after the one sheep which has gone astray.

Our text warns us that we are not to despise one person, even on account of evil character. The first temptation is to despise one, because only one; the next is to despise one, because that one is so little; the next, and perhaps the most dangerous, form of the temptation, is to despise one, because that one has gone astray. The individual is not in the right path, not obeying law, nor reflecting credit on the church, but doing much that vexes the spiritual, and grieves the holy; yet we are not, therefore, to despise him. Read the eleventh verse: "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." In the Greek, the word "lost" is a very strong word: we may read it, "that which is destroyed." It does not mean "that which is nonexistent," as you will clearly see; but that which is destroyed as to usefulness to the shepherd, as to happiness to itself, and as to working out the intent for which it was created. If any are so effectually destroyed by sin that their existence is a greater calamity than their non-existence would have been; if they are now dead in trespasses and sins, and even offensive in character, yet must we not despise them. The Son of man did not despise such, since "He has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Many a soul that has been so destroyed as to be lost to itself, lost to God, lost to his people, lost to anything like hope and holiness, the Lord Jesus Christ has saved by his gracious power. He values each one; this is the lesson which I would teach this morning to the utmost of my power. May the Holy Spirit teach it also.

In considering the words of our Lord which are now before us, I beg you to notice, first, that the Lord Jesus herein shows peculiar interest in one lost soul; secondly, he puts forth special exertion for the rescue of this lost one; and thirdly, he displays a special rejoicing when the lost one is restored. When we have thought of all this, we shall then observe, fourthly, that he sets us a very striking example, herein teaching us to care for each soul destroyed by sin.

I. First, then, in the words before us, OUR SAVIOR SHOWS PECULIAR INTEREST IN ONE LOST SOUL.

Note, in the commencement, that for the sake of those lost ones our Lord assumes a special character. The eleventh verse puts it, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” He was not originally known as “the Son of man,” but as “the Son of God.” Before all worlds, he dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” But in order to redeem men, the Son of the Highest became “the Son of man.” He was born of the Virgin, and by birth inherited the innocent infirmities of our nature, and bore the sufferings incident to those infirmities. Then did he also take upon himself our sin and its penalty, and therefore died upon the cross. He was in all points made like unto his brethren. He could not be the shepherd of men without becoming like to them, and therefore the Word condescended to be made flesh. Behold the stupendous miracle of incarnation! Nothing can excel this marvel—Immanuel, God with us! “Being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” O lost one, conscious of your loss, take heart to-day when the name of Jesus is named in your hearing; he is God, but he is man, and as God-and-man he saves his people from their sins.

Next to this, to show how Jesus values one lost soul, he makes a very wonderful descent. “The Son of man is come.” He was always known as “The Coming One”; but as to the salvation of the lost he has actually come. For judgment he is “the coming one” still; but for salvation we rejoice that our Savior has already come. Quitting the assemblies of the perfect, he has been here as the Friend of publicans and sinners. From being the Lord of angels, he has stooped to be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Yes, he has come; and not in vain. Those who preached the coming Savior had such a joyous message to deliver that their feet were beautiful upon the mountains, and their voices were as heavenly music; but as for us

who preach that he has come, and, coming, has finished the work which he undertook to perform—surely ours is the choicest of messages. Our Lord Jesus has completed the atoning sacrifice, and the justifying righteousness, by which lost men are saved: happy is the preacher of such tidings, and blessed are your ears that hear them! The good Shepherd has performed all that is necessary for the salvation of the flock which his Father has given into his hands. Beloved, let us take heart. Lost as we are, Christ has come to save us. He has come to the place of our ruin and woe. His coming and seeking will not be in vain. Brethren, how greatly ought we to value the souls of men when Jesus for their sake becomes a man, and comes into this sinful world among our guilty race that he may work the salvation of the lost!

Note, here, that he does this for those that are still straying. I have marked, in looking at the Greek text, that it is written, “He seeketh that which goeth astray.” The Shepherd seeks while the sheep strays: seeks it because it strays and needs seeking. Full many of the Lord’s redeemed are even now going astray, and even now is the Shepherd going after them. The Savior seeks those who are even now sinning. That he should have a love to those who are repenting I can well understand; but that he should care for those who are wilfully going astray is far more gracious. Jesus seeks those whose backs are towards him, who are going further and further away from the fold; herein is grace most free, most full, most sovereign. Indeed it is so. Though thou dost harden thyself against the Lord, though thou dost refuse to turn at his rebuke, yet if thou be his redeemed, his eye of love marks thee; in all thy wilful wanderings he follows thee. He sees thee, he seeks thee; oh that thou mayest yield, and find that he saves thee! O ye that are now in the flock, think of the love of Christ to you when you were outside the fold; when you had no wish to return; when, seeing him pursuing you, you only ran the faster to escape his almighty love! Let us sing together,

*“Determined to save,
He watched o’er my path,
When, Satan’s blind slave,
I sported with death.”*

Notwithstanding all my rebellion, and all my wilful transgression, he still loved me with his heart, and pursued me with his Word. Oh, how we ought to love sinners, since Jesus loved us, and died for us while we were yet sinners! We must care for drunkards while they still pass round the cup;

swearers even while we hear them swear; and profligates while we mourn to see them polluting our midnight streets. We must not wait till we see some better thing in them, but feel an intense interest for them as what they are-straying and lost. When the sheep is torn with the thorns of the waste places, and is sick, and worn to skin and bones with long wanderings and hungerings, we must seek its restoration, though we see in it no desire to submit itself to the Shepherd's care and rule. Such was our Savior's love to us: such be our love to lost ones.

The Shepherd takes a peculiar interest in the lost, not only as now straying, but as having already gone very far away. Carefully consider these words-"If so be that he find it." That "if" tells its own tale. The sheep had become so terribly lost that it was not likely to be found again: it had wandered into so dense a thicket, or strayed into so wild a region, that it seemed scarcely within the bounds of hope that it would ever be discovered and brought back. We do not often meet with an "if" in reference to the work of Christ; but here is one-"If so be that he find it." This does not show weakness in the Shepherd, but the desperate danger of the sheep. I have often heard it said, by those who come to confess Christ, and to acknowledge his love to them, that they are struck with wonder that they, above all others, should be doing any such thing. When we sit at the Lord's table, the feast is very wonderful; but the greatest wonder is the guest, when I am there. How humbly do we each one sing,

*"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter where there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come."*

But it is so. The good Shepherd is to-day seeking many whose salvation seems highly improbable, if not utterly impossible. Herein is love that he should go after those whose finding is by no means a certainty, nor even a probability! Very improbable, almost impossible, is the task he undertakes! Yet in such he takes a deep interest.

Moreover, those toward whom our Lord has these thoughts of love have often sinned so as to have brought themselves into the deadliest danger. "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." Saving implies ruin, peril, jeopardy-yea, destruction already in a measure present. Are not many now playing with the fire of hell? For what is that unquenchable fire but sin, in its nature and results? Men are trifling on the brink of eternal

woe: "Their foot shall slide in due time." Playing with edged tools is nothing in danger compared with sporting with your lusts; and many are doing so. Yet, despite their danger, Jesus seeks them. See you not those sheep heedlessly feeding near the den of the wolf? In a little the monster will devour them. They are far away from home, and food, and rest, and safety. They have no desire to return; but they are resolved to roam yet further from the fold. The Lord Jesus comes after such desperately deluded ones. Until you pass the iron gate the gospel will invite you to return. If you be but one inch this side of hell, love will pursue you, and mercy will follow you. Our glorious David, while a lamb still lives, is able to rescue it from the jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear. Though, like Jonah, a soul may have descended into the deeps, and may lie out of all human reach, yet a word from Jesus can bring it up from the lowest pit. Glory be to the blessed name of the Almighty Savior, he is able to save to the uttermost: his power to save the lost is such that none are too vile for his salvation.

If we rightly consider the parable before us, we shall see that he takes a special interest in these stray sheep because they are his own. This man did not go after wild beasts, nor after other men's sheep; but he had a hundred sheep of his own, and when he had counted them, he missed one. The hireling, whose own the sheep are not, would have said, "We have nearly the hundred: we need not be particular about an odd one.", But these hundred sheep belonged to the Shepherd himself; they were his own by choice, by inheritance, by divine gift, by glorious capture, and by costly purchase, and he could not accept ninety and nine for a hundred. "None of them is lost," saith he. "Those that thou gayest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Jesus could not endure to report a loss upon the flock handed over to him of the Father. Ninety-nine is not a hundred, and the Savior will not consider it such; for well he knows that "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Dear friends, since Jesus takes such an interest even in one stray soul, you must not think it little that you should be called to care for a single soul. Do not think that a little congregation of forty or fifty is too few to be worthy of your best efforts. Should your class, through various circumstances, get down to a very small number, do not, therefore, give it up. No, no. Value one soul more than a world's purchase. The full company of the redeemed is far from being made up as yet, and the Lord hath much people in this

city not yet brought to his feet; therefore, never dream of ceasing your labors. Rest not till the hour shall come,

*“When all the chosen race
Shall meet around the throne;
Shall bless the conduct of his grace,
And make his glories known.”*

II. Secondly, may the Spirit of God help me while I remind you that OUR LORD PUT FORTH SPECIAL EXERTION TO SAVE ONE SOLITARY INDIVIDUAL.

Observe in the parable—for it is a parable, though briefly told—that we see the Shepherd leaving happier cares. He felt himself at home with his attached and faithful flock; they had not gone astray, and they gathered about him, and he fed them, and took pleasure in them. There is always a great deal to do with sheep: they have many diseases, many weaknesses, many needs; but when you have an attached, affectionate flock about you, you feel at home with them. So the great Shepherd describes himself as leaving the ninety and nine, his choice flock, the sheep that had fellowship with him, and he with them. Yes, he leaves those in whom he could take pleasure, to seek one that gave him pain. I will not dwell upon how he left the paradise above, and all the joy of his Father’s house, and came to this bleak world; but I pray you remember that he did so. It was a wonderful descent when he came from beyond the stars to dwell on this beclouded globe, to redeem the sons of men. But, remember, he still continually comes by his Spirit. His errands of mercy are perpetual. The Spirit of God moves his ministers, who are Christ’s representatives, to forego the feeding of the gathered flock, and to seek, in their discourses, the salvation of the wandering ones, in whose character and behavior there is nothing to cheer us. My Master’s heart is full of care for all that love him; he wears their names engraven on the jewels of his breast-plate; but yet his heart is always going forth afar, after those who have not yet been brought to him; and after those who once were in his fold, but have gone aside, and quitted the flock. He leaves the happy and the holy, and gives his best thoughts to the lost.

Our Lord goes out to seek these. It is not merely a sending forth of thought, it is a marching forth of power. His divine grace is going forth, I trust, this day, beyond the company whom he has called by his grace, to those other sheep, who are not yet of his fold, whom also he must bring in.

He would not have his church expend all her care on the flock which he has led into her green pastures, but he would have her go afield after those who are not yet in her blest society.

According to the text, the Shepherd goes into the mountains: among difficulties and dangers. He will do and dare for the saving of the lost: no hardships can daunt his mighty love. You know through what dark ravines he passed in saving men. You have heard what climbing he had after proud souls, and what condescensions for despairing ones. A sheep in the East is more light of foot than our sheep; it will leap like a gazelle, and climb the mountains like a chamois; and so are sinners very swift in transgression, and very daring in presumption. They leap in their iniquities where the children of God would shudder to follow them even in thought. They make nothing of leaps of profanity which would curdle the blood of him that has been taught the fear of God at the feet of Jesus Christ. Yet the Lord Jesus went after these desperadoes. What difficulties he conquered, what sufferings he endured, what mountains he overleaped, that he might seek and save! O brethren, the same heart is in him still: he goes forth continually in the preaching of the Word. With many a sigh and many a groan on the part of his chosen ministers, he goes among the mountains to seek that which has gone astray. I pray that he may accept the effort of his unworthy servant this day, and bring some lost one home by means of this sermon.

To show his exertion for the lost, our Lord describes himself as seeking with persevering diligence. He looks this way, but sees nothing. He shades his eyes with his hand, and looks steadily! He thought he saw his sheep. There is surely a living object upon the hill-side! He gazes intently. No, it does not stir: it is a white rock! Possibly the lost sheep is in yonder gully! It is a long way to go, but he is so intent on his purpose that he is soon there; but the sheep is not to be seen. Where can it be? He travels on with swift foot, for he does not know what may become of his sheep while he delays. Every now and then he stops: he thinks he hears a bleating. Surely it is the voice of his sheep! He is mistaken. His love makes his ear the father of sounds which are not sounds at all. He has neither seen nor heard it these long hours; but he will continue seeking till he finds it. The concentrated omniscience of Christ is set upon a soul that goes astray, looking after it in all its evil desires and evil emotions; watching the growth of anything that looks like repentance; and observing with sorrow the hardening of its heart. This is what our Lord is doing for those redeemed with blood, who

as yet have not been carried back to the fold. He puts forth a gracious exertion of eye and mind as well as of foot and hand, towards his wandering sheep.

At the last he saves-completely saves. He has not come to make the salvation of his people possible; but to save them. He has not come to put them in the way of saving themselves, but to save them. He has not come to half save them; but to save them altogether. When my Lord comes forth in the majesty of his sovereign grace to save a soul, he achieves his purpose, despite sin, and death, and hell. The wolf may grind his teeth, but the Shepherd is the wolf's master. The sheep itself may for a long time have wandered, and at the last may struggle against him; but he grips its feet, and throws the creature on his shoulders, and bears it home; for he is resolved to save it. The sheep is glad to be so borne, for with a touch the Shepherd moulds its will to his more perfect will. His grace is the triumphant energy by which the lost one is restored.

The salvation of a single soul is a mass of miracles. I have heard of a fire which consumed the shop of a jeweller, and a number of costly treasures of gold, and silver, and precious stones, were found among the ruins, caked into a conglomerate of riches. What a salvage! Such is the salvation of a single man, it is a mass of priceless mercies melted into one inestimable ingot, dedicated to the praise of the glory of his grace who makes us to be "accepted in the Beloved," and "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." When I think of the energy which is put forth by the Lord to save a single lost soul, I feel stirred in my heart, and I desire that your hearts should be stirred also, that we may put forth all our strength to go and find the Lord's lost ones. Let us co-operate with him in his great labor of seeking that which is lost, Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put such a spirit within us, and keep it there!

III. I am compelled to pass onward somewhat hurriedly. Notice, in the third place, that our Lord FEELS A SPECIAL REJOICING AT THE RECOVERY OF A WANDERING SHEEP. Do not make a mistake here. Do not suppose that our Lord loves more the one soul that has wandered than the ninety and nine who have been preserved by his grace from going astray. Oh, no! he thinks ninety-nine times more of ninety-nine than of one; for his sheep are each one equally precious to him. We must not suppose that he looks upon any one soul of his redeemed with a tenderness ninety-nine times greater than he gives to another. But you will see the meaning of the

passage by an illustration from your own experience. You have a family, and you love all your children alike. But little Johnny is very ill; he has a fever, and is like to die: now you think more of him than of all the rest. He recovers, and you bring him downstairs in your arms, and just then he is the dearest child of the whole company. Not that he is really more valued than his brothers and sisters, but the fact that he has been so ill, and was likely to die, has brought him more before your mind, and caused you more anxiety, and therefore you have more joy in him because of his recovery. The great deeps of Christ's love are the same to all his flock, but on the surface there is sometimes a holy storm of joy when any one of them has been newly restored after wandering.

Learn the occasion of this demonstrative joy. The wandering one has caused great sorrow. We were all grieved that our brother should become a gross backslider, that such an earnest Christian as he seemed to be should disgrace his profession. Our Lord is still more grieved than we are. When the erring one comes back, we feel a new joy in him. In proportion to the sorrow felt over the wanderer, is the joy manifested when he is restored.

Moreover, great apprehensions were aroused; we feared that he was not the Lord's, and that he would go back unto perdition. We trembled for him. That black dread is all over now: the sheep is safe, the doubtful one is saved and restored to the fold. In proportion to the weight of the apprehension is the intensity of the relief.

The Shepherd had exercised also great labor over the lost one. He went up among the mountains to find his sheep; but now his labor is fully rewarded, for he has found his Lost sheep. He remembereth no more his travel and travail for joy that the sheep is safe.

Besides, in this newly-restored one, there are marks of salvation which cause joy. He has been torn with the briars, but he is resting now. See how he lies down in the tender grass! He was weary and worn, and almost dead with his wanderings; but now, how happy he is in the presence of his shepherd! How closely he keeps to his shepherd's footsteps! All this goes to make the shepherd glad!

Besides, the shepherd rejoices when he brings back the lost sheep because he makes that rescue an occasion and opportunity for having a special gala day. He wishes all his sheep to learn his delight in them all by seeing his delight in one. I know it is so in the church. I bless the Lord when he keeps

the feet of his saints: I bless him every day for preserving grace; but when some grievous wanderer is restored, then we bless him more emphatically. Then we have music and dancing. The elder brother wonders what these overflowing joys can mean: but everybody else can see good reason for special mirth when the lost one is found. Shepherds and their flocks cannot have holiday every day; but when a lost one has been recovered, they feel such mutual delight in each other, and such a common delight in the saving of the lost, that they seize upon the occasion for rejoicing. I want you all to recognize that, if you love the church of Christ, you are bound to keep a feast-day when fallen ones are raised up; and that you may hold that festival, you are bound to put out all your strength to bring in the lost one.

IV. Now we come to the tug-of-war, that is, to look upon our divine Shepherd as HE SETS US A STRIKING EXAMPLE.

We may view this text as our personal missionary warrant. To-day we are called upon to think of missions; and as I think it idle to preach about missions in the big high-flying style, I have purposed to say something common-place, but practical. Brethren, we are all of us to be missionaries for Christ, and the text presents a warrant for each one to work earnestly as a soul-winner.

What shall we do, then, to imitate our Lord? The answer is—Let us go after one soul. I cannot make a selection for you this morning, but I do entreat all who are workers together with God to go after the ones. There is a kind of knack in speaking to individuals—everybody does not possess it; but every believer should labor to acquire it. Seek the souls of men one by one. It is far easier work to me to speak to you all than it would be to take each one apart and speak to him personally of his soul; and yet such speaking to you one by one might be more successful than this sermon to you in the mass. I entreat you, as the great Shepherd goes after one, do not think you will demean yourself by going after one poor man, or woman, or child; but do it now.

Listen again: let that one be somebody that is quite out of the way. Try and think of one who has grievously gone astray; it may be there is one such in your family, or you meet with one such in the course of trade. Think carefully of that one soul, and reflect upon its sin and danger. You would like to pick out a hopeful case, in order that you might feel sure of success. Take another course this time: seek the one which is going astray, and seems hopeless. Follow your Lord's example, and go after one who is the

least likely to be found. Will you try this plan? If you do not, you will be quitting the way of your Lord.

“I have a class and a work,” says one. Yes, I want you, for a little, to leave the ninety and nine. I pray that you may feel called to look after some one greatly depraved person, or some utterly neglected child. Keep up your ninety-and-nine class, if you possibly can, but, at all hazards, go after the one. Make an unusual effort; go out of your way; let ordinary service be placed second for the time being. It will be a healthy change for you, and, perhaps, a great relief. Peradventure, you will come back and, do more good with the ninety and nine, after you have been away a little while with the straying one. You are getting a little mouldy; and you are just a wee tired of the monotony of your work. Every Sunday the same girls, or the same boys, and the same form of lesson. Well, cut the whole concern for a little, and go after the one sheep that has gone astray. “You are giving us odd advice, Mr. Spurgeon.” If it is not in my text, then do not follow it; but if it is in our dear Master’s words, I trust you will carry it out bravely.

When you go after that one, have all your wits about you. Go and seek; and that you cannot do, unless you are on the alert. Follow up the straying one. Did you say that you would wait till he called at your house? Is that your notion of seeking lost sheep? Is that the way of sportsmen in the autumn? do they sit in the drawing-room till the pheasants fly by the window? That would be poor sport.

*“O come, let us go and find them,
In the paths of death they roam.”*

Go after them, for so the shepherd did. He braved the mountain’s slippery side. I do not suppose the shepherd had any greater love for mountain tracks than you have; but up the rough tracks he climbed, for the sheep’s sake. Go after sinners into their poverty and wretchedness, until you find them.

Here is one thing to cheer you. If you should win such a soul as that, you will have more joy, a great deal, than in saving those for whom you regularly labor—more joy over that lost one than over the ninety and nine hopeful ones. It will be such a support to your faith, such a fillip for your joy, such a bright light to your labor, to have won such a specially guilty one. I should not wonder but what you will talk about it for many a day, and it will be a source of strength to you when things are not quite as you

would desire. Such converts are our crown of rejoicing. May I specially recommend that you make a trial of this extra sheep-seeking? If you do not succeed, you will have done no harm; for you will have copied your Lord and Master. But you will succeed, for he is with you, and his Spirit works by you.

I would remind you that, even under the old law, you would be bound to do this thing. Turn to the twenty-third chapter of Exodus, and read the fourth and fifth verses. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." You are bound to do good even to your enemy. Will you not serve your best friend? If your enemy's ox or ass needed to be taken back to him, you are bound to do it. How much more when the sheep belongs to him whom you love with all your heart! Prove your love to Jesus by laboring to take him back his strays!

Turn to the twenty-second of Deuteronomy, first to fourth verses, and there you will find another bit of the law. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother." Oh, will you not bring in the stray sheep of your greater Brother, "the firstborn among many brethren"? "And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again." If you cannot get a soul to Christ, at any rate get it to yourself. If you cannot lead it immediately to conversion, show it some hospitality within your own doors, by ministering such comfort as you can. Do what you can to cheer the poor heart till Christ comes after it. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." How easy it is to hide ourselves! that is the expression used by Moses, "thou shalt not hide thyself from them." When you know that people are very wicked, the usual plan is to wish them well, but keep out of their way. Prudence makes you hide yourself from them. The whole street may swarm with harlots, but then you have gone to bed, and the door is shut. What has their sin to do with you? There are many drunken men about; but you do not drink to excess, what has their drinking to do with you? That is what is meant by hiding ourselves from them. How easily that can be done! Take an illustration which is worth the telling. A vessel, the other day, was crossing the Atlantic, and it

fell in with that disabled emigrant ship, The Danmark. Suppose the captain had kept on his course. He might have looked another way, and resolved not to be detained. He might have argued, "I am bound to do the best for my owners. It will hinder me greatly if I go pottering about after this vessel. I had better go by, and not see it; or make haste to port and send out help." It could have been done, and nobody would have been the wiser; for the ship would have gone down soon. The captain of that vessel was a man of a nobler breed. He did not hide himself, nor turn the blind eye towards the vessel in distress. But what did the captain do? All honor to him, he came near, and took the ship in tow. This was not all: he found that she could not keep afloat, and he resolved to take those hundreds of emigrants on board his own ship. But he could not carry them and his cargo too. What then? The decision was greatly to his honor. Overboard goes the cargo! God's blessing rest on the man! Into the sea went the freight, and the passengers were taken on board; and carried to the nearest port. He could have easily hidden himself, could he not? So can you, you Christian people, as you call yourselves. Can you go through this world and always have a blind eye to the case of lost sinners? Can you come in and out of this Tabernacle and never speak to the strangers who throng these aisles? Will you let them go to hell unwarned and uninstructed? Can you hide yourselves from them! How dare you call yourselves Christians? How will you answer for it at last? Brothers, sisters, let us shake off this inhuman indifference, and, deny ourselves rest, ease, credit, that we may save poor sinking souls. Overboard with cargo cheerfully, that you may, in the power of the Holy Ghost, save souls from death.

Once more, this text is the great missionary warrant for all the church of God. We are to go, as the Savior did, to seek and to save that which was lost; and we are to do this, not on account of the numbers of the heathen, but for one of them. I grant you there is a great power in the argument of numbers—so many hundreds of millions in China, so many hundreds of millions in India; but if there were only one person left unsaved in any part of the world, it would be worth while for the entire Christian church to go after that one person; for he who is greater than the church, as the Bridegroom is greater than the bride, quitted heaven, ay, and quitted the sweet society of his own beloved, that he might go after the one that had gone astray. Do not care, therefore, about numbers: save the smallest tribes. Have an eye to the hamlets in England. I believe that the scattered

cottages of our land are in a worse condition than the villages. Care for the ones. Your Lord did so, and here is your warrant for doing the like.

Next, notice, that we ought never to be moved by the supposed superiority of a race. I have heard it said that it would be far better to try and convert the superior races than to consider the more degraded. Is it not better to bring in the educated Brahmins than the wild hill-tribes? "What a fine sort of people these are, these philosophical Hindoos! If we could win them they would be worth converting!" That is not at all according to the mind of Christ. The Shepherd sought a lost sheep, and when he had found it, it was no great spoil for him, for it was so worn out as to be nothing but a destroyed sheep. Yet he went after that one poor animal. Let us feel that the degraded Africans, the dwarfs of the woods, the cannibals of New Guinea, and all such, are to be sought quite as much as more advanced races. They are men; that is enough.

Once more, the motive for missionary enterprise must never be the excellence of the character of the individuals. The shepherd did not go after the sheep, because it never went astray, nor because it was docile, but because it did go astray, and was not docile. The sin of men is their claim upon the church of God. The more sin, the more reason for abounding grace. Oh that the church would feel it to be her duty, if not to go to the most degraded first, yet not to leave them to the last! Where you seem least likely to succeed there go at once, for there you will find room for faith; and where there is room for faith, and faith fills the room, God will send a blessing.

Dear friends, as you cannot, all of you, go abroad to the heathen, though some of you ought to do so, I ask you to do what you can do. Contribute to the collection, which is for the support of mission work. Here is a small opportunity; and if you do not avail yourselves of it, you are not likely to do the greater thing to which I have invited you. The Lord bless you! Amen.

THE BIBLE TRIED AND PROVED.

NO. 2084

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”-Psalm 12:6.

IN this psalm our text stands in contrast with the evil of the age. The Psalmist complains that the “godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men.” It was a great grief to him, and he found no consolation except in the words of the Lord. What if men fail: the Word of the Lord abides! What a comfort it is to quit the arena of controversy for the green pastures of revelation! One feels like Noah, when, shut within the ark, he saw no longer the death and desolation which reigned outside. Live in communion with the Word of God, and, in the absence of Christian friends, you will not lack for company.

Furthermore, the verse stands in fuller contrast still with the words of the ungodly when they rebel against God and oppress his people. They said, “With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?” They boasted, they domineered, they threatened. The Psalmist turned away from the voice of the boaster to the words of the Lord. He saw the promise, the precept, and the doctrine of pure truth, and these consoled him while others spake every man vanity with his neighbor. He had not so many of the words of the Lord as we have: but what he had made his own by meditation he prized above the finest gold. In the good company of those who had spoken under divine direction, he was able to bear the threats of those who surrounded him. So, dear friend, if at any time your lot is cast where the truths you love so well are despised, get you back to

the prophets and apostles, and hear through them what God the Lord will speak. The voices of earth are full of falsehood, but the word from heaven is very pure. There is a good practical lesson in the position of the text; learn it well. Make the Word of God your daily companion, and then, whatever may grieve you in the false doctrine of the hour, you will not be too much cast down; for the words of the Lord will sustain your spirit. Looking at the text, does it not strike you as a marvel of condescension, that Jehovah, the infinite, should use words? He has arranged for us, in his wisdom, this way of communicating with one another; but as for himself, he is pure spirit and boundless: shall he contract his glorious thoughts into the narrow channel of sound, and ear, and nerve? Must the eternal mind use human words? The glorious Jehovah spake worlds. The heavens and the earth were the utterances of his lips. To him it seems more in accordance with his nature to speak tempests and thunders, than to stoop to the humble vowels and consonants of a creature of the dust. Will he in very deed communicate with man in man's own way? Yes, he stoops to speak to us by words. We bless the Lord for verbal inspiration, of which we can say, "I have esteemed the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." I do not know of any other inspiration, neither am I able to conceive of any which can be of true service to us. We need a plain revelation upon which we can exercise faith. If the Lord had spoken to us by a method in which his meaning was infallible, but his words were questionable, we should have been rather puzzled than edified; for it is a task indeed to separate the true sense from the doubtful words. We should always be afraid that the prophet or apostle had not, after all, given us the divine sense: it is easy to hear and to repeat words; but it is not easy to convey the meaning of another into perfectly independent words of your own: the meaning easily evaporates. But we believe that holy men of old, though using their own language, were led by the Spirit of God to use words which were also the words of God. The divine Spirit so operated upon the spirit of the inspired writer, that he wrote the words of the Lord, and we, therefore, treasure up every one of them. To us "every word of God is pure," and withal full of soul nutriment. "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." We can heartily declare with the Psalmist, "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words."

Our condescending God is so well pleased to speak to us by words, that he has even deigned to call his only-begotten Son "The Word." "The Word

was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The Lord useth words, not with reluctance, but with pleasure; and he would have us think highly of them, too, as he said to Israel by Moses, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your sod.”

We believe that we have the words of God preserved for us in the Scriptures. We are exceedingly grateful that it is so. If we had not the words of the Lord thus recorded we should have felt that we lived in an evil time, since neither voice nor oracle is heard to-day. I say, we should have fallen upon evil days if the words that God spake of old had not been recorded under his superintendence. With tins Book before us, what the Lord spake two thousand years ago he virtually speaks now: for “He will not call back his words” (Isaiah 21:2). His word abideth for ever; for it was spoken, not for one occasion, but for all ages. The Word of the Lord is so instinct with everlasting life and eternal freshness, that it is as vocal and forceful in the heart of the saint to-day as it was to the ear of Abraham when he heard it in Canaan; or to the mind of Moses in the desert; or to David when he sang it to his harp. I thank God that many of us know what it is to hear the divine word re-spoken in our souls! By the Holy Ghost the words of Scripture come to us with a present inspiration: not only has the Book been inspired, it is inspired. This Book is more than paper and ink, it talks with us. Was not that the promise, “When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee”? We open the Book with this prayer, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth”; and we often close it with this feeling, “Here am I; for thou didst call me.” As surely as if the promise had never been uttered before, but had been spoken out of the excellent glory for the first time, the Lord has made Holy Scripture to be his direct word to our heart and conscience. I say not this of you all, but I can say it assuredly of many here present. May the Holy Spirit at this hour speak to you yet again!

In trying to handle my text, there will be three points to dwell upon. First, the quality of the words of God-”The words of the Lord are pure words”; secondly, the trials of the words of God-”As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”; and then, thirdly, the claims of these words derived from their purity and the trials which they have undergone. Eternal Spirit, help me to speak aright concerning thine own Word, and help us to feel aright while we hear!

I. First, then, beloved friends, consider THE QUALITY OF THE WORDS OF GOD: “The words of the Lord are pure words.”

From this statement I gather, first, the uniformity of their character. No exception is made to any of the words of God, but they are all described as “pure words.” They are not all of the same character; some are for teaching, others are for comfort, and others for rebuke; but they are so far of a uniform character that they are all “pure words.” I conceive it to be an evil habit to make preferences in Holy Scripture. We must preserve this volume as a whole. Those sin against Scripture who delight in doctrinal texts, but omit the consideration of practical passages. If we preach doctrine, they cry, “How sweet!” They will hear of eternal love, free grace, and the divine purpose; and I am glad they will. To such I say-Eat the fat, and drink the sweet; and rejoice that there are fat things full of marrow in this Book. But remember that men of God in old time took great delight in the commands of the Lord. They had respect unto Jehovah’s precepts, and they loved his law. If any turn on their heel, and refuse to hear of duties and ordinances, I fear that they do not love God’s Word at all. He that does not love it all, loves it not at all. On the other hand, they are equally mistaken who delight in the preaching of duties, but care not for the doctrines of grace. They say, “That sermon was worth hearing, for it has to do with daily life.” I am very glad that they are of this mind; but if, at the same time, they refuse other teaching of the Lord, they are greatly faulty. Jesus said, “He that is of God heareth God’s words.” I fear you are not of God, if you account a portion of the Lord’s words to be unworthy of your consideration.

Beloved, we prize the whole range of the words of the Lord. We do not set aside the histories any more than the promises.

*“I’ll read the histories of thy love,
And keep thy laws in sight,
While through the promises I rove
With ever fresh delight.”*

Above all, do not drop into the semi-blasphemy of some, who think the New Testament vastly superior to the Old. I would not err by saying that in the Old Testament you have more of the bullion of truth than in the New, for therein I should be falling into the evil which I condemn; but this I will say, that they are of equal authority, and that they cast such light upon each other that we could not spare either of them. “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” In the whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, the words of Jehovah are found, and they are always pure words.

Neither is it right for any to say, "Thus spake Christ himself; but such-and-such a teaching is Pauline." Nay, it is not Pauline; if it be here recorded, it is of the Holy Ghost. Whether the Holy Ghost speaketh by Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or John, or James, or Paul, the authority is still the same. Even concerning Jesus Christ our Lord this is true; for he says of himself, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." In this matter he puts himself upon the level of others who were as the mouth of God. He says again, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." We accept the words of the apostles as the words of the Lord, remembering what John said—"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6). A solemn judgment is thus pronounced upon those who would set the Spirit of Jesus against the Spirit which dwelt in the apostles. The words of the Lord are not affected in their value by the medium through which they came. Revealed truth is all of the same quality even when the portions of it are not of the same weight of metal.

Abiding by the text, we observe, next, the purity of the words of the Lord: "The words of the Lord are pure words." In commerce there is silver, and silver, as you all know: silver with alloy, and silver free from baser metal. The Word of God is the silver without the dross; it is as silver which has been purified seven times in a crucible of earth in the furnace, till every worthless particle has been removed: it is absolutely pure. David said truly, "Thy word is truth."

It is truth in the form of goodness, without admixture of evil. The commandments of the Lord are just and right. We have occasionally heard opponents carp at certain coarse expressions used in our translation of the Old Testament; but the coarseness of translators is not to be set to the account of the Holy Spirit, but to the fact that the force of the English language has changed, and modes of expression which were current at one period become too gross for another. Yet, this I will assert, that I have never yet met with a single person to whom the words of God have of themselves suggested any evil thing. I have heard a great many horrible things said, but I have never met with a case in which any man has been led into sin by a passage of Scripture. Perversions are possible and probable; but the Book itself is pre-eminently pure. Details are given of very gross acts of criminality, but they leave no injurious impress upon the mind. The

saddest story of Holy Scripture is a beacon, and never a lure. This is the cleanest, clearest, purest Book extant among men; nay, it is not to be mentioned in the same hour with the fabulous records which pass for holy books. It comes from God, and every word is pure.

It is also a book pure in the sense of truth, being without admixture of error. I do not hesitate to say that I believe that there is no mistake whatever in the original Holy Scriptures from beginning to end. There may be, and there are, mistakes of translation; for translators are not inspired; but even the historical facts are correct. Doubt has been cast upon them here and there, and at times with great show of reason-doubt which it has been impossible to meet for a season; but only give space enough, and search enough, and the stones buried in the earth cry out to confirm each letter of Scripture. Old manuscripts, coins, and inscriptions, are on the side of the Book, and against it there are nothing but theories, and the fact that many an event in history has no other record but that which the Book affords us. The Book has been of late in the furnace of criticism; but much of that furnace has grown cold from the fact that the criticism is beneath contempt. "The words of the Lord are pure words": there is not an error of any sort in the whole compass of them. These words come from him who can make no mistake, and who can have no wish to deceive his creatures. If I did not believe in the infallibility of the Book, I would rather be without it. If I am to judge the Book, it is no judge of me. If I am to sift it, like the heap on the threshing-floor, and lay this aside and only accept that, according to my own judgment, then I have no guidance whatever, unless I have conceit enough to trust to my own heart. The new theory denies infallibility to the words of God, but practically imputes it to the judgments of men; at least, this is all the infallibility which they can get at. I protest that I will rather risk my soul with a guide inspired from heaven, than with the differing leaders who arise from the earth at the call of "modern thought."

Again, this Book is pure in the sense of reliableness: it has in its promises no admixture of failure. Mark this. No prediction of Scripture has failed. No promise that God has given will turn out to be mere verbiage. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" Take the promise as the Lord gave it, and you will find him faithful to every jot and tittle of it. Some of us are not yet entitled to be called "old and grey-headed," though the iron-grey is pretty conspicuous upon our heads; but hitherto we have believed the promises of God, and tested and tried them; and what is our verdict? I bear my solemn

testimony that I have not found one word of the Lord fall to the ground. The fulfillment of a promise has been delayed sometimes beyond the period which my impatience would have desired; but to the right instant the promise has been kept, not to the ear only, but in deed and in truth. You may lean your whole weight upon any one of the words of God, and they will bear you up. In your darkest hour you may have no candle but a single promise, and yet that lone light shall make high noon of your midnight. Glory be to his name, the words of the Lord are without evil, without error, and without failure.

Furthermore, on this first head, the text not only speaks of the uniform character of God's words, and of their purity, but of their preciousness. David compares them to refined silver, and silver is a precious metal: in other places he has likened these words to pure gold. The words of the Lord might have seemed comparable to paper-money, such as our own bank-notes; but no, they are the metal itself. I recollect the time when a friend of ours used to go into the western counties, from one farm to another, buying cheese, and he was in the habit of taking quite a weight of coin with him, for he found that the farmers of that period did not care for bank-notes, and would not look at cheques; but they were more ready to sell when they saw that they would be paid in metal, down on the nail. In the words of God you have the solid money of truth: it is not fiction, but the substance of truth. God's words are as bullion. When you have them in the grip of faith, you have the substance of things hoped for. Faith finds in the promise of God the reality of what she looks for: the promise of God is as good as the performance itself. God's words, whether of doctrine, of practice, of comfort, are of solid metal to the man of God who knows how to put them in the purse of personal faith. As we use silver in many articles within our houses, so do we use God's Word in daily life; it has a thousand uses. As silver is current coin of the merchant, so are the promises of God a currency both for heaven and earth: we deal with God by his promises, and so he deals with us. As men and women deck themselves with silver by way of ornament, so are the words of the Lord our jewels and our glory. The promises are things of beauty which are a joy for ever. When we love the Word of God, and keep it, the beauty of holiness is upon us. This is the true ornament of character and life, and we receive it as a love-gift from the Bridegroom of our souls.

Beloved, I need not enlarge in your presence upon the preciousness of the Word of God. You have, many of you, prized it long, and have proved its

value. I have read of a German Christian woman who was accustomed to mark her Bible whenever she met with a passage which was specially precious to her; but towards the end of her life she ceased from the habit, for she said, "I find it unnecessary; for the whole of the Scripture has now become most precious to me." To some of us the priceless volume is marked from beginning to end by our experience. It is all precious, and altogether precious.

*"No treasures so enrich the mind,
Nor shall thy word be sold
For loads of silver well refined,
Nor heaps of choicest gold."*

Furthermore, this text sets before us, not only the purity and preciousness of the Lord's words, but the permanence of them. They are as silver which has passed through the hottest fires. Truly, the Word of God has, for ages, stood the fire-and fire applied in its fiercest form: "tried in a furnace of earth"-that is to say, in that furnace which refiners regard as their last resort. If the devil could have destroyed the Bible, he would have brought up the hottest coals from the center of hell. He has not been able to destroy one single line. Fire, according to the text, was applied in a skillful way: silver is placed in a crucible of earth, that the fire may get at it thoroughly. The refiner is quite sure to employ his heat in the best manner known to him, so as to melt away the dross; so have men with diabolical skill endeavored, by the most clever criticism, to destroy the words of God. Their object is not purification; it is the purity of Scripture which annoys them, they aim at consuming the divine testimony. Their labor is vain; for the sacred Book remains still what it always was, the pure words of the Lord; but some of our misconceptions of its meaning have happily perished in the fires. The words of the Lord have been tried frequently, ay, they have been tried perfectly-"purified seven times." What more remains I cannot guess, but assuredly the processes have already been many and severe. It abides unchanged. The comfort of our fathers is our comfort. The words which cheered our youth are our support in age. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." These words of God are a firm foundation, and our eternal hopes are wisely built thereon. We cannot permit any one to deprive us of this basis of hope. In the olden time men were burned rather than cease to read their Bibles; we endure less brutal oppositions, but they are far more subtle, and

difficult to resist. Still let us always abide by the everlasting words, for they will always abide by us.

Unchanged, unchangeable are the words of the Ever Blessed. They are as silver without dross, which will continue from age to age. This we do believe, and in this we do rejoice. Nor is it a tax upon our faith to believe in the permanence of Holy Scripture, for these words were spoken by him who is Omniscient, and knows everything; therefore there can be in them no mistake. They were spoken by him who is Omnipotent, and can do everything; and therefore his words will be carried out. Spoken by him who is immutable, these words will never alter. The words which God spake thousands of years ago are true at this hour, for they come from him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He that spake these words is infallible, and therefore they are infallible. When did he ever err? Could he err, and yet be God? "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Rest you sure of this—"The words of the Lord are pure words."

But time hastens me on to the next point.

II. Secondly, and carefully, let us consider THE TRIALS OF THE WORDS OF GOD. They are said to be as silver, which has been tried in a furnace. The words of God have been tested by blasphemy, by ridicule, by persecution, by criticism, and by candid observation. I shall not attempt an oratorical flight while describing the historical tests of the precious metal of divine revelation, but I shall mention trials of a common-place order which have come under my own notice, and probably under yours also. This may be more homely, but it will be more edifying. The Lord help us!

In dealing with the sinner's obstinacy, we have tested the words of the Lord. There are men who cannot be convinced or persuaded; they doubt everything, and with closed teeth they resolve not to believe, though a man declare it unto them. They are encased in the armor of prejudice, and they cannot be wounded with the sharpest arrows of argument, though they profess great openness to conviction. What is to be done with the numerous clan who are related to Mr. Obstinate? You might as well argue with an express-train as with Mr. Obstinate: he runs on, and will not stop, though a thousand should stand in his way. Will the words of God convince him? There are some in this place to-day of whom I should have said, if I had known them before their conversion, that it was a vain task to preach the gospel to them; they so much loved sin, and so utterly despised

the things of God. Strangely enough, they were among the first to receive the Word of God when they came under the sound of it. It came to them in its native majesty, in the power of the Holy Ghost; it spoke with a commanding tone to their inmost heart; it threw open the doors that had long been shut up and rusted on their hinges, and Jesus entered to save and reign. These, who had defiantly brandished their weapons, threw them down and surrendered unconditionally to almighty love, willing believers in the Lord Jesus. Brethren, we have only to have faith in God's Word, and speak it out straight, and we shall see proud rebels yielding. No mind is so desperately set on mischief, so resolutely opposed to Christ, that it cannot be made to bow before the power of the words of God. Oh that we used more the naked sword of the Spirit! I am afraid we keep this two-edged sword in a scabbard, and somewhat pride ourselves that the sheath is so elaborately adorned. What is the use of the sheath? The sword must be made bare, and we must fight with it, without attempting to garnish it. Tell forth the words of God. Omit neither the terrors of Sinai, nor the love-notes of Calvary. Proclaim the word with all fidelity, as you know it, and cry for the power of the Highest, and the most obstinate sinner out of hell can be laid low by its means. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God: this is his one battering-ram with which he casts down the strongholds of sin and self in those human hearts with which he effectually deals. The Word of God will bear the tests furnished by the hardness of the natural heart, and it will by its operations prove its divine origin.

Here begins another trial. When you have a man fairly broken down, he has but come part of the way. A new difficulty arises. Will the words of the Lord overcome the penitent's despair? The man is full of terror on account of sin, and hell has begun to burn within his bosom. You may talk to him lovingly, but his soul refuses to be comforted. Until you bring the words of the Lord to bear upon him "his soul abhorreth all manner of meat." Tell him of a dying Savior; dwell on free grace and full pardon; speak of the reception of the prodigal son, and of the Father's changeless love. Attended by the power of the Spirit, these truths must bring light to those who sit in darkness. The worst forms of depression are cured when Holy Scripture is believed. Often have I been baffled, when laboring with a soul convinced of sin, and unable to see Jesus; but I have never had a doubt that in the end the words of the Lord would become a cup of consolation to the fainting heart. We may be baffled for a season, but with the words of the Lord as our weapons, Giant Despair will not defeat us. O ye that are in

bondage under fear of punishment, you shall come forth to liberty yet: your chains shall be broken, if you will accept the words of God. My Master's word is a great opener of prison doors: he has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron asunder.

That must be a wonderful word, which, like a battle axe, smashes in the helmet of presumption, and at the same time, like the finger of love, touches the tender wound of the bleeding, and heals it in an instant. The words of the Lord, for breaking down or lifting up, are equally effectual.

In certain instances, the words of God are tried by the seeker's singularity. How frequently have persons told us that they were sure there was nobody like themselves in all the world! They were men up in a corner; strange fish, the like of which no sea could yield. Now, if these words be indeed of God, they will be able to touch every case-but not else. The words of God have been put to that test, and we are amazed at their universal adaptation. There is a text to meet every remarkable and out-of-the-way case. In certain instances, we have heard of an odd text, concerning which we could not before see why it was written; yet it has evidently a special fitness for a particular person, to whom it has come with divine authority. The Bible may be compared to the whitesmith's bunch of keys. You handle them one by one, and say of one—"That is a strange key, surely it will fit no lock that ever was made!" But one of these days the smith is sent for to open a very peculiar lock. None of his keys touch it. At last he selects that singular specimen. See! it enters, shoots back the bolt, and gives access to the treasure. The words of this book are proved to be the words of God, because they have an infinite adaptation to the varied minds which the Lord has made. What a gathering of locks we have here this morning! I could not describe you all: Bramah and Chubb, and all the rest of them, could not have devised such a variety: yet I am sure that in this inspired volume, there is a key in every way suited to each lock. Personally, when I have been in trouble, I have read the Bible until a text has seemed to stand out of the Book, and salute me, saying, "I was written specially for you." It has looked to me as if the story must have been in the mind of the writer when he penned that passage; and so it was in the mind of that divine Author who is at the back of all these inspired pages. Thus have the words of the Lord stood the test of adaptation to the singularities of individual men.

We frequently meet with people of God who have tested the words of God in time of sore trouble. I make here an appeal to the experience of the

people of God. You have lost a dear child. Was there not a word of the Lord to cheer you? You lost your property: was there a passage in the Scriptures to meet the disaster? You have been slandered: was there not a word to console you? You were very sick, and withal depressed; had not the Lord provided a comfort for you in that case? I will not multiply questions: the fact is that you never were high, but the Word of the Lord was up with you; and you never were low, but what the Scripture was down with you. No child of God was ever in any ditch, pit, cave, or abyss, but the words of God found him out. How often do the gracious promises lie in ambush to surprise us with their lovingkindness! I adore the infinity of God's goodness, as I see it mirrored in the glass of Scripture.

Again, the Word of God is tried and proved as a guide in perplexity. Have we not been forced, at times, to come to a pause and say, "I do not know what to think about this. What is the proper course?" This book is an oracle to the simple-hearted man in mental, moral, and spiritual perplexity. Oh, that we used it more! Rest assured that you never will be in a labyrinth so complicated that this book, blessed of the Spirit, will not help you through. This is the compass for all mariners upon the sea of life: by its use you will know where lies the pole. Abide by the words of the Lord, and your way will be clear.

Beloved, the words of God endure another test; they are our preservatives in times of temptation. You can write a book that may help a man when he is tempted in a certain direction; will the same volume strengthen him when he is attracted in the opposite direction? Can you conceive a book which shall be a complete ring-fence, encircling a man in all directions? keeping him from the abyss yonder, and from the gulf on the other side? Yet such is this Book. The devil himself cannot invent a temptation which is not met in these pages; and all the devils in hell together, if they were to hold parliament, and to call in the aid of all bad men, could not invent a device which is not met by this matchless library of truth. It reaches the believer in every condition and position, and preserves him from all evil. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Lastly, on this point, here is a grand test of the Book: it helps men to die. Believe me, it is no child's play to die! You and I will find ourselves in that solemn article or ever we are aware, and then we shall need strong consolation. Nothing upon earth ever gives me so much establishment in

the faith as to visit members of this church when they are about to die. It is very sad to see them wasting away, or racked with pain; but, nevertheless, the chief effect produced upon the visitor is gladsome rather than gloomy. I have this week seen a sister well known to many of you, who has a cancer in her face, and may, in all probability, soon be with her Lord. It is a dread affliction, and one knows not what it may yet involve; but the gracious patient knows neither murmurs nor fears. No one in this place, though in the flush of health, could be more calm, more restful, than our sister is. She spoke to me with full confidence that living or dying she is the Lord's, and she had bright anticipations of being for ever with the Lord. The little she could say with her voice was supplemented by a great deal which she expressed with her eyes, and with her whole demeanour. Here was no excitement, no fanaticism, no action of drugs upon the brain; but a sweetly reasonable, quiet, and assured hope of eternal joy. Brethren, it is not hard to pass out of this world when we are resting on that old and sure gospel which I have preached to you these many years. Personally, I can both live and die on the eternal truths which I have proclaimed to you; and this assurance makes me bold in preaching. Not long ago I sat by a brother who was near his end. I said to him, "You have no fear of death"? He replied cheerfully, "I should be ashamed of myself if I had, after all that I have learned of the glorious gospel from your lips these many years. It is a joy to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." Now, if this inspired volume, with its wonderful record of the words of God, helps us in the trials of life, directs us in our daily paths, and enables us to weather the last great storm, surely it is precious beyond description, "as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times."

III. Now, thirdly, what are THE CLAIMS or THESE WORDS or THE LORD?

The claims of these words are many. First, they deserve to be studied. Beloved, may I urge upon you the constant searching of inspired Scripture? Here is the last new novel! What shall I do with it? Cast it on the ground. Here is another piece of fiction which has been greatly popular! What shall I do with it? Throw it on one side, or thrust it between the bars of the grate. This sacred volume is the freshest of novels. It would be, to some of you, an entirely new book. We have a society for providing the Bible for readers, but we greatly need readers for the Bible. I grieve that even to some who bear the Christian name, Holy Scripture is the least read book in their library. One said of a preacher, the other day, "How does he keep up the congregation? Does he always give the people

something new?" "Yes," said the other, "he gives them the gospel; and in these days, that is the newest thing out." It is truly so; the old, old gospel is always new. The modern doctrine is only new in name; it is, after all, nothing but a hash of stale heresies and mouldy speculations. If God has spoken, listen! If the Lord has recorded his words in a Book, search its pages with a believing heart. If you do not accept it as God's inspired word, I cannot invite you to pay any particular attention to it; but if you regard it as the Book of God, I charge you, as I shall meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ, study the Bible daily. Treat not the Eternal God with disrespect, but delight in his Word.

Do you read it? Then believe it. Oh, for an intense belief of every word that God has spoken! Do not hold it as a dead creed, but let it hold you as with an almighty hand. Have no controversy with any one of the Lord's words. Believe without a doubt. The brother of the famous Unitarian, Dr. Priestly, was permitted to preach for his brother, in his chapel in Birmingham; but he was charged to take no controversial subject. He was obedient to the letter of his instructions, but very rebellious against their spirit, seeing he took for his text, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Assuredly there is no controversy among spiritual men upon the glorious truth of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus. So, also, all the words of the Lord are out of the region of debate: they are to us absolute certainties. Until a doctrine becomes an absolute certainty to a man, he will never know its sweetness: truth has little influence upon the soul till it is fully believed.

Next, obey the Book. Do it freely, do it heartily, do it constantly. Err not from the commandment of God. May the Lord make you perfect in every good work, to do his will! "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." You that are unconverted, may you obey that gospel word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Repentance and faith are at once the commands and the gifts of God; neglect them not.

Furthermore, these words of God are to be preserved. Give up no line of God's revelation. You may not know the particular importance of the text assailed, but it is not for you to assess the proportionate value of God's words: if the Lord has spoken, be prepared to die for what he has said. I have often wondered whether, according to the notions of some people, there is any truth for which it would be worth while for a man to go to the stake. I should say not; for we are not sure of anything, according to the

modern notion. Would it be worth while dying for a doctrine which may not be true next week? Fresh discoveries may show that we have been the victims of an antiquated opinion: had we not better wait and see what will turn up? It will be a pity to be burned too soon, or to lie in prison for a dogma which will, in a few years, be superseded. Brethren, we cannot endure this shifty theology. May God send us a race of men who have backbones! Men who believe something, and would die for what they believe. This Book deserves the sacrifice of our all for the maintenance of every line of it.

Believing and defending the Word of God, let us proclaim it. Go out this afternoon, on this first Sunday of summer, and speak in the street the words of this life. Go to a cottage-meeting, or to a workhouse, or to a lodging-house, and declare the divine words. "Truth is mighty, and will prevail," they say: it will not prevail if it be not made known. The Bible itself works no wonders until its truths are published abroad. Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth from the tree. Tell it out among the multitude, that the Son of God has come to save the lost, and that whosoever believeth in him shall have eternal life. Make all men know that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This thing was not done in a corner: keep it not a secret. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and may God bless you! Amen.

A DIRGE FOR THE DOWN- GRADE, AND A SONG FOR FAITH.

NO. 2085

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 18TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.”-Isaiah 66:10.

A MOURNER is always an interesting person. We pass by joyful people without a thought; but when we see the ensigns of woe we pause, and sympathize even if we dare not enquire. The new-made widow, the fatherless child, the bereaved husband, these have a history in which our common humanity is interested. “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;” and when that natural touch comes from the hand of sorrow, that kinship is quick to show itself.

The highest style of mourner is one whose griefs are neither selfish nor grovelling. He who bears spiritual sorrow on account of others is of a nobler order than the man who laments his personal woes. This man has not only bowed his shoulder to the inevitable load of personal trouble, but he is obeying the command, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The most excellent style of mourner is the mourner in Zion, the mourner for Zion, the mourner with Zion. If you love the church of God, you will share her joys; but when she passes through the dark defiles of persecution, or the rushing waters of discord, you will mourn with her. God has a great regard for mourners in Zion: for in loving the city, they love the King. Christ himself has come “to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” It is no small work of grace to make a

man so one with Christ, and with Christ's mystical body, that he sorrows with the Lord and his spouse. Whenever the ways of God languish, and we languish also, it is a mark that grace is in active exercise. Those who have learned this heavenly mourning are called to rejoice: "Rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her."

When I take up my parable, I shall, at the first, seem as though I had a roll written within and without with lamentations. Under the first head we shall enquire, Who are those that mourn with Jerusalem? Next, I would pass the cup of consolation from hand to hand, while we consider, Why may they yet rejoice with her? Thirdly, I shall press upon each one this question, Why should we personally mourn 'with Jerusalem? Surely we have each a portion here.

I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT MOURN WITH JERUSALEM? Those that love the church of God, and desire her prosperity; and when they do not see that prosperity, they are depressed in spirit. At this present time, the causes for such depression are exceedingly numerous.

Nothing can make the heart of the people of God more heavy than to think that the gospel glory of the church is declining. There was a time when the gospel of the free grace of God sounded forth from our pulpits as from a trumpet; but that time is past. In years gone by, you could pretty surely reckon upon hearing the gospel if you went into a Nonconformist place of worship; but you cannot reckon in that fashion nowadays, for in some places false doctrine is openly taught, and in others it is covertly advanced. In former times good men differed, as they always will, as to the form of their doctrinal system; but with regard to fundamental points, they were at one: it is not so now. The Deity of our Lord and his great atoning sacrifice, his resurrection, and his judgment of the wicked, never were moot points in the church; but they are questioned at this time. The work of the Holy Spirit may be honored in words; but what faith can be placed in those to whom he is not a person, but a mere influence? God himself is by some made into an impersonal being, or the soul of all things, which is much the same as nothing. Pantheism is atheism in a mask. The plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, as we have understood it from our childhood, is assailed in a thousand insidious ways. The fall of Adam is treated as a fable; and original sin and imputed righteousness are both denounced. As for the doctrines of grace, they are ridiculed as altogether out of vogue, and even the solemn sanctions of the law are scorned as bugbears of the dark ages.

For ninny a year, by the grand old truths of the gospel, sinners were converted, and saints were edified, and the world was made to know that there is a God in Israel; but these are too antiquated for the present cultured race of superior beings. They are going to regenerate the world by Democratic Socialism, and set up a kingdom for Christ without the new birth or the pardon of sin. Truly, the Lord has not taken away the seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal, but they are, in most cases, hidden away, even as Obadiah hid the prophets in a cave. The latter-day gospel is not the gospel by which we were saved. To me it seems a tangle of ever-changing dreams. It is, by the confession of its inventors, the outcome of the period, the monstrous birth of a boasted “progress,” the scum from the caldron of conceit. It has not been given by the infallible revelation of God: it does not pretend to have been. It is not divine: it has no inspired Scripture at its back. It is, when it touches the cross, an enemy; when it speaks of him who died thereon, it is a deceitful friend. Many are its sneers at the truth of substitution: it is irate at the mention of the precious blood. Many a pulpit, where Christ was once lifted high in all the glory of his atoning death, is now profaned by those who cavil at justification by faith. In fact, men are not now to be saved by faith, but by doubt. Those who love the church of God feel heavy at heart, because the teachers of the people cause them to err. Even from a national point of view, men of foresight see cause for grave concern. Cowper sang, in his day, words worthy to be remembered now

*“When nations are to perish in their sins,
 ‘Tis in the church the leprosy begins:
 The priest, whose office is, with zeal sincere,
 To watch the fountain, arid preserve it clear,*

*Carelessly nods and sleeps upon the brink,
 While others poison what the flock must drink.
 His unsuspecting sheep believe it pure,
 And, tainted by the very means of cure,*

*Catch from each other a contagious spot,
 The foul forerunner of a general rot.
 Then Truth is hushed, that Heresy may preach,
 And all is trash that Reason cannot reach.”*

The old motto of the city of Glasgow was, “Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word.” Our country has flourished by the preaching of the Word; and, under God, she has been raised to eminence, because of her

Protestant Christianity; and when she departs from this, the reason for maintaining her greatness will have ceased. This makes us mourn.

Another cause of mourning is when we see the holiness of the visible church beclouded. I trust I am not given to finding fault where fault there is not; but I cannot open my eyes without seeing things done in our churches which, thirty years ago, were not so much as dreamed of. In the matter of amusements, professors have gone far in the way of laxity. What is worse, the churches have now conceived the idea that it is their duty to amuse the people. Dissenters who used to protest against going to the theater, now cause the theater to come to them. Ought not many schoolrooms to be licensed for stage-plays? If some one were to see to the rigid carrying out of the law, would they not be required to take out a license for theatricals? I dare not touch upon what has been done at bazaars and fancy fairs. If these had been arranged by decent worldly people, could they have gone further? What folly has been left untried? What absurdity has been too great for the consciences of those who profess to be the children of God, who are not of the world, but called to walk with God in a separated life? The world regards the high pretensions of such men as hypocrisy; and truly I do not know another name for them. Think of those who enjoy communion with God playing the fool in costume! They talk of wrestling with the Lord in secret prayer, but they juggle with the world in unconcealed gambling. Can this be right? Have right and wrong shifted places? Surely there is a sobriety of behavior which is consistent with a work of grace in the heart, and there is a levity which betokens that the spirit of evil is supreme. Ah, sirs! there may have been a time when Christians were too precise, but it has not been in my day. There may have been such a dreadful thing as Puritanic rigidity, but I have never seen it. We are quite free from that evil now, if it ever existed. We have gone from liberty to libertinism. We have passed beyond the dubious into the dangerous, and none can prophesy where we shall stop. Where is the holiness of the church of God to-day? Ah! were she what she professed to be, she would be “fair as the moon, clear as the sun,” and then “terrible as an army with banners”; but now she is dim as smoking flax, and rather the object of ridicule than of reverence.

May not the measure of the influence of a church be estimated by its holiness? If the great host of professing Christians were, in domestic life and in business life, sanctified by the Spirit, the church would become a great power in the world. God’s saints may well mourn with Jerusalem

when they see spirituality and holiness at so low an ebb! Others may regard this as a matter of no consequence; but we view it as the breaking forth of a leprosy.

Moreover, we see in the church that her sacred ardor is cooling. There is still fervor in certain believers, and fervor of the best kind, for the divine Spirit has not utterly departed from us. We have around us Christian men and women who will do and dare anything for Jesus, and bear witness for him in the open street. Thank God for such! They are a standing protest against a lukewarm age. And we have still our gracious young men who will give their lives to bear the name of Christ among the heathen, amid the fevers of the Congo river. We have also an abundant seed of the faithful, who labor day and night for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Still things are not in Israel as we could desire. Very seldom are believers nowadays charged with being fanatical, nor even with being too enthusiastic; and this is a sign that we are below the right heat. When the world calls us fanatics we are nearing that point of ardor which is our Lord's due. If we were indeed fanatical it would be an error; but when we are called so, since the world's judgment is erroneous, we may conclude that we are only so earnest that the cold world is inconvenienced by our warmth. Oh, for the passionate love of a Rutherford! Oh, to seek the souls of men with the vehement zeal of a Whitefield, with the persevering purpose of a Wesley! Oh, to be carried away by the divine passion of compassion! Oh, to be wholly consecrated to him who is our King, our Lord, our all! His glory should be the one object of our lives. There is cause to grieve over many churches and individuals, that they are neither cold nor hot. Let us be personal and practical, and see whether we have not cause to grieve over ourselves in that respect.

There is grave cause for mourning in Zion, because the services of God's house are neglected. In certain large places of worship which once were crowded to the door, I hear that there are more pews than people. Where the gospel is gone from the pulpit, listeners soon go from the pews. Nothing is more like a sham than the apparent religious provision for this great metropolis; for we have churches and chapels in abundance, so that to build more would seem to be altogether needless; and yet, when we make enquiry, we find the congregations to be, in some instances, so ludicrously small, that if the building did not exist, it would be no more missed than a drop from the sea. "I do not know where to send my converts with the hope that they will hear the gospel," said a soul-winner

to me, the other day, concerning a certain London district. I cannot conceal from myself the gloomy fact that the habit of going to a place of worship is being altogether lost in this city. There are streets upon streets where only one or two persons are in the habit of attending the house of God. A man becomes even notable because he goes on the Sabbath-day to a place of worship. I was amused with one who attended this Tabernacle one Thursday night, and became so much interested in the service that he came on several Thursdays; but when a friend said to him, "Will you not come on Sunday?" he replied, "Oh, no; I have not got so far as that. I don't feel that I could become a Sunday chapel-goer." We, from our point of view, think better of the week-day hearer than of one who only attends on the Lord's-day; but his point of view was very different. No one would blame him for going where he pleased during the week, but to observe the Sabbath would be a decided step which he was not prepared to take; for it would involve losing a name for irreligion among his associates. This straw shows which way the wind blows. Alas! time was when it was thought to be a duty to observe the Sabbath; but it is now a day for lying late in bed, loafing about in shirt-sleeves, or mending rabbit-hutches and pigeon-houses! Do not think that I am exaggerating. I am speaking in sober seriousness the sad truth, which has been reported to me by city missionaries, district visitors, and working men who live among it. In many of our villages and country towns there is a healthy habit of church-going and chapel-going, though even there it is not so general as it used to be; but, in London, the general habit is the reverse. This is lamentable. How has it come about? I fear that it is very much the case, because if the people did go to many places of worship they could not understand what they would hear; and, what is worse, if they did understand it, it would not be of much use to them. The criticisms of modern thought are of no value to the working man. If the old gospel is brought to the front in all its simplicity, and preached with fervor, we may hope to see the people back again to hear it; but the task of calling them back is not an easy one. Coincident with the prevalence of a questioning theology comes this religious indifference, Under the prevailing form of doctrine, our city is becoming mere heathenish than Christian. Between the childishness of superstitious sacramentarianism and the wilful wickedness of doubt, the masses are sliding into an utter disregard of holy things. Reverence is dying out; and as surely as it dies we shall see a fierce attempt at anarchy.

The evil over which I now mourn is not only prevalent among the outlying masses, but it taints Christians themselves. Look at your hall-Sunday professors, content with only one service, and weary of that! How is it with many Christian people, as to meetings for prayer? Prayer-meetings are the very soul of church work, and they bring down the blessing upon all our spiritual agencies; yet they are despised by our high-fliers. In many chapels two services in the week have proved too great an effort for the constitution of the ministers, and too much of a tax upon the time of their hearers, who are occupied with the far superior avocations of whist or lawntennis. They could not come out two nights in a week: who would propose such a thing? So a compromise has been invented for the relief of the distressed, and they have set up a kind of service which is half lecture, half prayer-meeting, so as to get the pious business all over at once; and a very little affair is that one service. This is not only bad in itself, but it is a sign of something worse. Men who can pray to edification are in some directions becoming rare. One pastor told me, the other day, that out of a considerable congregation he found it hard to make up a prayer-meeting at all, because he had so few praying men. It is a dreadful impeachment against the churches, but faithfulness compels me to state it, before things grow still worse. You can get a crowd to a concert, but hardly a dozen to prayer! I know what I say. Because of all this, the ways of Zion languish—those ways which once were best trodden, namely, the ways of prayer and praise. Surely the Lord will visit the churches for this. There are grand exceptions, for which God be thanked; but still is it so—that the purely devotional service is at a discount. To hear a clever man they will come; but not to wait upon God. If there had been a magic lantern, or a penny reading, or a recitation with comic songs, the pious people would have strained a point to be there; but to pray is much too dull work for novel-reading, theater-haunting professors. These remarks will seem strange to good old-fashioned believers; but when they hear them, and know them to be true, I am sure it will cause them to take their places as mourners with Zion.

Another very great and grave cause for mourning to all true Christians, is the multitude of sinners that remain unsaved. O my dear hearers, did you ever realize what it is for a soul to be unsaved? If, on your way home, you were to stumble over a corpse, you would stoop down and look, and ascertain that the person was really dead, and then what a turn it would give you to find yourself so near the dead! You would not forget it for

weeks. Yet men are dead in trespasses and sins, and we believe that it is so; but it does not affect us in any special manner. Lord, arouse us! If we had passed a prison-yard, and had seen a man in chains, and heard the clanking of his fetters, the iron would have entered into our souls, and we should have felt sad for the prisoner; and yet around us in this congregation there are men and women bound fast with the chains of sin, and we are not distressed for them. We do not realize their bondage. We do not dispute the fact, neither do we feel its sadness. Look at the many round about us who are living in open evil, going after their lusts, plunging deeper and deeper into what must be their destruction. Look at the many that are blind, though they have eyes; that hear not, though they have ears; that feel not, though they are rational beings! How can we bear it? How can we bear it, that there should be any among us who know not God, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, who are yet in their sins? If an ungodly man could realize his own condition, he would not dare to sit still on his seat; and if we had compassionate hearts, and could clearly see the fact that our own children, our own dearest relatives, or our nearest neighbors, were condemned because of sin, and drawing every moment nearer to a terrible judgment, we should bestir ourselves, and we should give God no rest, but cry day and night to him until the perishing ones are saved. An unsaved soul is a sight that might well transform us into Niobes, and cause us to weep perpetual showers of pitying grief, until the arm of mercy should interpose to work salvation.

The darkest thought for a true heart is that, while souls are lost even now, the evil does not end here; but they are passing away into that hopeless state in the next world which our Lord speaks of as the place of the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched. They are going from this place, where mercy is proclaimed, to that dread tribunal where the voice of judgment cries, "Depart, ye cursed." They are hastening away to appear before the great white throne, unsaved, unrenewed, unforgiven! O God, have mercy upon our fellow-men, we pray thee; but, first, give us grace to have mercy upon them! He who can see a soul lost, and yet is not distressed, how dwelleth the love of God in him? We ought to be filled with sorrow, when men perish wilfully under the gospel. When our adversaries tell us that our dreadful belief with regard to the hopeless future of a lost soul, ought to break our hearts, we admit the truth of what they say—admit it to the fullest extent. But we reply, that if they conceive that we are not as tender as we ought to be, while believing that terrible

truth which seems to us to be plainly taught in the Scriptures, to what a depth of callousness should we not descend if they could make us doubt what we now believe? If they could persuade us of their comfortable fictions, if they could induce us to accept their “larger hope,” should we not cease from that slender degree of pity which their charity may confess we now possess? Brethren, we are as compassionate as they are: though that is not saying much. At least, we dare to incur unpopularity, and the sardonic censures of the wise and prudent, in order that we may give honest warning of the terrible woe which men are bringing upon themselves. They talk as if we were to blame for the hell we proclaim; will they give us an equal share of honor for the heaven we preach? We create neither the one nor the other; but they might at least cause their imputations to face both ways. My brethren, the terrors of the world to come, to those who wilfully reject the Savior, ought to affect us far more than they do: none are more ready to acknowledge this than we are. Let us lay to heart the sins of our age, the ruin of our fellow-men. They love not God, they trust not his dear Son, they are mad after sin, they are enemies to holiness: this is a heavy burden to a godly heart. They are dying in their sins, and coming under everlasting punishment; and these things should make us mourners in Zion. I am not too bold when I say that they do cause us great heaviness of heart.

I do not think that any man, who really thinks about the condition of the church, and then turns to the condition of the world in reference to the church, can walk up and down our streets exhibiting a perpetual gaiety of spirit. Other truths operate upon us to make us glad, but this drags us down. There must be times when we get alone, and pour out our hearts like water before the Lord, and cry, “O Lord, how long before thou wilt put forth thy saving power? How long before thine arm shall be made bare, and the work of grace shall be carried on to the rescue of the fallen millions?”

II. I have, at least, shown you that we are not without overflowing fountains of grief: but now, beloved, having mourned unto you, it is time for me to change my note. May the Lord cause the fountains of your pity to flow; but, at the same time, enable you to follow me while I say, in the second place, that **WE MAY YET REJOICE WITH JERUSALEM**. Why may we do so amid such reasons for mourning?

We may rejoice with the chosen of the Lord when we remember, first of all, that God has not changed, either in nature, or in love to his people, or in the purpose of his grace. Before we were born, he was able to achieve his purposes of love, and he will accomplish the good pleasure of his will when we are no more praying and working here below. When his church was faithful, his divine decree was carried out; and if his church be unfaithful, he is still omnipotent, and can, therefore, work out his great designs. He has not changed his system of working. He intends still to bless the world through the church: he means to use his saved ones for the saving of others. I believe that he will fight this battle to a happy end upon the same lines as hitherto, and that in the end he shall have great glory, notwithstanding all the infirmities and imperfections of his servants. An unchanging God is our security for ultimate victory. We fall back upon this truth. Our Lord knows not the shadow of a change, and his eternal purpose shall stand. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! let us exceedingly rejoice.

A further reason for joy is this—we may expect the Lord to appear. Take notice of the fifth verse of the chapter before us, for there we read, “He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.” God will not desert his own cause. Allow no such thought to afflict you. We have felt the hiding of his power: we shall yet see the unveiling of it. We have had to mourn that he allows the enemy to behave himself exceeding proudly; but before long he will make them sing to another tune. The Lord will awake like a mighty man that has been sleeping; and then, when he plucks his right hand out of his bosom, he will make short work of the insects that chirp against his glory and Godhead. Jehovah will win the victory, oppose who may. There never has yet been a dark night to patience which has not ended in a bright morning to faith. They that sat in darkness, and in the valley of death-shade, have seen a great light: it has sprung up when the blackness was most intense, In the middle ages the darkness deepened into sevenfold night; but, as in a moment, God said “Let there be light,” and Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingle, and other stars shone forth in the midnight sky, and made the gloom to disappear right speedily. Our glorious God can do so at this present crisis. Oh, for a word from the throne! Oh, for a fiat lux—“light be,” from the Lord and Giver of light, and this darkness which may be felt will be felt no more! I am not discouraged, though I am greatly saddened. The battle is not ours, but the Lord’s. God knows no difficulty. Omnipotence has servants everywhere, and power to create as many more agents of its purpose as there are sands on the sea-shore.

Sitting in the chimney side, to-night, a young Luther is preparing, as he looks in the fire, to burn the balls of the philosophic hierarchy of to-day. In the workhouse, amongst the poor children, there is a Moses who shall confront our Pharaoh and deliver Israel's tribes. The coming man who shall startle the world with his brave witness to the everlasting gospel, is at school. Never have a doubt about it: God will appear.

*“Lord, when iniquities abound,
And blasphemy grows bold,
When faith is hardly to be found,
And love is waxing cold,*

*“Is not thy chariot hastening on?
Hast thou not given this sign?
May we not trust and live upon
A promise so divine?”*

When the Lord shall put on strength, then shall his church be aroused. I read you in the chapter—"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child." The Lord can soon bring upon his church her fruitful birth-pangs, and make the barren woman to keep house. I hope to see, before I die, a revived church, holding truthful doctrine, agonizing over lost souls, and blessed with hosts of converts. Glory be to the name of the Lord, where all is as a desert he can make a garden. Aaron's dry rod shall bud and blossom again. His fold shall be filled, and there shall be a great sound as of the bleating of countless sheep. Since God is almighty in the spiritual realm, as well as in the material world, nothing is too great for us to expect. He that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead can arouse a moribund church; and he that cut Rahab and wounded the dragon can break the power of infidel criticism. Once more he will shake, not only earth, but also heaven. Wherefore let us rest in the Lord, and sing with joyful confidence, since no good thing will he withhold from his church, and no evil thing will he long permit to do her damage.

Oh, that the days of refreshing were come! Then shall the church have many converts, proving her power and increasing her influence. Thousands shall turn to Jesus at the expected Pentecost.

Then shall she nourish them well, and feed them with knowledge and understanding. I fear that if, in certain churches, there were to be many converts, they would not know what to do with them; but when the Holy

Spirit comes into her midst, then the church shall be a nursing mother. We read of “the breasts of her consolations”; see verse eleven. How abundantly she supplies loving, living nutriment to her newborn children when God blesses her! Yes, the Lord being present, the ministry becomes a means of spiritual sustenance, comfort, and growth to those who are as little children in grace; and, indeed, all the members of the church become assiduous in their care of those who have lately come to Christ. I pray that it may be so among us. We have added to us, during the last two months, first seventy, and then ninety, fresh members, for which I thank God. It is a little church in itself; but unless you all look after them, and try to help them on, we shall be embarrassed by such large additions to our number. Oh, that this church may carefully see to all the children that the Lord gives her; and if so, we shall indeed have the fullest reason for rejoicing with her! Then shall we sing, “The Lord has increased the people, and multiplied the joy.

At such times there is an abundant degree of peace and joy in all believing hearts. “For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.” It is a sad, sad thing when a church is not hearty in its love, and unanimous in its action. We have heard of churches of which the apostle Paul would have said, “I have heard that there are divisions among you”; and when it is so, the power to do good is not present. God will appear for his church, and end her sore dissensions, and set the hearts of his people together; and when it is so, then shall there be a great rejoicing, and we will take our part in it.

Nor is this all: God will raise up men fitted to do his work. Read the twenty-first verse: “I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” When the Holy Spirit visits a church, he is sure to bestow special gifts, and give special calls. As the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” so will he say in our churches, to our great delight. When God sent Pastor Harms to Hermansberg, it was a mere heath, and there were few on that heath that knew the Lord; but under his zealous preaching the whole village was turned into a missionary society. Oh, that we could do anything like it! Farmers and laborers, men and women, became missionaries for Christ to Africa; and a large proportion of the population went abroad, either to preach the gospel, or to form little colonies to work with the missionary, and support him. They sold house, and land, and everything, and thus made Hermansberg The starting-place of a great evangelizing enterprise. My beloved people, I hardly dare be so ambitious as to hope that you will ever

reach such consecration! See how it was among the Moravians: every man becoming a member of their church, became himself a teacher of the Word; every man, woman, and child among them sought to bring souls to Christ. Would God that the power of the Lord would come in that way upon all our churches! And we may expect it, if it be the true gospel which we preach, if it be the gospel which we love, if it be in the power of the gospel that we live. So it must be. The Lord will yet be taking numerous out of the midst of his people to be priests and Levites. What is to become of India, Africa and China, if we go on at the rate at which we have been crawling forward for these many years? Good as all mission work has been, yet what a drop in the bucket it is compared with what remains to be done! Oh, that the Lord would come and quicken his poor dead church with a diviner life! When she is quickened from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, then the nations of the earth shall know that God is in the midst of his people, even the infinite Jehovah, whose name is salvation. May the Lord Jesus take his servants, as Samson took the foxes, and fasten firebrands to them, and send them among the standing corn, till the whole earth is on a blaze with the flame that came down from heaven! How great, then, will be our joy!

Brethren, the providence of God is with us. All its terrors, as well as all its bounties, work for the advance of the Lord's kingdom. The wheels full of eyes all look this way. Brethren, the promise of God is with us. Our Lord Jesus must reign till all his enemies are put beneath his feet. Brethren, prayer is with us still: the mercy-seat, the Comforter, and the Advocate. If we know how to use the mighty engine of Allprayer, we may yet shako the gates of hell, Brethren, the Holy Ghost is with us still. He came down at Pentecost, and he has never gone back again: he abides in his church for ever, and works mightily. We have but to call upon him to carry on his sacred mission, and we shall see greater things than these.

III. But now my time has nearly gone, and so I must finish by asking, WHY SHOULD WE PERSONALLY BE OF THE NUMBER THAT MOURN WITH THE CHURCH, AND THAT REJOICE WITH HER? Perhaps some of you do not belong to that honorable company. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you of that host at once.

For, first, there is our own sin and ruin to mourn over. I spoke just now of how we ought to feel for a lost soul; but how ought that lost soul to feel for itself? Poor soul, if we ought to mourn for you, how much more should

you mourn for yourself! If you should be lost, if I have been faithful to you, I shall be no loser. What if you go down to hell, your mother's pleadings being in vain, your mother will not be robbed of her glory because you refuse the Savior. It is your soul, your own soul, your only soul, that is in jeopardy. If a man is a bankrupt here, he may start in business again; but if you make a bankruptcy of this mortal life, no second commencement is possible. In a campaign, a lost battle is a great evil, yet the next fight may retrieve the disaster; but if the battle of life be lost, you will never again be able to enter the lists and do better. I pray you, therefore, mourn over your own condition at once. Sitting in that pew, a sinner unforgiven, a rebel against God, with enmity in your heart against your best friend, what a state you are in! The Lord have mercy upon you! The Lord make you at once a mourner in the church of God, that you may, ere long, rejoice in her Savior!

Next, I may be speaking to some one who has been a backslider, and is a backslider even now. Are you sighing,

*“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord”?*

Well may you say so. By your wretched wandering you have disgraced the name of Christ, and you have dishonored the cause which you professed to love. You have made the enemy blaspheme, and you cannot wonder that your rest is broken. If anybody ought to be a mourner, you should be. You should take front rank among those who lament for the church of Christ, seeing that you have done her so much damage, that you will never be able to undo it even by a long life of usefulness.

Brethren, do you not think that we might all wisely become mourners when we think of our own want of zeal, and want of care for the souls of others. The preacher would smite upon his breast; and he invites you to do the same. Who among us spends half the thought that he should spend upon the conversion of his fellow-men? We all think of them a little; I hope the most of you are doing something for Jesus and his cause. Not many things are left undone which, as a church, we can do; but the things that are done—are they always done in a right spirit? Are they always baptized in prayer? Are they wrought out humbly, earnestly, and in entire dependence upon the Spirit of God? I am afraid that our faulty service towards other men must place us among the mourners in Zion if there were nothing else to do it.

We need not be ashamed to be among them, for if we sorrow with the Lord's church, we shall also, one day, rejoice with her.

May we not add to this our own failures in the matter of holiness? It is easy enough to drag the whole church up, as I did just now, and scourge her as she well deserves; but it is not so easy for each guilty person to flagellate himself. Yet this is what is needed. Ask—Have I been as holy as I should be? Has my house been ordered aright? Is there family prayer observed, not as a matter of form, but in life and power? Am I towards my children, towards my husband, towards my wife, towards my servants, as I ought to be? Are we as upright and generous as we should be in our business, and in our connection with common daily life? O sirs, we may each of us become mourners with the church of God if we examine ourselves with care!

Let me add that we have all a great concern in this' matter, and we ought, therefore, to join with the church in all her griefs. If the ministry of our pastors be not successful, we shall lose by its want of power. If the gospel is not preached our souls will not be fed. See to it that you do not encourage false doctrine, or wink at the modern apostasy. Suppose the gospel is not preached with saving power, then we shall have our children unconverted, and they will not be our joy and crown. There cannot be a deficiency in the pulpit without its bringing mischief to our households. We are members of one body, and if any part of the body suffers, every other part of the body will have to suffer too. If worldliness abounds, as it does, we shall see our children becoming worldly; we shall see them sucked into the vortex of infidelity and frivolity which now seems to sweep down and carry into the abyss so many hopeful young men and women. None of us will be able to escape scot-free from the terrible damage which evil is working all around. When false doctrine breaks forth like the waterfloods, it will surge around all our houses. Let us, therefore, cry mightily unto God, not for ourselves only, but for the one great universal church, and for this great city, and for this wicked world. O Lord our God, arise, for thy cause and crown! Take hold on sword and buckler, and plead thine own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

TAKING POSSESSION OF OUR INHERITANCE.

NO. 2086

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 12TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”-Joshua 1:2, 3.

UNDER the leadership of Moses the children of Israel had been journeying towards the land of promise. Owing to their waywardness, what might have been done in less than a month occupied many years. They wandered up and down in the wilderness, sometimes close on the border of their inheritance, and anon lost in the great desert. Alas! many of God's people are still in this unsatisfactory condition: they have come out of Egypt, the depths have swallowed up their adversaries, and they are on the way to the promised heritage; but they have not yet entered into rest. They will, we trust, ultimately reach the peace of God which passeth all understanding, for they have faith sufficient to prove them to be God's people, and, therefore, the Lord will surely bring them in; but, assuredly, they make a great deal of marching for very small progress. For lack of faith they go about, when, with a step, they might possess the promised Canaan.

To-day my earnest prayer and desire is that, going towards the promised heritage may come to an end with you this day, by your entering into heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus by an immediate act of faith. I want the Lord's people so to persevere in their seeking, by the divine strength, that they may get out of the great and terrible wilderness, and come to Mount

Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem, and enter into their heritage, according to that word, "We which have believed do enter into rest." Our friends have come as far as that first verse of our Lord's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; and they have a measure of that rest which comes of pardoned sin and confidence in Jesus. The pity is that they have not advanced to his next word of exhortation, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is a rest discovered and enjoyed through willing service: "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Many people are saved in one sense, but in another sense they are seeking salvation. Oh, that we may come to be saved in every sense: may salvation be ours in the broadest, widest, deepest, highest meaning of that blessed word! May we not only be saved from but saved to! Saved from sin; that makes us safe. Saved to holiness, that makes us happy. May we realize our completeness in Christ this day, and cease from the wanderings of fear! It is time that we took possession of that goodly heritage which the Lord has made our own, for in Christ Jesus "we have obtained an inheritance," and have the earnest of it in our possession of the Spirit of God. Hear ye the watch-word of the morning, ye that have tarried long enough in the wilderness—"Arise, go over this Jordan"! If I read the whole verse it is a command to myself: "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."

For our help in this desirable step, first, let us take a survey of the inheritance; secondly, let us glance at the title deeds; and thirdly, let us make a move towards taking immediate possession. For all this may the Holy Spirit. make us sufficient!

I. First, LET US TAKE A SURVEY OF THE INHERITANCE. I cannot carry you to the top of Pisgah; and if I could, you would probably reckon that you ought to die there. Your time has not yet come for that journey to the sky; but I would invite you to view the purchased possession with the eye of an enlightened understanding, and then to cross over the Jordan of indecision to possess the country.

I would say of this inheritance which God has prepared for his saints, and has given to them by a covenant of salt, that it is exceeding broad. We read here in this Book of Joshua, "From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and

unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.” These people did not conquer all the country, but were content with the narrow bounds of Canaan. They began their enterprise bravely, but soon showed a contracted spirit. Moses, in the thirty-fourth of Numbers, which is well worthy of a careful reading, gave them a little map, or ordnance survey, of the inner country, which they were commanded to conquer, and out of which they were to drive the inhabitants with the edge of the sword. The various races of Canaanites had brought upon themselves the curse of a righteous God. Their existence upon the face of God’s earth had become a calamity to mankind by reason of their horrible vices. They were doomed to utter extinction by the justice of God, as other races have been whose story profane history records. The Israelites were appointed to be their executioners. They did not accomplish their task; after a little while they began to make treaties and marriages with the doomed people, and they became thorns in their sides. Outside of these Canaanitish nations were greater territories, which stretched right away from the Lebanon ranges down to the border of Egypt, and as far east as the great river Euphrates, from whose banks their fathers came. This large domain was never altogether conquered by Israel, although David possessed a large portion of it, and Solomon still more. The people of these wide regions were not so far gone in evil as the degraded tribes of Canaan; and so they were to be spared, if they submitted to the sway of Israel. Even the inner kingdom Israel did not wholly subdue, and the wider region it left for centuries untouched. Beloved, this is a sadly correct picture of what happens to numbers of God’s people nowadays. The inheritance that God has given us to enjoy in Christ Jesus is exceeding broad; but we limit ourselves. All that we can think or desire is ours in the covenant of grace. There are immeasurable breadths and lengths, but we confine ourselves to close quarters. Truly “there is very much land yet to be possessed”! Some graces you must have, or you are not saved; some sins must at once be driven out of your life at the sword’s point, or you are not the Lord’s. As for the choicer graces, you are foolish indeed if you think of doing without them; and as for the less violent sins, you err greatly if you spare one of them. The deep knowledge, the spiritual experience, the high joy, the extreme delight, and the heavenly communion, which fall to the lot of certain of the saints, should be enjoyed by us all. There is no reason why one should miss them; for if they have but faith enough to grasp all that God gives, they have full permission to do so. The Lord may truly say to us, “Ye are not

straitened in me, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” We are petty princelets when we might have an imperial inheritance.

Just let me show what I mean. When we at first come to Christ by faith, we begin to enter into our inheritance, for we obtain the pardon of sin. Some believers are not even sure that they have a present and perfect remission; but some of us know that we are, once for all, “washed in the blood of the Lamb,” and therefore we are whiter than snow. This we know; but beyond that lies “acceptance in the Beloved,” which possibly we have not dared to claim. Hosts of professors are satisfied to be washed, but have not yet asked to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Beloved, we are not only absolved, but we are positively delightful unto God in Christ Jesus. He accepts our offerings, our prayers, our praises, our heart’s love. Our name is Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in us. Pardon of sin is like the little Canaan that must be conquered; but why not advance to the wider regions of “accepted in the Beloved”? Brethren, let us walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, while the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Think of another great blessing, namely, that of sonship. Beloved, we could sing heartily that hymn just now,

*“Behold what wondrous grace
The Father hath bestow’d
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!”*

But sonship is not all—“If children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Adoption you must have, heirship you ought to have, How rich you are, since God himself is yours—“heirs of God”! Yes, God himself is as truly yours as he is Christ’s—“joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” Why are we naked, and poor, and miserable, when we are heirs of a kingdom by reason of our adoption of the Lord? Let us take the good the Lord provides us.

Consider now the matter of regeneration. When we come to Christ by faith, we are born again, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus: this must be. But, brethren, when we are born again we perceive that the new birth begets a new life, and that new life develops itself in the beauty of holiness. Holiness is the fruit of regeneration; yet some imagine that they cannot be holy, at least not to any great extent. They believe that they can be saved

from certain grosser evils, but they cannot ascend to those glorious heights of consecration and sanctification without which the believer can never attain to the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. My message to you is, Arise, go over this Jordan, and take possession of the larger inheritance. Take possession of it all: seek after holiness, follow on to know the Lord. Be not satisfied until you are conformed unto his image, who is "the firstborn among many brethren." Aspire to the utmost God can give. You have not seen the goodly heights of Lebanon; as yet you are satisfied to stop at Jericho, by the river's brink, as if the conquest of one city had satisfied you. Gird on your harness, and go forth to the fight, for the Lord is with you, and the land is before you.

Again, as soon as a man has believed in Jesus he is safe. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ thou art born of God; and, being born of God, thou comest under the divine wing, and the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. Many are satisfied that this is true, but they do not, therefore, enter into peace as they should. That undisturbed serenity which springs from a sense of perfect safety in Christ Jesus is a glorious domain into which they do not enter. Our soul is made by faith to be calm as the lake upon a summer's evening, when the surface is unbroken by a ripple. Alas! we give way at times to doubt and fear, and hardly know whether we are the Lord's people or not. This must not go on. We must have faith; but we may have, and we ought to have, the full assurance of faith. In full assurance lies the spring of perpetual serenity. The Lord can create in us habitual calm: in the midst of trouble he can give us joy; in the hour of struggle he can give us confidence. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; then shall your times be of the halcyon order, and your days as the days of heaven upon the earth. It may be so, if you have grace enough to claim the whole of the wide territory which the Lord has allotted you. Oh, for grace to cry: "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; over Edom will I cast out my shoe. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?" God will bring us where unaided nature can never enter.

Once more: when we come to Christ by faith we have communion with God; and this is a land that floweth with milk and honey. Out of communion comes usefulness, and there are certain who fancy that they can never be very useful. The Lord cannot do many mighty works through them because of their unbelief. They have to be fed with a spoon, like invalid children. If they had but faith enough to receive power from on high by fuller communion with God, they might become as David. There is no

limit to the possibilities of usefulness in any man or woman when perfectly consecrated. Let us not imagine that we are doomed to small usefulness. That branch of the vine which hitherto has yielded little or no fruit, may yet be made by the heavenly Fine-dresser to bring forth much fruit. By faith let the divine sap of grace be received. Let living graces bring the living Christ into us, and then we shall bring forth clusters large as those which the spies brought from Eshcol of old. Thus much, then, concerning our survey of the goodly heritage of salvation; the land of promise is exceeding broad.

Next, it is exceedingly desirable. The country into which Israel entered was of a very choice kind. Travellers in Palestine tell us that it is the world condensed. Within that narrow strip of territory, you get plains and hills, frosts of winter and heats of summer, with products both of the semi-tropical and temperate zones. Palestine is the whole earth in miniature, and all the advantages of all lands are gathered into it. It was, in Joshua's days, a place of extreme fertility: "A land that floweth with milk and honey." Nor was this all: while it was fertile on the surface, it was rich underneath. It was a land "whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." The useful metals were near at hand, and every other convenience. Besides being fertile and wealthy, it was prepared for immediate habitation. The tribes had not to build houses, they inhabited what others had builded; they had not to plant vineyards, but to eat the fruit of former labors. All things were waiting for the true heirs of the land. Beloved, when faith gets her heritage in Christ, she is brought into a wealthy place. When sin is driven out, and we come to live in God's own land, then we find precious treasure; we dig, and we are enriched. We have all things in Christ; yea, in him we have all that our utmost want can require. As he has gone in heaven to prepare a place for us, so on earth he has already prepared, in the covenant of grace, everything that is needed for the way home. Why do we not take possession of that which he has prepared for us?

This heritage, upon which we are now looking down from the summit of our faith, is full of variety. In Palestine there were fertile plains and rich valleys, between rising hills and towering mountains. It was a land of brooks and rivers, a land which the Lord God thought upon. It was, in those days, the joy of all the earth: it was as the garden of the Lord for exceeding excellency. Beloved, if you come to Christ, you shall never need to go away from him to find variety of joys. In his teaching you shall find Lebanons of sublime doctrine, and Sharons of pleasant precept. Here are Hermions of experience, Tabors of communion, Jabboks of prevailing

prayer, and Cheriths of divine providence. The revelation of God is a blessed country, full of all manner of delights. They that live in Christ dwell in spiritual realms, which for light and joy are as heaven below. Above all things, it is “thy land, O Immanuel!” That is the dearest name for the Canaan of grace. The saints’ inheritance is the choicest form of life, and peace, and joy. We come to live with Christ, in Christ, for Christ, as Christ: we rise in him to fellowship with the Father, and with the church of the Firstborn. One heart sympathizes with all the purposes of God, and we joy in God himself. I cannot properly describe all this, but I live in the enjoyment of it. We live through our Lord, and with our Lord; and this is life eternal. This is “the life which is life indeed.” Compared with it all other life is death. Grace is glory in the bud: it will be full-blown by-and-by. This privilege is enjoyed none the less because of daily affliction, bodily pain, opposition, and reproach: it may even be enjoyed all the more because of these, if they are borne for Jesus’ sake. Our light afflictions are like the black shadows of a picture, which throw up the bright lights, and set them out more vividly. Christ Jesus becomes more and more precious to us when we have a straitness of earthly things. Yet this promised portion may be enjoyed if we have abundance of earthly things. God may multiply your possessions; and if he give you more of himself at the same time, they will not harm you. As you find all in God when you are poor, you shall find God in all when you are rich. Your life consists not in what you possess, nor in what you lack. You shall find in Christ a fullness, a soul-filling satisfaction; and this shall be a pledge of that something better which the Beloved has laid up in store for a still brighter day. What a word is that where we read of being “filled with all the fullness of God”! I do not think any man can exaggerate the possibilities that lie before believers. If any man shall draw a line, and say he can go no further, I must take leave to blot out that line: where God has set no bound, we will not allow a stop, lest, haply, we be found guilty of limiting the Holy One of Israel.

*“All our capacious powers can wish
In Christ doth richly meet.”*

All that is in Christ is meant for all believers, and therefore all believers may have all that is in Christ, who is all in all. We should not be content with pence when he endows us with pounds. No child of God could ever yet say, “I have taken all that God can give me, and still I am wanting more.” God all-sufficient is our heritage, and he more than fills our deepest need, our highest aspiration.

Thus have we surveyed our measureless inheritance.

II. I beg you, in the next place, TO GLANCE AT THE TITLE DEEDS OF OUR INHERITANCE. We shall not require a lawyer to assist us in our examination; but if there should be here a legal critic who would like to overhaul our papers, he is welcome to do so. I would not mind exhibiting our title before the whole bench of judges, for it has no flaw in it, and will stand in the highest court-yea, even in the last judgment. I have pleaded this incomparable title in several courts already, and it has been found to convey to me a valid gift. Here is the title deed, "The land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." It is repeated further on, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." This is an abstract of our title.

First, notice its covenant character. "I have given it to you." The Lord had given it to them from of old when he promised it to their father Abraham. When the deep sleep fell upon him, and he saw the vision of the burning lamp and the smoking furnace, then the Lord gave to him the wide domain, and he mentions in detail all the tribes which then held the inner circle. You will find the full conveyance in the fifteenth of Genesis, beginning at the eighteenth verse: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." Thus they came into possession by an ancient deed of gift which entailed it upon them from generation to generation. I am glad that our tenure of the kingdom of grace is ancient and well established, and that it is not so much with us, directly, as with One infinitely greater, with whom it stands fast for ever. Had the covenant been made with me individually, I should fear that my unworthiness would vitiate it; but it is made with One whose name forbids all fear of forfeiture. The covenant of grace is not made with you or with me individually, because of our personal righteousness; but it is made with our Covenant Head and Representative, whose life and death have sealed and ratified it. As the Lord could never run back from his promise to righteous Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," so will he never return from his promise which he gave to us in our blessed Covenant Head. He has given us an inheritance by an act of sovereign grace, and not because of any goodness in ourselves, and his gift will never be recalled, since the ground of it never alters. Each believer may say, "He hath in

Christ Jesus made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: and therefore do I possess all spiritual blessings, and shall possess them world without end."

Observe, next, that this deed of gift is notable for its graciousness. How does it run? Which I do sell to them? Ah, no! It is no sale, but a free gift. Does it say, "Which I do offer to them if they will earn it"? No, no: it is a present unconditional grant of sovereign love. Nothing is freer than a gift: "the gift of God is eternal life." He has given us all things for nothing, that we might behold the exceeding riches of his grace.

Note well the righteousness of our title—"Which I do give to them." The Lord God has a right to give what he pleases, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Of his own has he given unto us. In the great sacrifice of his dear Son he has satisfied all claims of justice, and he acts justly when he blesses largely those for whom Jesus died. When a man has the freehold of his land, he has a right to give it away if so it pleases him: the Most High God is possessor of all things, and when he says to his people "I give you this," who shall dispute his right? The blessings of the covenant of grace are a royal gift: they come to us by divine right. Who shall question Jehovah's will? He asks peremptorily, "Shall I not do as I will with my own?" That which grace has given us is ours by a surer title than anything else can ever be.

Do not fail to see its sureness. He not only says, "I have given it," and in some other places, "I will give it," but he declares "I do give it." God gives Christ and his grace to us every day. The blessings of the covenant are continually fresh gifts of his hand. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, he has made over the covenant possessions to us, and if it were to be done again he would do it without hesitation. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "I do give," saith he, and thus he stands to his act and deed. O children of God, what do you think of your title deeds? You stand possessed of your kingdom by the gift of him who has a right to give what he pleases. The kingdom is given you because it is your Father's good pleasure to give it to you. Not only was it his good pleasure, but it remains so. What great simpletons we are if we do not take possession of the brave country which is ceded to us! Does God give, and do we decline to accept? Does God give, and do we let the blessing lie untouched? O sheep, ye well deserve to starve if ye will not feed on the pastures into which the good Shepherd leads you. The highest privileges of

the covenant of grace are not the monopoly of advanced saints, they are the common property of all believers. A habit is growing up of saying, "Such and such a man is a saint"; and then you set him up in a niche after the fashion of Rome. Are not you also a saint? You will never enter heaven unless you are. If you are a saint, why not take a saint's inheritance? "Oh, but certain chosen ones are the Lord's favourites!" What! Has he not also chosen you, and favored you? Else it will go hard with you. Well, then, being yourselves favored and chosen, why do you not take hold upon the glorious estate which belongs to the chosen family. No part of Scripture is of private interpretation: no bit of the promised country may be hedged in as the peculiar portion of a few; for it all belongs to all the redeemed if they have but faith to make it their own. Do not hedge about the word spoken of the Lord, and say, "Ah! he said that to Jacob." Doth not the Lord tell us by his servant Hosea that "he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us"? (Hosea 12:4.) Although choice words were first of all spoken to this man or that, yet were they spoken for all believing people throughout all time. In the holy heritage all who have Christ have all that Christ brings with him. "If children, then heirs"-not if grown-up children, not if comely children, nor if vigorous children, but "if children, then heirs." If you are not children, what will become of you? but "if children, then heirs." Come, brethren, bestir yourselves, and claim your heirship. Take possession of the whole territory of grace which the Lord has dedicated to your use.

III. Now I have brought you to the third point-LET US MAKE A MOVE TOWARDS OUR POSSESSION. There is your land, but Jordan rolls between.

The first thing to do in this matter is to go over this Jordan. What do we mean? Out in the wilderness as a seeker, whose faith does not enter in, you are like a sheep which wanders from the fold, and you find little rest. You are apt to be numbered with the Bedouin of the desert, and not with the people of the Lord. Come out from the world, and be separate. The land of gracious experience is meant for you to dwell in, so that you may be recognized as the Lord's peculiar people, separated unto the Most High. Are you ready to come right out, to be settled in Immanuel's land, to break every link with "the world which lieth in wickedness"? I have heard a great deal of talk about this separation, but I have seen these very talkers hesitate when the decisive act of separation from false doctrine and unholy living has been expected of them. I pray you hear the divine voice, which crieth, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father

unto you, and ye shall be my sons and. daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” It is required of you, in order to your full entrance into the grace state, that you take up a decided stand on the Lord’s side. On the other side of Jordan is your portion, and not in the wilderness of Sin. Did I hear you say to yourself, “Suppose I am beaten?” Well, you cannot retreat from the land, for there is no bridge over the Jordan. The river effectually bars all retreat. Are you willing to make a life decision? Will you draw the sword and burn the scabbard? It is death or glory with you. May you have grace to take the one irreversible step, and be the Lord’s, wholly and only, for ever! You can never take the kingdom of grace until with deliberate resolve you quit the sand of the desert for the soil of Canaan. A balloon cannot go up into the sky until the last rope is cut. Oh, for that sharp, decisive step, by which, like Abraham, you come out from your father’s house that you may be a sojourner with God in the land which his grace will show you.

Having decided for the Lord, you are next to take possession by an act of simple faith. The Lord says to you, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.” This is an easy way of taking land: to put your foot down upon it. I delight in that word of the Lord to Jacob, when he lay asleep, “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.” If you can, by faith, lie down on a promise, and find rest in it, it is yours. Every place in the grace country upon which the sole of your foot shall tread is yours. You will remember that the Red Indians agreed to sell to William Penn as much land as a man could walk round in a day; and I do not wonder that at the end of the day they complained that the white brother had made a big walk. I think I should have put my best leg foremost, if whatever I could put my foot upon would be mine; would not you? Why, then, do you not hurry up in spiritual matters? Do you value earthly things more than spiritual? Mark, then, that if you put your foot down upon a blessing, and say, “This is mine,” it is yours. What a very simple operation is the claim of faith! You do not want to pass through the Universities to learn that: it is grasping with the hand, or appropriating with the foot. Many of the Lord’s poor and unlearned ones obtain more from the promise than the more cultured ever do. The learned man lifts his head up, but the simple put their foot down; and this last is the way to the inheritance. By criticism you may put your foot in it, but by faith you put your foot on it. Strangers cavil, children claim. He that can trust his Lord may say, “In the name of the living God this blessing is mine.” Come, then,

brother, if there be more holiness, put your foot on it; if there be more happiness, put your foot on it; if there be more usefulness, put your foot on it. Lay your claim to all that is put within your reach in Scripture; this is the victory that overcometh the world, and conquereth Canaan, even our faith.

But the Canaanite was there! Yes, I know it; but you see he had no right there: the Lord had outlawed him. The land was Israel's by the Lord's gift, and they had a right to fight for the possession of their own estates. They first put their foot on it, and it was theirs; and then they said to the aboriginal Canaanites, "Clear out"! The old nations had forfeited their lease through breach of covenant, and they were therefore to give up possession to the incoming tenants, whose right was indefeasible. God's people are in conflict with sin, and they carry out this war vigorously when they have first seen their right to the blessings of grace, as given them of the living God. You may not claim a piece of land unless you are sure that it is really yours; you are a thief if you do. But when you are sure that an estate is rightfully yours, then you commence your action, and strive to win it. In spiritual things, waive no spiritual right. Say to sin, that now mars your peace, "Peace is mine, clear out!" Say to sin, that stops your usefulness, "That usefulness is mine, I claim it: clear out!" "Hivite, Jebusite, Girgashite, whatever sort of fellow you are, clear out of my heart and life, for holiness is mine. God, the sovereign possessor of all things, has given us our redeemed nature, to have and to hold for his glory, and we mean to have it!"

Each blessing is yours, since you put the foot of faith upon it; but the actual enjoyment of it will need a struggle. War! war! war! with every Canaanite! Break their images, and cut down their groves. They must be driven out at the sword's point. You have God's help with you in this holy battle. Your warfare will be accomplished, for the Lord himself has said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

I long to encourage you, my friends, to carry on this sacred crusade. I would have you grasp all which the hand of love holds out to you. Need I urge you? If there be such need, you are in a sorry way. I do not believe that if I should read from this pulpit that my friend John Smith, over there, had been left five thousand acres of land, I should require to follow him home to persuade him to go and look at it. If my sister yonder received a notification that a very nice little estate had been left her in the country, I

do not believe I need beg her to look after it. She would take an early train to-morrow morning to go and look over her farm. Brethren, here is an inheritance so broad, and wide, and lasting; why do you not hasten to take it? There is holiness, do you not want it? There is serenity, do you not desire it? There is joy unspeakable and full of glory, do you not wish for it? There is usefulness, do you not hunger for it?

This is the reason why some are so indifferent: they are ignorant: they do not even know that these choice blessings are to be had. But all that any child of God was, you may be; all the joy, and bliss, and holiness ever enjoyed on earth, you may enjoy. The land is before you; go in to possess it. Do not be without the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, for in him is "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Some of our dear friends hear a doctrine which is gospel and water; and they really do not know what the undiluted gospel is. The doctrines of grace are the cream which many cautious preachers skim from the milk of the Word lest it should prove too rich for the stomachs of their hearers. A solid portion of Calvinistic doctrine is like a joint of nourishing meat, and the people of this generation are such babes that they cannot digest it. It is too rich for me!" cries one. I know it, I know it. But I pray the Lord to make you grow into men, who can enjoy the fat things full of marrow, and the wines on the lees well refined. There are glorious truths of which beginners know nothing, and through not knowing of them they miss much joy. Full many a child of God goes fretting and worrying when he ought to be singing and rejoicing, and would be so if he knew what God has provided for him.

Many do not possess the land because of unbelief.

*"Alas! it seems too good to be true."
"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all."*

Yes, that is quite true; but are you going to sing that one line for ever? Is that your style of singing?-one line for ever? If our leader, just now, when we sang the hymn, had kept on with-"Behold, what wondrous grace!" "Behold, what wondrous grace!" it would have been very sweet: but I should have pulled his coat-tail, and said, "Go on with the whole verse." So, in this case, you say-"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all." Why not go on to sing-

"But Jesus Christ is my all in all"?

You are empty, but Jesus fills you. You are in prison, but Jesus sets you at liberty. Why not rejoice in that liberty? The Lord deliver us from unbelief, for it is enough to shut any man out of the inheritance.

Many are indolent, Oh, the laziness of some of God's people! I will not enlarge upon this matter, probably you know something about it yourselves.

Lastly, the indecision of a great many is another cause why they do not possess the land. There is a hesitancy to go up and seizer it. They mean to be better Christians before they die. I wonder how many Christians here would like to finish their lives to-day! Would your life, if now ended, be a life worth living? Suppose it were now threatened to be cut short, would you not pray with anguish, "Lord, let me live a little longer, that I may distribute more of my money to thy cause, may bear better testimony to thy truth, and may set my house in order"? Set your house in order at once, my brother. Give away a 'full portion of your substance immediately. Begin to work for Jesus at once. Why should you hesitate? You blame the sinner when he delays; surely the saint is to be blamed, too, when he also lingers.

I have done when I have said to any soul here that is seeking the Lord, if you to-day come in, and accept the blessings of the covenant, you may have them, and welcome. Do not say to yourself, "It will be a presumptuous thing for me to believe in Jesus." It will be a kind of presumption which has no sin in it. If a rich man, in one of the famine-stricken districts of China, were to say to his servant, "Provide a great feast, and set it out in the street"; and he were then to put up a notice to hungry Chinamen, "Whosoever will may come," I do not think that, if I were a hungry Chinaman, I should stop away from the dinner from fear of presumption. I should fall to, and ask no questions, for my stomach's sake, if for nothing else. O poor, doubting sinner, you had better do the same. Feed freely, and fear not. When God's cry is "Come, and welcome," come at once, and ask no question; or if a question does arise, let your hunger answer, and tell you that you must. God gives his grace freely; freely take it. Come, let us sing together that little ditty:

*"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me;
And on the cross he shed his blood
From sin to set me free.*

This will be a blessed morning for you, if you can not only sing it, but carry it out at once, by a simple faith in our living, risen, reigning Savior. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

GRACE FOR GRACE.

NO. 2087

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 19TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” — 1 Corinthians 2:12.

THE course of our fallen race has been a succession of failures. Whenever there has been an apparent rise, it has been followed by a real fall. Into ever-increasing darkness the human mind seems resolved to plunge itself in its struggles after a false light. When men have been fools, they have danced in a delirium of sin; when they have been sober, they have given themselves up to a phantom wisdom of their own, which has revealed their folly more than ever. It is a sad story, the story of mankind! Read it in the light of God's Word, and it will bring tears from your very heart.

The only hope for man was that God should interpose; and he has interposed, as though he began a new creation, or wrought a resurrection out of the kingdom of death. God has come into human history, and here the bright lights begin. Where God is at work in grace, abounding sin is conquered, hope begins, and good becomes perceptible. This better state is always markedly the effect of a break in the natural course of things, a supernatural product which would never have been seen in this poor world had it been let alone. See yonder avalanche rushing down the steep mountain-side; such is humanity left to itself. Lo, God in Christ Jesus throws himself in the way; he so interposes as to be crushed beneath the descending rocks. But, beloved, he rises from the dreadful burial; he stops the avalanche in its terrible career; he hurls back the tremendous mass, and changes the whole aspect of history. In this divine interposition, of which

the Bible gives us the best record, to which, I trust, our experience has added a happy appendix, we behold and adore the almighty grace of God.

In the interposition of omnipotent grace, we note that the Lord so works as to preserve his own glory. He takes care that no flesh shall glory in his presence. He might have used the power of the great, but he has not; he might have instructed man by man's own wisdom, but he has not; he might have declared his gospel with the excellency of human speech, but he has not. He has taken for his tools, not the armor of a king, but the sung of a shepherd; and he has placed his treasure of truth, not in the golden vase of talent, but in the earthen vessels of lowly minds. He has not made men speak for him under the spell of genius, but as they have been moved by his Holy Spirit. The Lord of hosts will save men, but he will not give men a yard of space for boasting; he will grant them a salvation, which shall humble them in the dust and lead them to know that he is God, and beside him there is none else. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth." God's gracious interposition reveals his sovereignty, his wisdom, his power, his love, his grace; but it reveals nothing in men which can admit a boastful thought.

The Lord our God has worked in a way parallel with his central interposition, which is seen at the cross, where Jesus unveiled Jehovah's way of revealing power in weakness. It is in such a connection that Paul says, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He knew that there was nothing else to know. The plan of the cross is to conquer death by death, to remove sin by the endurance of the penalty, to work mightily by suffering terribly, to glorify himself by shame. The gibbet whereon Christ died was the abyss of reproach and the climax of suffering; but it was also the focus of God's interposing grace. He there glorified himself in connection, not with honor and power, but with shame and death. The great self-sacrifice of God is the great victory of grace. Beloved, it is most sweet to think that all the ways of God to men are in harmony with this way of the cross, and that the cross is the pattern of the Lord's constant method of accomplishing his designs of grace rather by weakness than by strength, by suffering rather than by the splendor of his majesty.

Let me also add, that this way which God has taken, by which he saves men and glorifies himself, is entirely suitable to the condition of those

whom he saves. If salvation had been by human excellence I could never have been saved. If the plan of salvation had required that in which a man might rightly glory, how could it have come to sinners without strength or goodness? Such a gospel would have been no gospel to us, for it would have been far out of our reach. God's plans are workable plans, suitable to the weakness of our fallen race. In Christ he comes to the wounded man where he is, and does not ask him, in his fainting condition, to come a certain part of the way. Grace does not begin half-way down the alphabet, but it is the Alpha of our hope.

It is my delightful task, though in much weakness, to set forth the exceeding freeness of the grace of God, and thus to set before you an open door, that you who have never entered may boldly do so; and that you who have already entered may sit within, and sing to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you "accepted in the Beloved." My text speaks of the gifts of God freely given to us, and of the way by which we may receive them, and come to know their excellence and value: in all these three things it shows us that everything is of grace — it is given of grace, it is received through grace, it is understood by grace. "Grace reigns," and grace alone.

This morning I shall speak, first, of the thing, which are freely given to us of God; secondly, of the power to receive them, which is also given, since it is spoken of as "received"; and, thirdly, of the knowledge of them, which is also given through the Spirit. When we have set forth these three things we shall have ranged through a wide domain of sovereign grace.

I. First, then, THE THINGS OF GOD ARE FREELY GIVEN.

All the blessings of salvation are a gift. All the inheritance of the covenant is a gift. All that which comes by our Lord Jesus to save and sanctify men is a gift. A gift is not a return for purchase-money. We are not asked, in any sense, to bring a price to God wherewith to purchase pardon, justification, or eternal life. Where the notion of purchase is for an instant hinted at, it is only to show more plainly how free is the blessing: "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." God freely gives his grace, expecting nothing in return, but that we do as freely receive as he does freely bestow; and even that free reception is a part of the gift which he bestows upon us. Be not feeling in your purse: money is useless as to purchasing salvation. Be not searching in your character, or in your resolutions, to find some little recommendation: neither the coins of the

merchant nor of the self-righteous are current here. The free grace of God would be insulted by being put up to auction, or set forth to sale. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is a gift, and not a prize. There are heavenly prizes to be run for, to be fought for, and to be obtained by divine help. There is a recompense of reward to which we are to look, and a crown for which we are to strive; but the grace that forgives sin, and works faith, is no prize for exertion, but a gift to those without strength. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Jehovah will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion, according to the good pleasure of his own will. Salvation is not granted to men as the result of anything they are, or do, or resolve to be, but it is the undeserved gift of heaven. If it were of works, it would not be of grace; but it is of faith, that it might be of grace alone.

The blessings of salvation are freely given us of God, therefore they are not a loan, handed to us for a time, and to be one day recalled. Our heavenly heritage is not held on lease, upon terms of annual payment: it is an unencumbered freehold to every man that hath by faith put his foot upon it. To give a thing and take a thing is for little children in their play; and even among them it is the subject of ridicule. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance on his part. When he has given it, the deed is done outright, and can never be reversed. O believer, if thy sin be blotted out, it can never be written in again! God has declared that he has forgiven our transgressions; and then he adds, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." There is no playing fast and loose in connection with the everlasting love of God and its glorious acts; if thou hast God, thou hast him by an eternal holding, of which none can deprive thee. "This God is our God for ever and ever." The better part which Jesus gives to his beloved shall not be taken away from us. The things of God are all of them free gifts, with no legal condition appended to them which would make their tenure one of payment rather than of absolute gift. We may not say that the blessings of salvation, such as pardon, justification, and eternal life, are gifts with an "if" in the core of them, rendering them uncertain. No, the gift of God is not temporary life, but "eternal life."

We will dwell for a minute upon the fact that saving blessings are the gifts of God. Some despise the work of salvation, and the blessings which accompany it; but, surely, they know not what they despise. Every part of

salvation, from its Alpha to its Omega, is to the highest degree precious, for it is of God. It is the gift of the heavenly King, the gift of the Almighty Sovereign, whose hand makes the gift priceless. If the Lord himself has given thee this or that blessing, thou shouldst prize the gift as coming from such a hand! That which thy father gave thee, preserve; for there is a sanctity in the gift of love. That which thy choice friend has given thee, wear it, and for his sake value it as the token of friendship. But that which thy God has given thee, prize above all things else; his touch hath perfumed it with unutterable fragrance. Value every part of the work of grace because it came from God and leads to God. God's gifts are always worthy of the giver. God gives not trinkets and counterfeits; his gifts are solid gold and lasting treasure. The gifts of divine grace have a quality of divinity about them: they are all God-like. The Lord gives upon a God-like style. His grace is like the rest of his nature. How art thou blest if thou art divinely pardoned and divinely justified! "It is God that justifieth." Who is he that condemneth?" Jehovah is thy strength and thy song, he also hath become thy salvation.

I like to think of every blessing of grace that I have received as coming from God; because each mercy then becomes prophetic of more. God is unchangeable, and therefore what he has given he will give again. "Still there's more to follow," is a popular way of putting a great truth. The stream which has begun to flow will never cease flowing. The more the Lord gives, the more we may expect. Every blessing is not only in itself a mercy, but it is a note of hand for more mercies. When we get the most of God's mercy that we can hold, we are by its greatness enlarged to receive still more. Realization begets expectation, and expectation increases realization. Each mercy as it comes makes room for another larger than itself, even as the narrow end of the wedge opens the way for its wider portion. Every mercy bears a thousand mercies in its bowels. John Bunyan said that God's flowers bloom double: not only do they bloom double, but they bloom sevenfold; and out of every one of those flowers there comes a seed which will yield seventy times seven. Therefore, be encouraged. The least of the things which are freely given to us of God draws behind it an endless chain of more than golden links of love. The seed of salvation, glory, and eternal life, is small as a grain of mustard seed; but he that hath it hath received what neither earth nor heaven can fully contain. What a mercy is a single mercy! I cannot talk to you about the gifts of God; you

must think over the subject. That which comes from God's own hand should be much on our mind.

I am going to dwell for a minute or two upon that word "freely" "The things that are freely given to us of God." Harken, ye that have never found grace yet; and sing while you listen, you that have found it, and are now enjoying it. "Freely given." "Well," say you, "the word 'given' is enough to express the meaning, is it not?" Yes, it would be enough, if men were willing to understand; but the additional word "freely" is meant to make the meaning doubly plain. When we say "grace," there is no need to say free grace, is there? Yet there are some people who will be conveniently deaf, if they can. We wish to speak so that they not only can understand us, but cannot misunderstand, if they try. The text is very expressive — "Freely given to us of God."

How is salvation "freely given"? It comes from God without compulsion. If a man is stopped on the road with, "Your money or your life," he gives his money; but it is not freely given. Now, none can force mercy from God; blessed be his name, there is no need to think of such a thing. God gives freely, that is, even without persuasion. God was never persuaded to be gracious. He is ready to pardon, and his grace persuades us to accept mercy. Our praying does not turn the heart of God to love us, but proves that we are turning to love him. It is because he is gracious that he sets us praying. You have not, poor sinner, to convert an unwilling God to be willing to forgive: the conversion is in your will, not in his will: "He delighteth in mercy." He persuades Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem, but Japhet does not need to persuade Jehovah to receive him. The fountain of divine love pours forth its streams of grace at all seasons without pressure. There is no need to tread the grapes of mercy to force forth their cheering juice. The paths of the Lord drop fatness, distilling spontaneously as the dew and the rain.

Yea, the grace of God is so free in its gifts that they come without suggestion. A man may be generous at heart, and yet he may need a hint to put it into his mind to relieve the needy. Mention a charity to him, and inform him that it is in need, and his guineas are forthcoming; but he needs a prompter. No one has prompted the grace of God. No one ever suggested any deed of bounty to God; out of his own heart the thought has come of itself. The gifts of his grace were in his eternal purpose from of old, and there of his own good pleasure. He freely instructs us how to pray

for those gifts which he has of old purposed to bestow. Our prayer does not instruct the Lord; it only shows that he has, in a measure, instructed us. He gives freely in the sense of absolute spontaneousness.

He also gives without grudging. We have known men say, "Well, I suppose I must give something; but these claims come terribly often; my purse is always being drawn upon; but I suppose I cannot get out of it without a subscription." He gives as if he were parting with his blood. His fingers tremble and linger long over the shilling, which has to be extracted as forcibly as if it were a tooth. One wonders that the Queen's image is left upon it when it has been held with such pressure. But the Lord gives out of the greatness of his heart, without so much as a trace of unwillingness. Even when the boon was his own Son, he freely delivered him up. There is never a grudge in the Lord's mind towards those who draw upon him the most largely and the most frequently. "He upbraideth not." Many who give take the opportunity to upbraid, saying, "I do not think you ought to have been in this plight. You must have been wasteful, and not so industrious as you ought to have been, or you would not be drawing upon me," and so on, until they have taken full compensation for their shilling out of the poor creature, who feels bound to endure the chastisement. God giveth liberally, and adds no sorrow therewith to those who humbly seek wisdom at his hands. Oh, the splendor of the generosity of God! He is ready to save — waiting to deliver. It delights him to bestow his goodness. The cost was paid long ago on Calvary's tree, and that is over. Since the great sacrifice has been presented, all the blessings of grace are freely given to us of God, with a willingness which shows that his heart goes with them.

Once more: you know that we use the word "freely" in the sense of bountifully. We say of such and such a person, "His banquet was spread with a free hand," or we say, "He helps his poor neighbors very freely"; that is to say, his gifts are without stint. The benefits bestowed by some are like the provisions of a workhouse, weighed out by ounces; but free grace does not limit itself by calculations, nor bound the applicant by estimates. As a free-handed housekeeper makes liberal provision, so does the Lord provide more than need demands. The mere crumbs from the Lord's table would suffice to feed multitudes. The Lord giveth not his Spirit by narrow measure: we are not straitened in him. Come along with you, you needy saint or sinner; the more you can take in the better pleased will the Lord be with you; and if, sitting at his table, you feel as if you could eat all that is upon it, hesitate not to make the trial, for you shall be heartily welcome.

Your capacity will fail long before the provision. The Lord desires you to open your mouth wide, and he will fill it: it is easier for him to give than for you to open your mouth. He encourages and requests you to bring large petitions with you when you come before his mercy-seat. Come and receive “the things that are freely given to us of God.”

I do not know whether I have made my intent quite so plain as I wanted to do; but this I would set before you — God gives his grace freely, in the most emphatic sense. His sovereign grace is of himself: “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” He is not compelled to be gracious by the force of our importunity, but he often gives to those who have never asked of him, as it is written: “I am found of those who sought me not.” He calls by his divine power those who aforetime were unwilling to come to him; even as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who received light and grace when he was in the act of persecuting the saints. God gives his grace as freely as the sun, which, as soon as it rises from its chambers in the east, “sows the earth with orient pearl.” See how freely it visits the tiny flower, which holds up its cup to have it filled with sunshine! How it peers into the glade of the forest, where, by the brook, the fern loves the shade. Whether the lark flies up to meet it, or the mole burrows in the earth to escape its light, the sun shines all the same. It fills the heavens and floods the earth with the brilliance which it is its nature to diffuse. The Lord comes by promise to those who seek him; but he comes also in sovereign grace to those who seek him not. He is coming this morning to some of you who look not for him; for he is like the dew, which waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of man. You came from the country, and you said that you would go and hear Spurgeon this morning; but you did not know that the Lord was about to save you. Give yourself up to the writ of grace, of which I am the officer this morning. Surrender your hearts to almighty love; and when you do so, you will perceive many of “the things that are freely given to us of God.”

Now, let us talk about what these things are. They are altogether immeasurable, these “things that are freely given to us of God.” Shall I tell you what they are in one word? GOD. God gives us God. God the Father gives himself to the unworthy sons of men. He becomes their Father and their friend. He gives them his wisdom, his power, his love, his immutability. He gives himself to men to be their possession for ever. In adoption he gives his fatherhood, and grants them sonship, so that they may cry, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” He gives them pardon and

acceptance. He grants them answers to their prayers in ten thousand ways. He gives them his Providence to guide and lead them. He gives them all they need for this life, and then he gives them an inheritance with himself for ever in the world to come. He who gave us Jesus, with him also freely gives us all things.

Beloved, the Son of God also gives himself. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Jesus gives his people his blood to wash out their sins, his righteousness to cover them with beauty, his intercession to plead their cause, and his enthronement to secure their victory. He gives his loving care to prepare a place for them in the sky; he gives his resurrection to bring them up from the grave, and his union with them to preserve them through the perils of life. We are married to himself, and so he freely gives his heart's love to us. Even his crown, his throne, and his heaven he freely gives to his chosen. Oh, what a gift of grace this is that is freely given to us of God! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." He is God's unspeakable gift. Nobody can speak it, for nobody can compass it within the range of thought.

The Holy Spirit also freely gives himself to us. He is the "free Spirit," and never freer than when he gives himself to enlighten, quicken, convert, comfort, and sanctify his people. He leads to repentance and to faith. He conducts to knowledge and holiness; he preserves and perfectly conforms us to the image of Christ. Thus see a summary of the things which are freely given to us of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

All things are yours, the free gifts of God. Now if Paul, when he was writing as an apostle, spoke of these things, not as what he had won or deserved, but as free gifts to him, you and I, poor sinners that we are, may well be glad to accept these priceless boons on the same terms. We are happy to think that these tenisons are laid at our door, with nothing to pay and nothing to do but simply to accept them as the "things that are freely given to us of God." I have used simple language, but my theme is sublime. The Lord bless it!

II. Our second head is: THE POWER TO RECEIVE THESE GIFTS IS ALSO FREELY GIVEN. Some of you are saying, "I see very clearly that salvation is the gift of God, but how can I get it? How can I apprehend these blessings, and make them my own?" Dear friend, the text says, "We have received the spirit which is of God." The power with which we receive these gifts,

which God freely gives, is the power of the Holy Ghost; and this, also, we do not purchase or deserve, but we freely receive it.

The power to grasp Christ does not lie in our nature in its own strength or goodness. Our state is that of death, and death cannot grasp life. God the Holy Spirit must breathe life into us before we can rise from the grave of our natural depravity, and lay hold upon Christ, who is our life. It is not in unrenewed human nature even to see the kingdom of God, much less to enter it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

The power to receive the things of God lieth not in high gifts or attainments. We may not think that a Homer, or a Socrates, or a Plato would be able to obtain the things of God more readily than common men. Genius is no help towards grace. Indeed, great talent and great learning often miss the way where lowliness travels with ease. Do not sit down and say, "I am a poor stupid, and cannot be taught of God." Or, "I am a humble countryman, or a poor woman keeping house for others; I cannot know these precious things." It is not so. Read the words of Paul in the first chapter of this epistle: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The power to receive the blessings of God does not lie in talent at all, but it lies in the Spirit of God. You think that if you had a long hand you could reach the grace of God. No, but if you have a withered hand, that grace can reach you. You suppose that if you had a clear eye you could see the Lord; ay, but if you have no eye but a blind one, the Lord can open it, and give you sight. Grace is not tied to the rare gifts of genius, nor to the precious acquirements of experience, nor to the high attainments of learning. No young child may say, "I cannot receive the things of God, for I am too young." Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he hath perfected praise. Persons who have had a long and instructive experience are often as far from grace as if they had never suffered anything. Persons who have taken degrees at the university may be still as ignorant as Hottentots concerning heavenly things. The power to receive is still of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does not find good in us, but brings it to us. "Well," says one, "but surely we must pass through a period of great anguish and distress before we can receive the things of God." Very often men do suffer greatly from a sense of guilt, and the fear of punishment before they lay hold on Christ; but they do not lay hold on Christ by this experience. The wounded man is not restored by his pains, the famishing man is not fed by his hunger. The power to lay hold on Christ is a spiritual

power, which must be given from above; it lies not concealed within, but is implanted by the Lord from without. No process of discipline, or education, or evolution, can enable a man to lay hold on the things of God. He must be born again from above, and his heart must be opened to receive the grace of God. A man can receive nothing unless it be given him to receive it, and that gift is the Holy Spirit.

The receptive power is not bestowed by human excitement, nor by the oratorical power of the preacher to whom the man listens. Possibly some have thought, "If I could hear so-and-so preach, I should then be able to believe." Put that thought away: you will believe in Jesus Christ when the Holy Spirit leads you to see how worthy your Savior is of your confidence. You will never believe in him if you are looking to yourself for the power to believe, rather than to the truth itself, and to that Spirit who can make the truth clear to you, and work in you to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Come, then, dear hearts, you that feel so dull and dead, and so strengthless that you cannot do anything, remember right confidently that the Holy Spirit can enable you to receive all the gifts of God. May he at this time bless the truth to you, and you will feel the soft, sweet influence of repentance, melting you to tears on account of sin: you will feel a something telling you that in Christ there is just what you want, and you will feel a resolve forming in your heart, "I will have it if it may be had." Then you will come to a solemn decision for the present hour, "I will have it now. I will even now rest in Jesus, who died for the ungodly. Once for all I will turn my eyes to the cross, and look to him that did hang upon it, and trust my soul's weight on him." That is how the work is done. You may not know at the time that the moving power is the Spirit of God, but no one else works us to this thing but the Holy Ghost. We do not see the Spirit, nor hear his voice, nor recognize his person at the time, but being emptied of self, and led to accept the things that are freely given to us of God, we are spiritually enriched, and then we perceive that it was all of grace by the free gift of the Spirit of God.

One thing I should like to say before leaving this point: remember there are two spirits: there is the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world. This last is everywhere active, and believers feel it to be their foe: it worketh evil, and only evil. Only the Spirit of God can save you: the spirit of the world will ruin all who yield to it. I warn you against the spirit of this age — the spirit of the world. Do not lay yourselves under the influence of the spirit of the world; for even if you are truly saved, its pestilential influence will injure

you. Are you seeking salvation? Keep clear of the spirit of the world as much as possible; and you will have no easy task, for its contagion will be found in men professing religion, but cunningly undermining it; and in books which pretend to reverence our Lord while they betray him. The religious world is more dangerous by far than the sensual world; it wears the sheepskin, but it has all the fierceness of the wolf. You cannot expect the Spirit of God to bless you if you yield to the spirit of the world. Do not meddle with that which is doubtful. There are works of fiction nowadays in abundance whose tendency is polluting: the world is drenched with them; avoid them as you would a bath of vitriol. If you would find eternal life, go where the Spirit of God works: search the Scriptures, and hear the truth through which the Spirit of God usually operates; and associate with those in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Hear that preaching which comes from God, for that alone will lead you to him. You can soon tell what sort the preaching is. I do not think you need stay ten minutes before you will find out whether it is according to the spirit of the world, or is in the power of the Spirit of God. Those two opposite spirits are waging a fierce battle at this hour; and, I grieve to say it, many who profess godliness are tainted with the spirit of the world. Take you good heed that you follow the right Spirit, for in so doing you will find the things which are freely given us of God, and with them glory, and immortality, and eternal life.

Now, I have done what I wanted to do, if I have made you feel how free salvation is. I would have you know that not only are the gifts of grace most free, but that the very hand with which we take the gift is nerved to do so by God's grace. Undeserved bounty bestows not only the money, but the purse in which we carry it home. God gives not only the blessing to the heart, but the heart to receive the blessing. Hallelujah!

III. My last head is this: THE KNOWLEDGE OF THESE GIFTS IS FREELY GIVEN.

This is so in the lowest and most ordinary sense, since a knowledge of the things freely given of God is communicated to our minds by the revelation contained in the inspired Scriptures. These sacred writings are open to all, and all are invited to search them. Read the Word of God, and you will know in the letter what are the free gifts of God to men. But this form of knowledge suffices not: we cannot savingly know the things of God by mere reading, neither can they be taught to us by a book. The head learns by nature, but the heart must learn by grace. The way to know the things of

God is for that which is written in the Word of God to be also written upon the heart by the same Spirit who wrote in the book. I heard about repentance, but I never knew repentance until I repented; I heard of faith, but I never knew faith until I believed; I heard of pardon, but I never knew pardon until I was washed in the blood of the Lamb; I read about justification by faith, but I was never justified till, by faith, I received the Lord Jesus to be my righteousness. Appropriation by faith gives an apprehension by the understanding: experimental enjoyment creates true acquaintance. Beloved, go to the Holy Spirit, and ask him to enable you to take the things which God freely gives, and when you possess them, you will “know” them.

If still you desire to know more of the infinite preciousness of the gifts of God, it is a wise ambition; and it will be fully and freely satisfied by the Holy Spirit. Resort to him, for he is the great Teacher; there is no instructor like him. His knowledge surpasses all other, for he knows the mind of God. No man can communicate to you what he does not know, and no man knows the mind of God but the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost knows the infinite and the unsearchable; and therefore he is able to teach you what you cannot learn elsewhere. The mind and meaning of God in every gift of grace the Spirit can unfold to you. There is no being taught effectually except you are taught of the Spirit of God. All other teaching is superficial, and therefore temporary and vain; but the Holy Spirit speaks to the soul, and writes the lines of truth on the fleshy tablets of the heart, so that they can never be erased. If you would know the things freely given us of God, the Holy Spirit must lead you into the inner secret of the sacred treasure-house.

By the same divine aid you must be enabled to feed upon these choice things, and have a full enjoyment of them. The things of God, as I have said before, are best known by a personal enjoyment of them. Who can know meat and drink except by living upon them? When you can feed upon a Scripture, when you can suck out the marrow of a doctrine, when you can extract the juice from a divine promise, when you are made fat and flourishing by inspired teaching, then hath the Lord made you freely to know the blessings of his covenant. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may be to you as the seven-branched lamp gladdening your eyes with his light, and as the loaves of the shewbread nourishing your heart, and then may he lead you within the veil, and make you to see the mercy-seat, and all the glory of the Lord your God! Oh, to realize that blessing, “All thy children shall be

taught of the Lord"! May we be taught by actual enjoyment and heavenly communion, so that we may come into holy familiarity with the choice things that are freely given to us of God. I do not know that I want to hear any lecture on bread; I know all that I want to know about that form of food, because I eat it every day; even so, we need little talk about covenant blessings, because they are the continual portion of our souls, our strength in every stage of our heavenward pilgrimage, and our song in anticipation of the eternal rest.

My dear brothers and sisters, go to this high-school of heaven. The terms are, "nothing to pay," though the education is beyond all other. Blessed school, wherein sinners are made saints, and saints are made to grow into the likeness of Jesus. Everything is as free in this university as in the first dame-school of humble faith, where the sinner learns repentance, and ventures to trust his Savior. Eternal life is the gift of God, in its first breathing; and it is still the gift of God in its highest development. When you stand before the throne of the Most High, you will stand there through grace alone. All along, from sin's pit to heaven's gate, without a break, the whole road is paved with grace. We do not begin with grace, and then go on to trust in works: we do not at first receive freely, and then afterwards have to live upon a hard-earned wage. No; still, still, still he worketh in us to will and to do, and we lovingly work under his divine guidance, as we are strengthened by his divine power.

Grace lays the foundation-stone, and

*"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."*

What of all this? Listen to me for a very few minutes more. I speak to those of you who know the things that are freely given to you of God. Learn from these things to be humble. If you know anything, you have been taught it. If you possess anything, it has been given you. You are a charity child. The clothes on your back are furnished by the Lord's favor. The bread in your mouth is the provision of his love. A proud saint is a contradiction in terms. "What hast thou which thou hast not received?"

In the next place, be generous. I cannot believe in a stingy saint. Here again there is a fiat contradiction in terms. All things are freely given you, are

you going to be mean over them? “Freely ye have received, freely give.” He who turns over the coin in his pocket, to make it as small as ever he can before he gives it, is a poor creature. He gets the smallest change on Saturday, that he may give it on Sunday. He is a saint, is he? Let those believe in his saintship who can. The child of God should be free-hearted. He should give himself away, because Jesus gave himself for us. You should be of large heart, for you serve a large-hearted Christ, who has given you all things freely to enjoy.

Next, be ready to impart what you know. If the Spirit of God has made you to know the things freely given of God, try to tell somebody else. Don’t act as if you had a patent, or a monopoly, and wanted grace to be a secret. You have not the gift of God yourself if you have no desire that others should have it. The first instinct of a converted man is to try to convert others. If you have no wish to bring others to heaven, you are not going there yourself.

Try and impart this knowledge in the way in which you received it. You received it by the Holy Spirit; then go and teach it, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but in the power of the Spirit of God. Last night I felt so unwell that I thought I should not be able to preach to-day; but I cheered myself with this reflection — if you cannot give wealth of illustration, if you can display no beauty of style, never mind, you can tell out the soul-saving truth in plain words, and God will own it. Holy Spirit, bless my feeble words this morning! Thou canst do it, and thou shalt have all the praise. Go to your Sunday-school class this afternoon, dear friend, and say, “Lord, put words into my mouth, and teach me, that I may teach others. Enable me to labor, not in the power of my knowledge, eloquence, or experience, but under the guidance of thy Spirit.” Better five words in the Spirit than a long oration in your own power.

Lastly, if the Lord has given us all these things freely, let us praise him. I did not mind hearing our brother over there cry out “Amen.” He may do it again, if he likes. Sometimes it is well to let the living water of praise to God burst the pipes, and flood the streets. What a dumb set we are! The Lord has to pull hard at the rope before our bell speaks at all. Let us praise him for what he has done for us, and make this vow this morning:

*“I will praise him in life, I will praise him in death,
And praise him as long as he lendeth me breath;
And say, when the death-clew lies cold on my brow,
‘If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, ‘tis now.’”*

The Lord himself bless you all, according to the riches of his grace. Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — 1 corinthians 1:18-31; 2

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 386, 491, 236.

THE FORM OF GODLINESS WITHOUT THE POWER.

NO. 2088

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 2ND, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:
from such turn away.”-2 Timothy 3:5.*

PAUL warns us of certain characters which will appear in the last times. It is a very terrible list. The like have appeared in other days, but we are led by his warning to apprehend that they will appear in greater numbers in the last days than in any previous age. “Lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” These will swarm like flies in the decay of the year, and will make the times exceeding perilous. We are nearing that period at this very time. That these people would, some of them, be within the church is the most painful part of it; but they will be so, for they are comprehended in this last clause of the black catalogue, which we have taken for our text-“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

Paul does not paint the future with rose-color: he is no smoothtongued prophet of a golden age, into which this dull earth may be imagined to be glowing. There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at last, this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture gives them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and who expect no rule

of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord, are nearer the mark. Apart from the second Advent of our Lord, the world is more likely to sink into a pandemonium than to rise into a millennium. A divine interposition seems to me the hope set before us in Scripture, and, indeed, to be the only hope adequate to the occasion. We look to the darkening down of things; the state of mankind, however improved politically, may yet grow worse and worse spiritually. Certainly, we are assured in verse thirteen that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." There will spring up in the Christian church, and round about it, a body of faithless men who profess to have faith; unsaintly men who will unite with the saints; men having the form of godliness, but denying the power. We may call these hard times, if we will, but we have hardly yet come to the border of those truly harder times when it will go hard with the church, and she shall need, even more than to-day, to cry mightily unto the Lord to keep her alive.

With this cloud upon our spirit, we come to the text itself. Let us consider it carefully, and may the Holy Spirit help us! True religion is a spiritual thing, but it necessarily embodies itself in a form. Man is a spiritual creature, but the human spirit needs a body in which to enshrine itself; and thus, by this need, we become allied to materialism; and if not "half dust, half Deity," as one has said, we are certainly both matter and soul. In each of us there is the form or body, and the soul or power. It is so with religion: it is essentially a spiritual thing, but it requires a form in which to embody and manifest itself. Christian people fall into a certain outward method of procedure, a peculiar outward mode of uttering their faith, which becomes to true godliness what the body is to the soul. The form is useful, the form is necessary, the form ought to be vitalized; just as the body is useful, and is necessary, and is vitalized by the soul. If you get both the form, as modelled in the Word of God, and the power, as bestowed by the Spirit of God, you do well, and are living Christians. If you get the power alone, without the ordained form, you somewhat maim yourself; but if you get the form without the power, then, you dwell in spiritual death. The body without the spirit is dead; and what follows upon death with flesh? Why, corruption, corruption so horrible, that even love itself has to cry, "Bury my dead out of my sight." So that if there be in any the body of religion without the life of religion, it leads to decay, and this to corruption; and that has a tendency to putridity of character. The raw material of a devil is an angel bereft of holiness. You cannot make a Judas except out of

an apostle. The eminently good in outward form, when without inward life, decays into the foulest thing under heaven. You cannot wonder that these are called “perilous times,” in which such characters abound. One Judas is an awful weight for this poor globe to bear, but a tribe of them must be a peril indeed. Yet, if not of the very worst order, those are enough to be dreaded who have the shadow of religion without its substance. Of such I have to speak at this time: from such may God give you grace to turn away! May none of us ever be spots in our feasts of love, or clouds without water carried about of winds; but this we shall be if we have the form of godliness without the power thereof. With great solemnity of soul I approach this subject, seeking from the Lord the aid of his Spirit, who makes the Word to be a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

First, I shall speak of the men, and secondly, of their folly, and when I have done that, I shall have some words of instruction to give by way of conclusion.

I. First, let us talk awhile of THE MEN. They had the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof. Note what they had, and then observe what they had not.

They had a form of godliness. What is the form of godliness? It is, first of all, attention to the ordinances of religion. These, so far as they are Scriptural, are few and simple. There is baptism, wherein, in figure, the believer is buried with Christ, that he may rise into newness of life; and there is the Lord’s Supper, wherein, in type and emblem, he feeds upon Christ, and sustains the life which came to him by fellowship with Christ’s death. Those who have obeyed the Lord in these two ordinances have exhibited in their own persons the form of godliness. That form is every way instructive to others, and impressive to the man himself. Every baptized person, and every communicant at the Lord’s table, should be godly and gracious; but neither baptism nor the communion will secure this. Where there is not the life of God in the soul, neither holiness nor godliness follows upon the ordinances; and thus we may have around us baptized worldlings, and men who go from the table of the Lord to drink the cup of devils. It is sad that it should be so. Such persons are guilty of presumption, falsehood, sacrilege, and blasphemy. Ah me! We sit beside such every Sabbath-day!

The form of godliness involves attendance with the assemblies of God’s people. Those who have professed Christ are accustomed to come together

at certain times for worship, and, in their assemblies, they join in common prayer and common praise. They listen to the testimony of God by his servants whom he calls to preach his Word with power. They also associate together in church fellowship for purposes of mutual help and discipline. This is a very proper form, full of blessing both to the church and to the world, when it does not die down into mere form. A man may go to heaven alone, but he will do better if he travels thither with Mr. Greatheart, and Father Honest, and Christiana, and the children. Christ's people are called sheep for one reason, that they love to go in flocks. Dogs do very well separately, but sheep do best in company. The sheep of Christ love to be together in the same pasture, and to follow in a flock the footsteps of the good Shepherd. Those who constantly associate in worship, unite in church-fellowship, and work together for sacred purposes, have the form of godliness, and a very useful and proper form it is. Alas! it is of no value without the power.

Some go further than public worship, for they use a great deal of religious talk. They freely speak of the things of God in Christian company. They can defend the doctrines of Scripture, they can plead for its precepts, and they can narrate the experience of a believer. They are fondest of talking of what is doing in the church: the tattle of the streets of Jerusalem is very pleasant to them. They flavour their speech with godly phrases when they are in company that will relish it. I do not censure them; on the contrary, I wish there were more of holy talk among professors. I wish we could revive the old habit, "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Holy conversation causes the heart to glow, and gives to us a foretaste of the fellowship of the glorified. But there may be a savor of religion about a man's conversation, and yet it may be a borrowed flavour, like hot sauces used to disguise the staleness of ancient meat. That religion which comes from the lips outward, but does not well up from the deep fountains of the heart, is not that living water which will spring up unto eternal life. Tongue-godliness is an abomination if the heart be destitute of grace.

More than this, some have a form of godliness upheld and published by religious activity. It is possible to be intensely active in the outside work of the church, and yet to know nothing of spiritual power. One may be an excellent Sunday-school teacher after a fashion, and yet have need to be taught what it is to be born again. One may be an eloquent preacher, or a diligent officer in the church of God, and yet know nothing of the

mysterious power of the Spirit of truth upon the heart. It is well to be like Martha in service; but one thing is needful, and that is, to sit at the Master's feet and learn, as Mary did. When we have done all the work our position requires of us, we may only have displayed the form of godliness; unless we hearken to our Lord, and from his presence derive power, we shall be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Brethren, I speak to myself and to each one of you in solemn earnestness; if much speaking, generous giving, and constant occupation could win heaven, we might easily make sure of it; but more than these are needful. I speak to each one of you; and if I singled out any one more than another to be the pointed object of my address, it would be the best among us—the one who is doing most for his Master, and who, in his inmost soul, is thinking, “That warning does not apply to me.” O my active and energetic brother, remember the word, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” If any of you dislike this searching sermon, your dislike proves how much you need it. He that is not willing to search himself should stand self-suspected by that unwillingness to look at his affairs. If you are right, you will not object to be weighed in the balances. If you are indeed pure gold, you may still feel anxiety at the sight of the furnace, but you will not be driven to anger at the prospect of the fire, for your prayer will be, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I need not enlarge further. You all know what a form of godliness is, and most of us who are here present hold fast that form: may we never dishonor it! I trust we are anxious to make that form accurate according to Scripture, so that our form of godliness may be that into which the earliest saints were delivered. Let us be Christians of a high type, cast in our Lord's own mould. But do not become sticklers for the form and neglect the inner life: that will never do. Shall we fight about a man's clothes, and allow the man himself to die?

But now, as these people had not the power of godliness, how did they come to hold the form of it? This needs several answers.

Some come by the form of godliness in an hereditary way. Their ancestors were always godly people, and they almost naturally take up with the profession of their fathers. This is common, and where it is honest, it is most commendable. It is a great mercy when, instead of the fathers, shall be the children; and we may hopefully anticipate that our children will

follow us in the things of God, if by example, instruction, and prayer, we have sought it before the Lord. We are unhappy if we do not see our children walking in the truth. Yet the idea of birthright membership is an evil one, and is as perilous as it is unscriptural. If children are taken into the church simply because of their earthly parentage, surely this is not consistent with that description of the sons of God which is found in the inspired Scripture—"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Not generation, but regeneration, makes the Christian. You are not Christians because you can trace a line of fleshly descent throughout twenty generations of children of God; but you must, yourselves, be born again; for except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Many, no doubt, lay hold naturally on the form of godliness because of family ties: this is poor work. Ishmael is a sorry son of Abraham, and Esau of Isaac, and Absalom of David. Grace does not run in the blood. If you have no better foundation for your religion than your earthly parentage, you are in a wretched case.

Others have accepted the form of godliness by the force of authority and influence. They were, as lads, put apprentice to godly men; as girls, they were under the guidance of pious teachers; and, as they grew up, they came under the influence of persons of superior intelligence and character, who were on the Lord's side. This accounts for their form of godliness. Many persons are the creatures of their surroundings; religion or irreligion is with them the result of circumstances. Such persons were led to make a profession of faith in Christ because others did so, and friends encouraged them to do the same. The deep searching of heart, which they ought to have exhibited, was slurred over, and they were found among the people of God without having to knock for entrance at the wicket-gate. I do not wish any one to condemn himself because he was guided to the Savior by godly friends-far from it; but, nevertheless, there is danger lest we fail to have personal repentance and personal faith, and are content to lean upon the opinions of others.

So have I seen the form of godliness taken up on account of friendships. Many a time courtship and marriage have led to a formal religiousness, lacking heart. The future husband is induced to make a profession of religion for the sake of gaining one who was a sincere Christian, and would not have broken her Lord's command to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Godliness should never be put on in order that we may put a wedding ring upon the finger: this is a sad abuse of religious profession.

Other kinds of friendship, also, have led men and women to profess a faith they never had, and to unite themselves visibly with the church, while in spirit and in truth they were never truly a part of it. I put these things to you that there may be great searchings of heart among us all, and that we may candidly consider how we have come by our form of godliness.

Certain persons assume the form of godliness from a natural religious disposition. Do not suppose that all unconverted people are without religion. Much religiousness is found in the heathen, and there are races which have naturally more of reverence than others. The German, with his profound philosophy, is often free, not only from superstition, but from reverence; while the Russian is by race naturally religious, not to say superstitious. I am speaking after the manner of men: the usual Russian takes off his hat to holy places, pictures, and persons, and he is little inclined to disbelieve or scoff. We perceive like differences among our own acquaintances: one man is readily fooled by sceptics, while another is ready, with open mouth, to believe every word. One is naturally an infidel, another is as naturally credulous. I mean, then, that to some the form of godliness commends itself, because they have a natural leaning that way. They could not be happy unless they were attending where God is worshipped, nor unless they were reckoned among the believers in Christ. They must play at religion, even if they do not make it their life business. Let me remind you of the questionable value of that which springs out of fallen human nature. Assuredly, it brings no one into the spiritual kingdom, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “Ye must be born again.” Beware of everything which springs up in the field without the sowing of the husbandman, for it will turn out to be a weed. O sirs, the day will come when God will try us as with fire, and that which comes of unregenerate nature will not stand the test, but will be utterly consumed.

I do not doubt that, in these silken days, many have a form of godliness because of the respect it brings them. Time was when to be a Christian was to be reviled, if not to be imprisoned, and, perhaps, burned at the stake. Hypocrites were fewer in those days, for a profession cost too much; yet, strange to say, there were some who played the Judas even in those times. To-day religion walks forth in her velvet slippers; and in certain classes and ranks, if men did not make some profession of religion, they would be looked upon with suspicion, and therefore men will take the name of Christian upon them, and wear religion as a part of full dress. The cross is

at this day worn as a decoration. The cross as the instrument of our Savior's shame and death is forgotten, and instead thereof, it is made the badge of honor, a jewel wherewith ungodly men may adorn themselves. Is this indicative of the deceitfulness of the age? Beware of seeking respect by a hypocritical godliness. Honour gained by a heartless profession is, in God's sight, the greatest disgrace. The actor may strut in his mimic royalty, but he must take off his crown and robes when the play is over; and what will he then be?

From the days of Iscariot until now, some have taken up the form of godliness to gain thereby. To make gain of godliness is to imitate the son of perdition. This is a perilous road, and yet many risk their souls for the lucre which they find therein. Apparent zeal for God may really be zeal for gold. The Emperor Maximilian showed great zeal against idolatry, and published a decree that images of gold and silver should be melted down. He was extremely zealous about this. The images were all to be melted down, and the metal forfeited to the emperor. It was shrewdly suspected that this great iconoclast was not altogether swayed by unselfish motives. When a business brings grist to the mill, it is not hard to keep to it. Some love Christ because they carry his bag for him. Beware of that kind of godliness which makes a man hesitate until he sees whether a duty will pay or not, and then makes him eager because he sees it will answer his purpose.

Once more: I do not doubt that a form of godliness has come to many because it brings them ease of conscience, and they are able, like the Pharisee, to thank God that they are not as other men are. Have they not been to church? Have they not paid for their pew? They can now go about their daily business without those stings of conscience which would come of neglecting the requirements of religion. These people profess to have been converted, and they are numbered with believers; but, alas! they are not of them. Of all people these are the hardest to reach, and the least likely to be saved. They hide behind the earth-works of a nominal religion; they are out of reach of the shot and shell of gospel rebukes; for these fly among the sinners, and they have taken up their quarters among the saints. Sad is that man's plight who wears the name of life but has never been quickened by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, I have very feebly tried to show what these men had, and why they had it.

Let us now remember what they did not have. They had “the form” of godliness; but they denied “the power.” What is that power? God himself is the power of godliness, The Holy Spirit is the life and force of it. Godliness is the power which brings a man to God, and binds him to him. Godliness is that which creates repentance towards God, and faith in him. Godliness is the result of a great change of heart in reference to God and his character. Godliness looks towards God, and mourns its distance from him; godliness hastens to draw nigh, and rests not till it is at home with God. Godliness makes a man like God. Godliness leads a man to love God, and to serve God; it brings the fear of God before his eyes, and the love of God into his heart. Godliness leads to consecration, to sanctification, to concentration. The godly man seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and expects other things to be added to him. Godliness makes a man commune with God, and gives him a partnership with God in his glorious designs; and so it prepares him to dwell with God for ever. Many who have the form of godliness are strangers to this power, and so are in religion worldly, in prayer mechanical, in public one thing, and in private another. True godliness lies in spiritual power, and as they are without this, they are dead while they live.

What is the general history of those who have not this power? Well, dear friends, their course usually runs thus: they do not begin with denying the power, but they begin by trying to do without it. They would like to become members of the church, and as they fear that they are not fit for it, they look about for something which looks like conversion and the new birth. They try to persuade themselves that they have been changed: they accept emotion as regeneration, and a belief of doctrine for belief in Christ. It is rather hard at first to reckon brass as gold, but it grows easier as it is persisted in. Patching up a conversion, and manufacturing a regeneration, they venture forward. At the first they are a good deal suspicious of themselves, but they industriously kill every question by treating it as a needless doubt. Thus, by degrees, they believe a lie.

The next step is easy: they deceive themselves, and come to believe that they are surely saved. All is now right for eternity, so they fancy; and they fold their arms in calm security. Meeting with godly people, they put on a bold front, and speak up as bravely as if they were the true soldiers of King Jesus. Good people are charmed to meet with fresh brethren, and at once take them into their confidence. Thus they deceive others, and help to strengthen themselves in their false hope. They use the choice phrases of

earnest Christians. Mixing with them, they pick up their particular expressions, and pronounce Shibboleth in the most approved fashion.

At last they take the daring step of denying the power. Being without it themselves, they conceive that others are without it also. Judging from their own case, they conclude that it is all an affair of words. They get on very well without any supernatural power, and others, no doubt, do the same; only they add a little cant to it to please the very godly folk.

They practically deny the power in their lives, so that those who see them and take them for Christians say, "There really is nothing in it; for these people are as we are. They have a touch of paint here, and a little varnish there, but it is all the same wood." Practically, their actions assure the world that there is no power in Christianity; it is only a name. Very soon, privately, in their hearts they think it is so, and they invent doctrines to match. Looking about them, they see inconsistent Christians and faulty believers, and they say to themselves, "There is not much in faith, after all. I am as good as any of these believers, and perhaps better, though I am sure there is no work of the Spirit in me." Thus, within their own hearts they believe, what, at first, they dare not speak: they count godliness an empty thing. By-and-by, in some cases, these people profanely deny the divine power of our holy faith, and then they become the greatest enemies of the cross of Christ. These traitors, nourished in the very house of God, are the worst foes of truth and righteousness. They ridicule that which once they professed to reverence. They have measured Christ's corn with their own bushel; and because they never felt the powers of the world to come, they imagine that no one else has done so. Look at the church of the present day; the advanced school, I mean. In its midst we see preachers who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. They talk of the Lord Jesus, but they deny his Godhead, which is his power; they speak of the Holy Spirit, but deny his personality, wherein lies his very existence. They take away the substance and power from all the doctrines of revelation, though they pretend still to believe them. They talk of redemption, but they deny substitution, which is the essence of it; they extol the Scriptures, but deny their infallibility, wherein lies their value; they use the phrases of orthodoxy, and believe nothing in common with the orthodox. I know not which to loathe the most, their teachings or their spirit: surely they are worthy of each other. They burn the kernel and preserve the husk. They kill the truth, and then pretend to reverence its sepulcher; "they say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." This is horrible,

but the evil is widely spread, and in the presence of it the children of God are framing compromises, selling their Lord, and becoming partakers with the despisers of his truth. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." It is the sin of the age-the sin which is ruining the churches of our land.

II. In the second place, we are to observe THE WICKED FOLLY of this hypocritical conduct. Those who rest in the mere show of godliness are acting in a shameless manner, and I will try to expose it.

First, they degrade the very name of Christ. Brethren, if there is no spiritual power in godliness, it is worth nothing. We want no clouds without rain. Of shams and mere pretences we have more than enough. Those who have not the power of godliness, show us a very damaging picture of religion. They make out our Lord's religion to be comparable to a show at a country fair, with fine pictures and loud drumming on the outside, and nothing within worth a moment's consideration. The best of the show is on the outside; or if there be anything within, it is a masquerade where all act borrowed parts, but no one is what he seems to be. Gracious Lord, never suffer us so to act as to make the world think that our Redeemer is nothing more than the clever manager of a theater, where nothing is real, but all is pantomime. Men and brethren, if you pray at all, pray God to make you real, through and through. May you be made of true metal! It were better for you that you had never been born than that you should make Christ dishonorable among the sons of men, by leading them to conclude that religion is all a piece of acting.

The folly of this is illustrated by the fact that there is no value in such a dead form. The form of godliness without the power is not worthy the trouble it takes to put it together, and keep it together. Imitation jewels are pretty and brilliant; but if you take them to the jeweller he will give you nothing for them. There is a religion which is all paste gems-a godliness which glitters, but is not gold; and in that day when you will want to realize something from it, you will be wretchedly disappointed. A form of godliness joined to an unholy heart is of no value to God. I have read that the swan was not allowed to be offered upon the altar of God, because, although its feathers are as white as snow, yet its skin is black. God will not accept that external morality which conceals internal impurity. There must be a pure heart as well as a clean life; the power of godliness must

work within, or else God will not accept our offering. There is no value to man or to God in a religion which is a dead form.

Next, there is no use in mere formality. If your religion is without spiritual life, what is the use of it? Could you ride home on a dead horse? Would you hunt with dead dogs? Would any one like to go into battle with a pasteboard helmet? When the sword fell on it, what use would such a helmet be? What an outcry has been raised about bad swords! Is false religion any better? In the depth of winter, can you warm yourself before a painted fire? Could you dine off the picture of a feast when you are hungry? There must be vitality and substantiality, or else the form is utterly worthless; and worse than worthless, for it may flatter you into deadly self-conceit.

Moreover, there is no comfort in it. The form without the power has nothing in it to warm the heart, to raise the spirits, or to strengthen the mind against the day of sickness, or in the hour of death. O God, if my religion has been a mere form, what shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? My fine profession will all disappear, and nothing will come of it wherewith I may face the last enemy. Peter called hypocrites "wells without water." You are thirsty, and you gladly spy a well. It is well surrounded with a curb, and provided with a windlass and bucket. You hasten to draw water. What! Does the bucket come up empty? You try again. How bitter is your disappointment! A well without water is a mockery. It is a mere pit of destruction, a deadly delusion. Are some of you possessors of a religion which never yields you a drop of comfort? Is it a bondage to you? Do you follow Christ as a slave follows his master? Away with such a religion! The godliness which is worth having is a joy to a man: it is his choice, his treasure, his all. When it does not yield him conscious joy, yet he prizes it as the only source from which joy is expected by him. He follows after Christ *con amore*, out of his heart's desire after him, and not from the force of fashion, or the power of fear.

To have the form of godliness without the power of it is to lack constancy in your religion. You never saw the mirage, but those who have traveled in the East, when they come home are sure to tell you about it. It is a very hot and thirsty day, and you are riding on a camel. Suddenly there rises before you a beautiful scene. Just a little from you are brooks of water, flowing between beds of osiers and banks of reeds and rushes. Yonder are palm trees and orange groves. Yes, and a city rises on a hill, crowned with

minarets and towers. You are rejoiced, and ask your guide to lead you nearer to the water which glistens in the sun. He grimly answers, "Take no notice, it is the mirage. There is nothing yonder but the burning sand." You can scarce believe him, it seems so real; but lo, it is all gone, like a dream of night. So unsubstantial is the hope which is built upon the form of godliness without the power. The white ants will eat up all the substance of a box, and yet leave it standing, till a touch causes the whole fabric to fall in dust: beware of a profession of which the substance has been eaten away. Believe in nothing which has not the stamp of eternity upon it. Go to, poor child; thou mayest blow thy bubble, and the sunlight may paint it with rainbows; but in an instant it is gone, and not a trace of it remains. Thy transient globe of beauty is for thee and thy fellow children, and not for men.

In reality, this kind of religion is in opposition to Christ. It is Jannes and Jambres over again: the magician of hypocrisy is trying to work miracles which belong to God only. In appearance he would produce the same marvels as the finger of God; but he fails. God grant we may never be guilty of resisting the truth by a lying profession. False men do serious injury to true godliness; for, like Ehud, they come with a pretended message from God, and with their dagger sharpened at both edges, they strike vital godliness in its very bowels. Nobody can do so much damage to the church of God as the man who is within its walls, but not within its life.

This nominal godliness, which is devoid of power, is a shameful thing. I close with that. It is a shameful thing for this life, for the Lord Jesus loathes it. When he passed by the fig-tree, which was so early with its leaves, but so empty of fruit, he saw therein the likeness of the vainglorious professor who has no real holiness, and he said, "Henceforth let no fruit grow on thee for ever." His word withered it at once: it stood a terrible emblem of the end of a false profession. How shameful will such a fruitless, lifeless professor be in eternity, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! What shame and everlasting contempt will await him when his falsehood shall be detected, and his baseness shall fill all holy minds with horror! What will be the hell of the false professor!

I have done when I have added a few words of instruction. The form of godliness is most precious; let those who feel the power of godliness honor it and use it. Do not despise it because others have damaged it. Come forth, and make an open profession of religion; but see that you have the

power of it. Do cry to God that you may never wear a sleeve which is longer than your arm: I mean, may never go beyond what is really and truly your own. It will be better for you to go to God as a lost soul, and cry for mercy, than to profess yourself saved when you are not. Yet do confess Christ without fail or fear. Do not be ashamed of Jesus because of the ill manners of his disciples. Regard the ill savor of false professors as a part of the cross which you will have to bear for your Lord. To be associated with some who are not true seems inevitable in this life, however carefully we choose our company.

My next is a word of discrimination. Those to whom my text has nothing to say will be the first to take it home to themselves. When I discharge my heart with a faithful sermon, certain trembling souls whom I would fain comfort are sure to think that I mean them. A poor woman, in deep distress, comes to me, crying, "Sir, I have no feeling." Dear heart, she has ten times too much feeling. Another moans out, "I am sure I am a hypocrite." I never met with a hypocrite who thought himself one; and I never shall. "Oh!" said another, "I feel condemned." He that feels himself condemned may hope for pardon. If you are afraid of yourselves I am not afraid of you. If you tremble at God's Word, you have one of the surest marks of God's elect. Those who fear that they are mistaken are seldom mistaken. If you search yourselves, and allow the Word of God to search you, it is well with you. The bankrupt trader fears to have his books examined. The sound man even pays an accountant to overhaul his affairs. Use discrimination, and neither acquit nor condemn yourself without reason. If the Spirit of God leads you to weep in secret for sin, and to pray in secret for grace; if it leads you to seek after holiness; if it leads you to trust alone in Jesus, then you know the power of godliness, and you have never denied it. You who cry, "Oh, that I felt more of the power of the Holy Spirit, for I know that he could. comfort and sanctify me, and make me live the life of heaven on earth!" You are not aimed at either by the text or the sermon; for you have not denied the power. No, no, this text does not belong to you, but to quite another class of people.

Let me give you a word of admonition. Learn from the text that there is something in godliness worth the having. The "form" of godliness is not all: there is a blessed "power." The Holy Ghost is that power, and he can work in you to will and to do of God's good pleasure. Come you to Jesus Christ, dear souls. Do not come to the minister, nor to the church, in the first place; but come to Jesus. Come and lay yourselves at his feet, and say,

“Lord, I will not be comforted unless thou comfort me.” Come, and take everything at first hand from your crucified Lord. Then shall you know the power of godliness. Beware of second-hand religion, it is never worth the carrying home. Get your godliness direct from heaven by the personal dealing of your own soul with your Savior. Profess only what you possess, and rest only in that which has been given you from above. Your heavenly life, as yet, may be very feeble, but the grain of mustard seed will grow. You may be the least in Israel, but that is better than being the greatest in Babylon, The Lord bless these words, and apply them to each one in his own way by his Holy Spirit. You can make either a blister of them, or a plaster of them, as conscience shall direct. God guide you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PROFITABLE MIXTURE.

NO. 2089

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 9TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”-Hebrews 4:2.

THE people that came out of Egypt were an interesting company, if we think of what God had done on their behalf, and of what he proposed to do for them. They had been lifted up from a state of slavery into one of freedom, and they were on their way to a country where they were to be settled, each one upon his own portion of land, therein to become priests and kings unto Jehovah. What an unhappy circumstance that the high ideal set before them was never realized by any of them save two lone men- Joshua and Caleb! You hear them singing at the Red Sea, in exultant joy, and they are on their way to Canaan, the land that floweth with milk and honey: loud are their songs, and high are their hopes. But mark those lines of graves- those innumerable hillocks which were formed wherever the camp was pitched in the desert! That is the end of the generation which came out of Egypt: “Their carcases fell in the wilderness.” Instead of reaching Canaan and settling, every man under his own vine and fig-tree, they lie in dishonored graves outside of the land of promise. Ah me! so lofty a destiny before them, and so sad a missing of it.

Let us not follow in their track. We are far too much inclined to do so. They were men, and we are no better than they by nature. Oh, for grace to walk after a higher rule! Let a holy dread seize upon us at this time, such as that which Paul expresses in the following words: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” Let us not find a tomb when we might gain a

throne. Let us not go down into the pit when before us lies the way to heaven, and multitudes are beckoning us thither. May great grace be given that we may win where a whole nation failed! It will be grace indeed if Gentiles shall excel the seed of Abraham. May heavenly power create within our bosoms a holy caution, lest by any means we come short of the grace of God! Let rebellious Israel be our beacon. From the graves of their lusting lot us hear a voice of warning, lest we also tempt the Lord, and constrain him to shut us out of his rest.

First, I shall invite you to consider Israel's hearing of the gospel: "Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." They heard good news from Moses, which was, at any rate, a gospel; but to me it seems that they also heard the gospel which we hear. Secondly, let us notice Israel's failure to profit thereby—"The word preached did not profit them." They heard, but heard in vain. Thirdly, let us put our finger upon the fatal cause of failure, so plainly indicated here by the words, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." The hearing was alone, and without the admixture of faith it answered no practical purpose. May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for this meditation, and may we so consider the lamentable failure of Israel, that we may not fall after the same example of unbelief!

I. First, then, let us think of ISRAEL'S HEARING OF THE GOSPEL. Whether you take it as our translators have put it in the Authorized Version, "Unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them"; or accept the Revised rendering, "Indeed, we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they"; it comes to much the same meaning; for the message of Moses and the reports of the faithful spies were both typical of the gospel which was brought to us by our Lord and his apostles. Our gospel is more clear than theirs; yet they had the gospel also, in all the essential truths of it, and had they fully believed it, it would have been a saving gospel to them.

We shall notice, first, that the good news brought to Israel was a gospel of rest for slaves, a promise of deliverance for men who cried by reason of sore bondage. This was a fit emblem of that news which comes to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of Moses in the sixth of Exodus: "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which

bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord.” This was the gladdest of news to the bondslaves in Egypt. These men were made to labor to exhaustion. They had to work in making bricks, and, as you well remember, they were denied the straw so necessary to their manufacture; and yet the tale of their bricks was not diminished. They had no rest from toil by day or night; and if they did not supply the full number of bricks, they were cruelly beaten by their taskmasters. Truly the tribes of Israel were in a very evil case. They groaned by reason of their bitter bondage, and that promise was a wonderful gospel to them—”I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” This is the kind of gospel which is preached to us to-day. Does not Jesus say, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls”? Spiritual rest is even more precious than bodily rest. The great promise of the gospel is rest from the burden of guilt, the pressure of fear, the bondage of habit, the slavery of sin, the scourging of conscience, and the dread of wrath to come. Jesus promises rest for the heart, the intellect, the desires, the fears, the hopes, the conscience of the man. There is perfect rest to be had, rest from all the burdens which the cruel Pharaoh of hell has heaped upon you. It is yours if you will but have it. What a happy people we ought to be to have Christ among us as himself the rest of our souls! We ought to leap toward this blessing with intensity of spirit, and say, “Lord, suffer me to enter at once into thy rest! Deliver me from the slavery of sin, and I will serve thee all my days with gladness and delight. Lay what burden of holy service thou shalt please upon me, only ease me of my guilt, and deliver me from the wrath which lieth hard upon me.” The gospel of rest is preached to you, my hearers, even as it was preached to Israel in Egypt. Have you understood it? Have you received it in your hearts? Have you so mixed faith with the glad news that you have accepted it, and made it true in your own proper persons? Can you sing—

*“My heart is resting, O my God;
I will give thanks and sing;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing”?*

Note, next, that the good tidings to Israel was a gospel of redemption in order to their entering into the promised rest. They were slaves to Pharaoh;

how could they become dwellers in Canaan? They might truthfully say, "We cannot break our bonds." The power of Egypt would hold Israel as with an iron hand. But with a high hand and an outstretched arm Jehovah their God determined to bring them out; and bring them out he did. Connected with that power of arm there was the price of sacrifice; for they were redeemed typically by the blood of the Passover Lamb. That blood sprinkled on the lintel and on the two side posts, preserved their houses when the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt with his death-sword. They stood about their family tables, and feasted joyfully, while there was wailing in every house of Egypt, from Pharaoh's palace down to the lowly chamber of his maid-servant. This day I also preach to you rest through the divine omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, and through the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Lamb of God. A full atonement has been made, a sufficient ransom has been presented; by this are men set free. Christ Jesus is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. He died in the believer's room that he might rest lawfully, and have no fear of being brought under bondage through the demands of justice. By the death of our Lord Jesus Christ the law has been magnified, and the requirements of divine justice have been met. God is, in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself. Blessed are the lips that tell you this good news! I never feel so happy as when I am talking of redemption through the blood of the Lamb. I gladly proclaim perfect redemption, efficacious redemption: I joy to testify that every believer is justly set free, and comes righteously from under the curse of God, since "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Beloved, the gospel preached to Israel is the gospel which is preached to us, only we have it more plainly, and see it in substance rather than in shadow. You have heard the word of reconciliation, and you know its meaning. Have you rested in it? Have you come to Jesus? Have his wounds become your resting place? Is his blood your covering? Are you sheltered beneath the crimson canopy of his finished sacrifice? There is the point; and in this respect "unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them.

Furthermore, it was a gospel of separation. When you read the words of the Lord to his chosen ones, you are compelled to see that he means them to be a people set apart for his own purposes. He no sooner began with them than the first summons was to Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." Israel was in Egypt: but Israel was not a part of Egypt. No

Israelite could become an Egyptian. As a distinct people they came into the land of Ham, and as a distinct people they went out of the land. Too much was Israel defiled by the customs of that heathen nation; but it was not absorbed in Egypt, nor did it cease to be a peculiar race. The Lord has of old separated to himself, in his eternal purposes, a people who are his; and his they shall still be, even till that day in which he shall make up his jewels. These chosen ones he gave to his Son, and Jesus owns the gift when he speaks of "as many as thou hast given me." These belong to the Lord Jesus in a special way. These have a destiny before them, even in this world, of separation from the rest of mankind; for Jesus saith, "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." "Ye are a peculiar people." We are the Lord's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is by means of this separation that we find rest. There is no rest for us in Egypt, for it is polluted. Our rest lies where God hath prepared it, and he cries, "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest." Here we have no abiding city. Here we are "strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were." Yet even here the church is distinct from the world, and cannot be made one with it. The eternal choice has made a difference; and by a heavenly calling, and a divine life working in us, we are set apart unto the Lord himself, The eternal decree of separation is fulfilled in an actual separation in the thoughts, and habits, and ways, and lives of the chosen. We are not now what we were, nor what others are; for John saith, "Ye are of God, little children, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." This is the gospel of separation which leads on to rest. Until separated there is no rest for us. Thus is it written, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Thus you see that ours is a gospel of rest, a gospel of sacrifice, and a gospel of separation from the rest of mankind. Hear it with more earnest heed than Israel gave to it: "For unto us is the gospel preached, as well as unto them." Dear hearers, do you know what this separation means? Have you been called out? Have you quitted your former haunts and ways? Do you cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart though others turn aside? Do you follow the footsteps of the Crucified? Judge ye yourselves, that ye be not judged.

Still further, the gospel preached to the Israelites told them of a glorious heritage which was provided for them. It was described as "a land that floweth with milk and honey"-a land of wheat and barley, and figs, and oil-

olive, a land which was not irrigated by labor, but was watered by the rain of heaven; a land of rivers, a land which the Lord thought upon, a land out of whose bowels they might dig brass and iron. It was the fairest of all countries, an epitome of the whole world; and it was to be theirs as a freehold for ever. Each tribe was to have its portion, each family its lot. This was good news to them; and all the more so because within the outward and temporal good news there was a spiritual gospel. Even so are you told that there is a heritage, even a heavenly one, to which God bringeth his believing people, and of which he gives them an earnest even now, in the possession of his Holy Spirit. This heritage is, in a measure, ours even in this life; but into the fullness of its delight we shall enter when the Lord shall come and receive us unto himself. Beloved, our hearts ought to burn within us when we think of the good things of the covenant, the fat things full of marrow, and the wines on the lees well-refined. On these Sabbath days, especially, we should look to enjoy an antepast of that heavenly feast to which there will be no end. We do enter into the rest already in a measure: we shall come into the fullness of it very soon. The snows upon the heads of many of you prophesy that the year of your wilderness-life is drawing to a close, and the endless years of your glory-life are hastening on. O my hearers, you have all heard this gospel of glory, have you all accepted it? Are you anticipating the world to come, whereof this gospel speaks? Have you already entered into the life eternal? Is there within you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life? If so, you are thrice happy; but whether or no, to you has this gospel been preached, even as unto Israel of old.

They had also preached to them the gospel of a divine calling; for they were informed that they were not to enter into this land to be idlers in it, but they were to be a nation of priests, In that holy land they were to be a holy people. There would they present sacrifice to God, while others worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth. There would the sacred oracle speak to them, while the rest of the world followed lying vanities. There would the glory of the Lord shine out of the midst of his temple, and Israel would rejoice in the light thereof. They were to preserve the lamp of truth until the day should come when it would shine on all mankind. Truly, the Israelites who came out of Egypt had a splendid heritage before them if they could but have believed God, and so have grasped it. To them it would have been true—"strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall

be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Happy people! This, even this, is the gospel that is preached unto you. We are called to believe in Jesus; and then, in him, to become priests and kings unto our God, and in his holy service to spend our happy days. God grant that we may receive this gospel indeed and of a truth! Count not yourselves unworthy of this high honor. Put it not from you, lest the Lord should swear in his wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Once more: they had a gospel which promised them help to obtain all this. It is a poor gospel which sets heaven before us, but does not help us to enter it. To these Israelites journeying mercies and conquering aids were promised. The Lord said to them, "I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee." The like help for the attainment of heavenly blessedness is provided in the gospel which we preach. All helps for the winning of the fadeless crown are waiting for them that believe. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities." The Lord "will subdue our iniquities." "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." When we are weak then are we strong; we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us. This gospel is preached to us. The Lord, All-sufficient, will be the help of his people. He saith, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Therefore I may gladly sing, "The Lord is my strength and my song, he also hath become my salvation." We are encouraged to go forward, and take possession of the promises, for the Lord hath said, "Certainly I will be with thee." My dear hearer, do you embrace this gospel? Do you find in it strength for the journey of life? See to it that you miss not the blessing.

Enough of this. You will find it an interesting exercise to observe in how many ways the gospel preached to Israel runs parallel with the gospel preached to us. The true gospel is no new gospel: it is that old wine which is better than the new with all its fermentation and froth: it is the gospel of the eternal God, which changeth not.

II. But now, secondly, I have the painful business of setting briefly before you ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO PROFIT BY THE GOSPEL WHICH THEY HEARD.

Though they heard it from many, they clung to Egypt. One would think they would have abhorred the land of the iron furnace and the brick-kiln;

but no; at the first they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." The signs and wonders that God wrought in the field of Zoan were almost as much needed to separate Israel from Egypt as to loosen the cruel grasp of Pharaoh. The nation had not long been quit of the land before they cried out, "Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." Again and again they sighed for the leeks and the garlic and the onions of Egypt, whining for the coarse food of their bondage, and despising the bread from heaven. They talked as if the Lord had done them a great injury by setting them free from their taskmasters. Ah me! The gospel which they heard did not profit them; for in their hearts they still tarried in the house of bondage.

Worse still, they provoked the Lord. By their murmurings, but chiefly by their idolatry, they vexed his Holy Spirit. Could you have believed it? after all the gods of Egypt had been smitten in detail by the plagues of Jehovah, yet the people remembered the idol god, the ox of Egypt, and they set up for their own worship what the Lord derisively called a "calf." They said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Yes, the chosen people of Jehovah ate and drank in honor of the image of a bullock which hath horns and hoofs, and afterwards they rose up to play the lascivious games which attended such idolatrous worship. They thus made themselves naked to their shame, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them. Truly the word preached had not profited them.

Moreover, they were always mistrustful. They could not endure a little thirst without fear that they would die of it. Whatever trial happened to them they were frightened, and began to complain, and were ready to rebel. The days of their provoking of God were many. Their lustings after flesh greatly grieved the Lord: when he had prepared them the best of diet, and "Men did eat angels' food," they declared that the soul abhorred this light bread. When they had flesh they ate till they were sick of it. They were ever full of distrust and carnality; a stiff-necked generation.

They went so far as to despise the promised land: they said, "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." They would fain go back to Egypt, rather than advance upon a scene of such great danger. They dared to speak as if death in Egypt had been preferable to the wilderness, for they would never be able to conquer the land. The spies whom they sent to spy out the land, ten of them flattered their humor and defamed the country.

They could not deny that it flowed with milk and honey, for the fruits were before them, and the clusters of Eshcol were convincing evidence of its fertility; but they said it ate up its inhabitants, implying that it was a deadly place to dwell in. Thus they set at nought heaven's highest boon.

When the time came when they might have advanced against the foe, they were afraid to go up. When for this the Lord withdrew from them, then they resolved that they would go up, and in consequence they were smitten by the Canaanites. They feared lest the giants would destroy them: they felt like grasshoppers in their sight; they dared not hope to win the country; they turned back in the day of battle.

The end of it was, they died in the wilderness. Ah me! The whole generation died in the wilderness-these very men that stood by the Red Sea, and said, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance." They sang, "Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away"; but, on the borders of the land they trembled, turned back into the wilderness, and died. To them the inspiring gospel of the promised rest was altogether unprofitable.

O my hearers, fear and tremble lest it be the same with you! Let me go over this story once more with a personal application. Do you still cling to sin? Do you still love it? Would you be willing to go to heaven, but are you unwilling to part with sin? Is the flavour of the onion of sinful pleasure still pleasant to your palate? Are you provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are you setting up idols? Are you loving self, and sin, and error, and the world? Do you distrust the Lord? Am I speaking to any gospel hearers who are still doubters, still refusing to believe that Jesus Christ can save? refusing to trust yourselves with him who died upon the cross? It is sad that it should be so. Do you despise the goodly land? Do you say in your heart, "Heaven and heavenly things are too visionary for me. I have too much to do to earn my daily bread"? Are you sighing after flesh, after worldly wealth, and honor, and pleasure? Do you loathe the manna of holy joy and fellowship, and bliss, and life in Christ? Is it so? And are you fearing to-day that you never can do what you should do, and that you can never conquer your evil propensities? Do you sit down supinely, judging your passions to be too strong to be subdued, your habits too firmly fixed to be changed? Are the giants too strong for you to slay them? Have you no trust in God and in his

boundless grace? If so, O sirs, I fear me your carcasses will fall in the wilderness, your dying hour will come, and you will have no hope. The howling wilderness will be all around you in the hour of your departure out of this life, and you will pass from it to a state still worse, and find that you have missed glory and honor, and immortality. God grant it be not so; yet I fear it will be so with many of you who abide in unbelief. A whole nation missed the rest of God: it will not be a wonder if you and I miss it, who are but one or two, unless we take earnest heed and are filled with fear “lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.”

III. So now, thirdly, I am going to put my finger upon THE FATAL CAUSE OF THIS DIREFUL CALAMITY. Why was it the gospel that they heard did not profit them?

Assuredly, it was not the fault of the gospel which they heard. In itself it is calculated to profit all who receive it. It promised liberty, and this should have made them gratefully obedient. It promised an inheritance, and added to it a high and holy calling, and this should have aroused their loftiest aspiration. It promised every help to the getting of the promised blessings, and what could they have more? Concerning the gospel which I have preached to you, I can truly say that if you miss blessedness, it is not because you are straitened in the gospel, or are discouraged by the narrowness of the Lord’s grace.

*“What more can he say,
than to you he hath said?”*

What larger provision, what greater promise can God give to guilty man than this—“He that believeth in him hath everlasting life”? Pardon of sin, justification of your persons, the salvation of your souls, and everlasting bliss, what more can be set before you? If this does not touch you, what will?

In their case it was not the fault of the preacher; for Moses spoke God’s Word with great meekness and gentleness. He set before them the truth with all fidelity. With all my imperfection, I hope I can say, also, that if you die in the wilderness I am clear of your blood; for I have warned you to escape, and I have bidden you seek, first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

It was not the fault of a lack of confirming signs from God. No default of divine working hindered Israel's faith. God wrought with his gospel in those days very mightily. The daily manna and the water leaping from the rock, with other signs and wonders, went to prove the Word of the Lord. If men do not believe the gospel of Christ, it is not because it does not work wonders still. You have seen others converted, you have seen others die in perfect peace, you have seen what the Lord can do for his believing people; and if you believe not, you will die in your sins. I have heard much of "honest doubt"; but I honestly believe that much of doubt is the most dishonest thing out of perdition. Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulness of this sin; it will ruin you if you indulge in it. "Believe and live," is the gospel; "Doubt and die," is the alternative.

Neither was it for lack of the Holy Spirit that these people made the gospel a failure to them; for we read that the Holy Ghost spoke to them, and they rebelled, and vexed the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Ghost who spoke to them and said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." That same Holy Spirit is with the gospel still. Oftentimes he stirs your hearts, and moves you even to tears: he makes deep impressions, and causes you to long after better things. Quench not the Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit of God; if he leave you, you are lost for ever; and he may do so. God grant this may not be the case!

Well, then, what was the cause? We put our finger on it at once: "Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Where there is no faith in the gospel, no good consequence can possibly come of it. If it were preached to you by angels; yea, if one arose from the dead and proclaimed it to you, if you believed it not, what could be the beneficial effect of hearing it? Men, why do you hear it if you do not mean to believe it? If you will be damned, why do you throng this place to hear about salvation? If you are resolved that you will not have the promise of God, why come and listen to his servant, who has nothing else to tell you? Are we set up to be as marionettes, or dancing dolls, for you to stare at? God forbid that we should ever accept the calling of actors in a play. If we do not win your hearts for Christ, and so save you, we have labored in vain, and spent our strength for nought. See the effect of absence of faith, and lament it.

Where there is no faith, men remain slaves to the present. If they did not believe in the milk and honey of Canaan, you see why they hankered for the cucumbers of Egypt. An onion is nothing comparable to an estate

beyond Jordan; yet as they think they cannot get the estate, they pine for the onions. When men do not believe in eternal life, they naturally enough cry, "Give me bread and cheese. Let me have a fortune here." They keep their nose to the grindstone, always thinking about this passing life, because they do not heartily believe in heaven and its glories. They are as "dumb driven cattle," that see not into another state: this life seems real to them, but the next life they suspect to be a dream. As long as there is no faith, this world is all, and the world to come is nothing at all.

If a man hears and has no faith, he learns nothing. What would be the use of your listening to lectures upon science if you disbelieved what the professor set forth? You are no pupil, you are a critic; and you cannot learn. Many professors have no faith, and, consequently, whoever may teach them, they will never come to a knowledge of the truth. Israel never saw through the almost transparent veil of the types because they did not believe. If they had believed, they would have discovered under every symbol a world of wondrous meaning, instructing them in the things of God. Want of faith means want of eye and want of perception.

The truth did not affect the hearts of Israel, as it does not affect any man's heart till he has believed it. If there be a goodly heritage, and I believe it, then I long for it, then I strive for it; but if it be to me as an idle tale, it does not affect me one whit. If there be liberty for the captive, I desire it, and I cry to God to give it to me; but if I do not believe that escape is possible, I shall sit down in despair. If I believe the gospel, it affects my life, it changes my character: it takes me down from false hope, and it lifts me up to a surer confidence. Only that which is believed can operate upon our spiritual nature. As light is of no use if we cannot see, so is the gospel of no service if we have no eye of faith. The gospel plays on a man like some mighty minstrel upon his harp. It touches every string of our soul. The Master sometimes stays his hand to tune each string, that it may yield the right note; and this once done, what angel voices sing amid those strings! A man's soul touched by the finger of the gospel resounds the music of God. If the gospel is not believed, those fingers touch mute strings, and no response is heard.

A man that has no faith in what he hears does not appropriate it. There is gold! Eagerly one crieth, "Let me go and get it." Unbelief restrains him, as it whispers, "There is no gold, or it is beyond reach." He does not go to get it, for he does not believe. A hungry man passeth by where there is

entertainment for needy travelers. Believing that there is food for his hunger, he tarries at the door; but if unbelief mutters, "There is a bare table within, you might as soon break your neck as break your fast in that place," then the traveler hurries on. Unbelief palsies the hand, and it appropriates nothing. That which is not appropriated can be of no use to you. Look at your food. How is it that it builds up your body? Because you take it into the mouth, and it descends into the stomach, and there it is mixed with certain fluids, and is digested, and ultimately is taken up into the system and becomes a life-sustaining force. Being properly mixed, it is taken up and assimilated. And so it is with heavenly truth: if it is taken into the heart, and then mixed with faith, it is digested, and becomes food to every part of the spiritual nature. Without faith the gospel passes through the soul undigested, and rather feeds disease than promotes life. O my hearers, what a dreadful lack is the lack of faith!

Lastly, these people could not enter in, because they had no faith. They could go to the border of the land, but they must die even there. They could send their spies into the country; but they could not see the fertile valleys themselves. Without faith they could not enter Canaan. Shall it be so with us, that, for want of faith, we shall hear the gospel, know something about its power, and yet miss its glories, and never enter into possession of the life eternal which it reveals? Here is the point: "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

With two practical points I will conclude. One is this: see the great value of hearing the gospel. Do hear it as often as you can. Do not get into the sluggish habit of those who are content with one spiritual meal for the whole week. Once on the Sabbath is enough for many nowadays. Hear as often as you can. On the week-nights come out to hear the word. I may not long be able to preach it, nor you to hear it. Hear it often, for one of these days it may be blessed to your soul, if it has not been so as yet. What a mercy to have your hearing! Dear friends, who used to hear me preach and are now very old, come to me in the vestry with sad faces, and say, "I cannot hear even you now." When the eyesight also begins to fail, as it does in some cases, and thus they are deprived of reading as well as of hearing, it is a double trial. You will know the miss of the gospel if ever it comes to that with you, as it may in old age. Be sure that you hear and read while you can, and thus store your mind. Also, pray our Lord to raise up more preachers of the gospel: they are few enough. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." Pray much

for those who do preach the gospel faithfully, that they may be kept true to the Bible and honest to souls. The gospel is getting more and more adulterated. One of these days you will want a microscope to find a grain of evangelical doctrine in a dozen sermons. Indeed, the small proportion of gospel to a sea of words is often like one homeopathic globule in the Atlantic ocean; there is so little of it. God grant that we may have the gospel preserved to us, and be enabled to hear it!

But still, the great necessity is faith. Instead of speaking upon that subject, let me beg you to try and do a little mixing at once. Don't mix philosophy with the gospel, but by the help of God's Spirit mix faith with it. Before us is the glorious word made flesh, in the eternal Son of God in our nature! He lives for men; he dies to make atonement for sin. Even he cannot save you unless you now mix faith with all those truths about him which the Scriptures teach you. Now mix faith with what you know concerning the Savior, and say, "Lord, I believe that thou art the Son of God. I believe that thou didst live a perfect life, which is our righteousness. I believe that thou didst die a painful death, which brings us pardon. I believe that thou ever livest to intercede. I trust my soul in thy hands." That is mixing faith with the gospel, and you will in this fashion richly profit by the gospel. You will go your way a saved man.

There is proclaimed in the gospel the pardon of sin. The Lord blots out the sins of his believing people like a cloud. Mix faith with that doctrine, and say, "Lord, I believe that thou canst put away all my sins through Jesus Christ; thou canst wash away my crimson stains and scarlet spots, and make me whiter than the snow. Lord, I trust thee to do this. I rely upon thee for the forgiveness of my transgressions!" By this act of faith you will be profited by the promise and pardon, for you are pardoned the moment you believe in him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

Try what you can do with eternal life itself. Say, "Lord, I believe that there is a spiritual life which thou dost breathe into believers. I believe that this grows from grace to glory. Thou givest to believers eternal life even here; death cannot kill it, and so they live on and on, and on, throughout eternity, for ever blessed in Christ. I believe in the new creation. I appropriate it. I trust in Jesus for it. This heritage is mine! By faith I take it to myself." God will never take away what you can grasp by faith. Accept it, and the acceptance makes it yours: for the Lord himself made it yours long ago in

his eternal purpose, and, therefore, he has given you faith as a token that he ordained heaven and perfection to be yours. Mix faith with every promise. Henceforth continue to practice the holy art of mixing faith with the revelations of Scripture. Compound them as the dispensers do. Here is a choice drug, but it wants mixing with its proper affinity; the promise must be mixed with faith if it is to be life-giving to the soul. Mix it, then, with faith, and be profited immediately and eternally. Be united to the truth, and it will save you. Let it come into union with you, and you will never perish. The Lord help you to be joined unto his truth by faith, for Christ's sake! Amen.

A DELICIOUS EXPERIENCE.

NO. 2090

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 16TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.”-Hebrews 4:3.

LAST Sabbath day we meditated upon the fact that those who came out of Egypt did not enter into the rest of God. “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” To-day I shall not seek so much to warn as to encourage, while we look at the way by which we can enter into the true rest. The faithful minister of God should be like the parent birds, who, when their young are old enough for flight, sometimes drive them from the nest to make them fly; and, at other times, go before them, twittering and stretching out their wings, to tempt their callow offspring to try the air. Thus, at times, we endeavor to drive, and anon we try to draw you to the flight of faith. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade; knowing the joys of true religion, we entreat. By all means we would induce men to quit the nest of their old trust, and fly to Christ by faith. If God will bless the Word, so that you put your trust in Christ, we shall be content; nay, more, our cups will run over with gratitude for your salvation.

In the text, we have a declaration of experience, “We which have believed do enter into rest,” to which is very singularly added, “As he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest.” The happy declaration is supported by the tremendous oath of judgment, which shut out the unbelieving race. There is usually a promise embedded in a threatening, like gold in quartz; just as there is generally a threatening as the reverse of the golden coin of promise. When we read, in the opening chapters of the Bible, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” it was implied, was it not, that if they did not eat they should live?

Though that promise was not stated in words, it was implied in the threatening. So here, when we read, "I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest," while we are taught that some could not enter in because of unbelief; it is implied in it that believers would enter in. Those who have faith in the divine promise shall enter in. If unbelief shuts men out, then faith is the door of entrance to those who have it. I beg you to grasp the kernel of promise which lies whole and safe within the shell of the threatening. God swore of those unbelieving Jews that they should not enter in, but he had declared that some should enter in; therefore a promise is left which will be fulfilled in those who have faith, and so are the true seed of faithful Abraham. These shall enter in; and certain of them in the text declare that they have done so: "We which have believed do enter into rest."

I venture to say that the threatening in this case even gives a touch of rose color to the promise, for it runs thus, "If they shall enter into my rest." Whereas the declaration only says, "rest": "we which have believed do enter into rest," the word "My" is added. That little word is like a bright gleam amidst the blackness of the tempest. Oh, the glory of that which God calls "my rest"!

There is such a thing as the rest of God, and there is such a thing as our entering into it. I call your attention to the fact, that the two typical rests of the Old Testament were rests of God; and yet they were rests into which God's people were to enter. The first rest was the rest of creation. When God had finished all his work upon this habitable globe he rested. But what follows? "He rested on the seventh day, and hallowed it." To what end? That we might rest also. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God"; and therefore, because it is his Sabbath, he would have us share in it. "In it thou shalt not do any work." It was a day sacred to holy rest. God will not rest alone. He will have his people in fellowship with him therein. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God"; because God hath his Sabbath. The other rest was the promised land, of which Mount Zion was chosen to be the center. We read in Psalm one hundred and thirty-two, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Where the Lord rested, there he gave his people rest; for he adds, "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread."

Thus God and his church are associated in happy fellowship. Neither the day nor the land is used as a type of rest with reference to God alone; he will have his people enter into his rest.

The true rest of God lies higher than times and places. The Lord God rests in the person of Jesus: in him he is well pleased. The Lord speaks of him as, "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." In the person of his Son, the heart of the Father finds perpetual joy: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But we also behold his glory—"The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." By faith we see that in him which gives rest to our heart. Therefore was Jesus given: "This man shall be the peace." The Lord Jesus is our true Noah, in whom we find safety and rest. He was both given in birth and given up in death to be the rest of weary souls.

Beloved, this morning I earnestly pray that you may be able to join in the declaration of the apostle Paul in the words before us. Though nearly nineteen hundred years have passed away, it is still true of those who believe, that they enter into rest. Some of us are now resting where the Lord rests, and our rest is daily deepening, so that ere long it will only need a moment's change, and we shall rest with God in glory.

May the Holy Ghost direct us, while we shall, first, notice the people to whom this experience is confined: "They which have believed do enter into rest"; secondly, the experience itself: "We do enter into rest" and thirdly, the personal assertion of this experience: we declare, without hesitation, that, having believed, we do enter into rest!

I. Follow me in meditation, and may the Spirit of God bless it to our souls, while we consider THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THIS EXPERIENCE IS CONFINED. They rest, and no one else: they rest, because they have believed. As surely as unbelief shuts out, so surely does faith shut in.

What is to believe? To believe is, first of all, to accept as true the revelation of God; to give unfeigned assent and consent to all that God has made known in his Word, and especially to believe that he was, "in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." We cannot take the further step of trust unless, first, we give credence to the testimony of God. In reference to the work of our Lord Jesus, we must, first, accept the facts concerning him, and the witness of God about him, or we cannot go further. What God saith is true, and to us

it is true because God saith it. We set to our seal that God himself is true. We bow our judgments, our questionings, our consciences, our faith, before the throne of the Lord God of truth. This is an essential groundwork for saving faith.

The operative point of faith is the next one: we trust ourselves with him who is revealed: thus we carry our belief of truth to its practical conclusion. We come, just as we are, to the Savior who bids us come; we rely for our salvation and acceptance with God upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Father reveals him. We see in him God's appointed messenger of grace. We perceive him to be our covenant head and representative, and we rejoice to stand or fall with him. Chiefly do we receive him as our substitute, and, in consequence, our sacrifice. We believe in him as bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; as made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. It is of the essence of faith that we trust ourselves with the Lord Jesus, because of his finished work on our behalf. We trust Jesus in the faithfulness of God to the promises made to us in Christ Jesus. We lean upon the sure Word of God and work of Jesus. He hath not the faith which will bring him to heaven who doth not wholly trust himself with God in Christ Jesus.

Out of this trust must come action agreeable thereunto. He that trusts Christ appropriates to himself the blessings contained in him, and henceforth they become his heart's treasure; and this changes the whole tone of his life. He that trusts in Christ becomes obedient to his Savior's word; just as the sailor who trusts his pilot yields to him the steering of the ship. He that has real faith in the unseen is willing to forego the pleasure and the profit of that which is seen and temporal, so far as it comes in conflict with that kingdom of God. He sees all that he needs in Jesus, and sets great store by him; for he believes that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." Faith is an eye to see with, and a hand to grasp with. Faith joyfully accepts all that Jesus brings her, and for his sake she quits all other confidences. To be married to Christ she forsakes all other trusts and delights. This leads the believer to flee from sin: he sees that no good can come thereby, but only deadly evil. Moved by gratitude, he reckons himself dead to the world, because Jesus died, and alive unto God, because the life of Christ has quickened him. This leads to a daily rejoicing in Christ; for in proportion as we trust the Lord, and are governed by that trust, we become happy in the Lord. When we can say, "He is all my salvation and

all my desire," we shall not be afraid even on a dying bed. So far as I am trusting, I am resting.

According to the statement of the writer of this epistle, faith, wherever it exists, brings with it rest. Let me sketch three or four cases in proof, such as I have seen myself. Yonder is a man who has come to a right idea of his guilt before God. He went on merrily enough for years, till the Holy Spirit shone into his soul, and caused him to see the evil of his life. He began to think. Looking back upon his past conduct, he became uneasy; for he felt that he had lived without God, and therefore he had lived an unprofitable life towards his best Friend. He became greatly disturbed in spirit, not only by day, but even by night: his dreams were tinged with fear. He felt that he was all wrong, and he feared he could never be set right. In such a condition rest is out of the question! What is to be done? In eager desire he goes from one place of worship to another, and he reads the Scriptures and godly books; but he finds no rest, and he will find none until he begins to see Jesus. How often have I seen the enlightenment which comes of faith! When the man sees that God is full of love towards him, that he is willing to receive him guilty as he is, and to blot out all his sin for Jesus' sake; that Christ on the tree bore the penalty of his transgressions-then, I say, an enlightenment comes over his soul. I have seen the countenance transfigured as the divine witness has shone into the mind. It has been to the man as when the sun ariseth and the shadows flee. When his heart has said, "Christ for me," then has he led his captivity captive. An overpowering delight has filled the soul, has flashed from the eyes, shone forth in every feature, and overflowed at the lips, Oh, the joy of knowing by faith that Christ has saved me, that in him I am reconciled to God! Nothing else will give us this rest save confidence in God in Christ Jesus.

Observe another case. This person was once a Christian professor, leading the way in public service; but he declined gradually, and at last he fell into grievous open sin. He has been cut off from the visible church; and necessarily so, for he has wandered into sinful habits, and mixed with evil associates. He is ill at ease. Like an unquiet spirit, he is seeking rest, and finding none. If there had been nothing of grace in his heart, he might have been satisfied with the husks of the world; but he has enough grace remaining in him to make him miserable. His foot finds no resting place. He is not willing, as yet, to go back to the church; and yet he cannot be content away from the fold. He is as a bird which has wandered from its nest, or a dog which has lost its master. It is only as that man beholds again

the vision of the Crucified Lover of his soul that he will see a hope of rest. He must again see his God, clothed in human flesh, bleeding and dying for him; for in that sight alone will he find a window opened in heaven through which a backslider's prayer may enter. It is the eye of Jesus which makes Peter repent, and the voice of Jesus which makes Peter confess his love. I invite any who are in a backsliding condition to come with weeping to the pardoning Savior. Do not distrust him because of your sin, but trust him because of his merit. Come back, come back to your first husband; for it was better with you then than now! Say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Turn to the way of faith, for this is the homeward path.

I have seen the like result of faith in another case, which is very different from the last. A Christian man endowed with large power of thought, in an evil hour, quitted his moorings, and drifted out into the deep. He saw others sailing on the great and wide sea, and he thought it a brave thing to imitate them. To-day he has lost his compass, and does not believe in his chart. He neither knows what he does believe, nor what he should believe: his intellect is like a whirligig, his belief twists about like a weathercock. All around him is a haze, and all beneath him is a quicksand. He fears that before long there will remain in his mind no capacity to separate fact from fiction. He fears that there is no truth; for all doctrine has become to him as the baseless fabric of a vision. Only one thing he knows—he is not happy, and he views with regret the restfulness of former days. My distracted brother, your only hope of intellectual rest lies in believing your God. Oh, that you would subject your intellect to the Holy Spirit! Come, cast away your pride, and sit at the feet of Jesus. Become a little child, that you may enter the kingdom. Have you not had enough of this plague of the period—the thing which betrays its character by calling itself "honest doubt"? While you are your own guide, you will go astray; but when you will place your hand in that hand which bears the nail-print, you shall be safe and happy. Then will you sing, "He leadeth me beside the still waters." There is sound intellectual rest to be had by him who will submit himself to the infallible teaching of God, and will wait from day to day upon the Holy Ghost for light upon his path. "We which have believed do enter into rest," and the rest is not that of ignorance and agnosticism, but of clear knowledge, for we know and have believed the love which God hath towards us. Our standing is on the rock of a revelation which has been made over again in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. While those who rely on their culture are as

barques driven upon the rocks, we stand on safe ground, and are not shaken.

Let me give you one more picture. Tread softly, for the shadow of death is over yonder bed! Weakness will scarce bear the sound of your footfall. His pulse is faint and few, the man is dying! See how his tender wife wipes the death-sweat from his brow! Come hither, ye philosophers, and cheer his last hours with the joys of evolution! Come, ye advocates of a new theology, and cheer him with your criticisms! Poor heart, he sees no consolation in all that you can set before him. He turns himself to the Lord Jesus, and cries—"Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes; Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies Heavens s morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee, In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me." If he can but see "the sacred head once wounded," he will have rest. How sweet! how deep! how perfect that rest will be! Men die not when they breathe their last with the living Savior near them. In unruffled calm the spirit takes its flight from earth, and that word is fulfilled, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." Behold, how they bathe their souls in seas of heavenly rest; they have obtained joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing have fled away. In ten thousand thousand instances they that have believed have, even in their mortal agony, entered into rest. Blessed be the Lord for this!

Thus have I set before you who these people are; they are not those who merely talk of religion, but they have true faith in God. They do not hesitate and delay, but they have once for all believed, and are now walking by faith. They are not questioners, but they believe God with a simple, child-like confidence. These are they that enter into rest, and nobody else will ever do so. I wish some of you would take this decisive step, and end this wretched pretense of wisdom, this self-conceited trust in "culture": for it will be your greatest gain in life to trust your God, and enter into rest.

II. Our second point is THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF: "we which have believed do enter into rest." I shall now speak of what I know of a surety, and of what many of you know also. We will propound no theory, and indulge no imagination, but keep to matters of fact.

Wherein do we rest? Brethren, we rest where God rests: that is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wondrous personality we see in him! As God, he is the infinite delight of the Father. As personified

Wisdom, our Lord Jesus says, "I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." We cannot tell how much the Father loves him, and how perfectly he rests in him. When God looked upon fallen man he could not rest in him, for it repented him that he had made man upon the face of the earth. There was one Man only upon whom the Father's eye rested with pleasure; and even in the foresight of his birth and death he took pleasure in him. When Noah presented the sacrifice which symbolized the atonement, we read that the Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest. The Father takes an intense delight in the glorious person of the Lord Jesus. He cannot rest in the creation which is made subject to vanity; he cannot rest in fallen man, but he rests in One that is near akin to him, and at the same time near akin to us. Jesus counts it not robbery to be equal with God, and yet counts it not beneath him to be made like ourselves. To the Father and to us he is the place of our common rest. How happy are we to find rest in a person! This is warm and substantial comfort. You cannot rest in the words of a doctrine as you can in the bosom of a person. Take a poor child that is lost in the street. Talk to it upon cheering themes. These ought to comfort it; but the little one goes on crying. Sing to it, and reason with it. It is all in vain. Run, fetch its mother! See how it smiles! It nestles in her bosom, and is at rest. A person yields the heart-comfort. So it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. In life, in death, it is a delightful thought that our salvation rests in the hands of a living, loving personality; we depend upon a divine and human person, an accessible helper, to whom we may come at all times. Oh, yes, "we which have believed do enter into rest" in the person of the Well-beloved!

Next, we rest in his work. That work I can only roughly outline to you. It was a life of perfect obedience, completed by a death of shame and agony. The life and the death were all for us: in our room and place he obeyed and suffered. "It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief"; and because of that bruising and grief, it is written, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Sinners are reconciled to God, and all offense is removed out of the way. Such rest does the Father find in the life and death of his Well-beloved Son that he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. God rests in the work of Christ; and so do we. Beloved, when you get a faith's view of the work of the Redeemer, do you not feel that all your fears and forebodings are sweetly laid to rest? The full Atonement, the perfect Righteousness, the glorious Victory, are not these

quiet resting-places? The covenant of grace, and all the blessings it contains, are not these a joy for ever? Can you not say of the Word of the Lord,

*“My faith can on this promise live,
Can on this promise die”?*

I scarcely need to mention, as a separate item, the perpetual life of Christ. We have not a dead Savior. I heard one speaking about the blood of Christ as a dead thing; but indeed that in which we trust has a living efficacy. Beloved, the blood of Christ is the blood of a living Christ. He died, but not as a bullock dies at the altar; for he died to live again, which the bullock could not do. We trust in him who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore. Because he lives we shall live also. Lift up your eyes, and see your Lord upon the throne! Behold him risen from the dead, and know that he is coming soon, in all his glory, to receive you unto himself. I ask you if you cannot find perfect rest in the thought that he ever liveth, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost? Yes, preach Christ to the soul, he is true balm for its wounds. The love of Jesus is a pillow for every aching head. Let our Lord be near, and, like John, we find rest upon his bosom.

Do you ask me what is comprehended in this rest? I answer-all things. Here we lay every burden down. Personally I do at this moment rest in Jesus as to all the past. Whatever there has been of sin to grieve over, whatever of mistakes, folly, or wrong-all this is no more my load, for it was laid on Jesus as my scapegoat, and he carried it away into the wilderness of forgetfulness. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin. I also rest in him in reference to the present. Whatever there may be of evil occurrent, or of need pressing, or of danger secret, or of slander foul, I leave all with him in whom my soul reposes, who says to me, “Let not your heart be troubled.” They say, there is a skeleton in every house; I know of none in mine: yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. We are set free from present fret and worry by that dear hand which ruleth all things, and causeth all things to work together for good. Concerning to-day we enter into rest. But there is the future. We foolishly try to look through the veil which hides the morrow from our view; but it is all in vain. Why should we wish to know what God conceals? It is known to our Father in heaven; and that is enough for our faith. We can leave the future where we leave the past. He that believeth thus enters into rest as to the past, the present, and the future. We cast all

our care on our Lord, for he careth for us. The poor committeth himself unto God; and when he has so done, he is quiet, and his soul is even as a weaned child. I see no cloud in my sky: Jesus fills it all. How can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Let us rest and rejoice.

What are the excellencies of this rest which comes by believing? I answer, they are very many. It brings us honor. "Unto you that believe, he is an honor." It is a glorious thing to rest where God rests. Many people would give their eyes to be invited to stay with the Queen; but, oh, to dwell where God dwells, and to rejoice where God rejoices! Every believer has this dignity.

This rest is also a wonderful source of strength. When the tree strikes deep root it gets vigor for fruitage. No man has any great power to work successfully while he is worried. The fulcrum must rest, or the lever will not work. Fret creates a great leakage in a man, and his force runs away uselessly; but when care is ended, and he enters into rest with Christ, then all the force and energy of his being turns to holy service for God and man.

Rest in Christ Jesus also gives an incentive to diligence; for we feel that since we have such sweet rest ourselves, we would wish others to have it. We tell out the news which gladdens us. We cannot hide from the multitudes around us the glad tidings which have charmed away our griefs.

This rest also brightens life. When you enter into rest, life is not a dull and dreary round, such as the blind horse finds at the mill. Life is not a chain, which we must drag behind us, but wings on which we soar into the joyous blue, and hold converse with the choristers of heaven. I know not how to express my thankfulness that ever I had a being, seeing it is crowned with well-being in Christ Jesus. I could not say, "'Tis something better not to be." Nay, nay, life is a favor now that I know my Lord. This rest in Christ is a fair antepast of heaven. We eat from the tables of celestials. "Men did eat angels' food" in the wilderness; and so do we to-day. We drink from the chalices of the glorified. When you rest in Christ you know what heaven's repose must be like, and your heart is glad.

What are the limits of this rest? We may place them where we will, "According to your faith, so be it unto you." "We which have believed do enter into rest." It is an entrance, and no more, as yet. But when an Israelite had an entrance into Canaan, it was his own fault if he did not

penetrate the interior, and traverse the land from Dan to Beersheba. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "All things are possible to him that believeth." If you are not perfectly restful, it is not the fault of the rest. If you are not as restful in heart as saints in heaven, you have only yourself to blame. You have the same ground for rest as they have, and the same Lord by his presence and power to work repose in your spirit:

*"How sweetly rest thy saints above,
Which in thy bosom lie!
The church below doth rest in hope
Of that felicity."*

There is not a joy in the covenant of grace but what you may have, if you have faith enough to lay hold upon it. There is an unlimited range of bliss before you: arise and take possession in the name of God; for it is all yours. But still, for the most part here below all that we can get is an entrance, and we are happy if it is administered to us abundantly. We cross the threshold of our Father's house, and take the first chair in the first room we come to: this is a great privilege; but let us go further in and press into his presence-chamber. Anyhow, let us say, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

III. Under the third head I must draw your attention to THE PERSONAL ASSERTION OR THIS EXPERIENCE: "We which have believed do enter into rest." I like the plain and positive speech of the apostle for himself and his friends. If the apostle had belonged to the same school as some of our good but weak brethren, he would have said, "We that have believed hope that we may some day know a little of what the rest of faith means. We sometimes hope, but oftener fear. We are afraid to believe too certainly, lest it should be presumption. We sometimes indulge a faint hope that ultimately we may find rest." This is very weak milk-and-water, and no one will ever get much joy out of it. Let us attain to something better than this. Paul did not talk so. He said, "We which have believed do enter into rest"; and he said no more than is true. Some dog barks at me. I know what its bark means. My opponent cries, "You are too dogmatical, and too positive." To which I reply, "I cannot help being dogmatic when I say that I see what I know I have seen, and declare that I feel what I know I am feeling." Would you have me doubt my own consciousness? I know whether I am at rest or not.

I do not invite any of you to say that faith gives you peace unless it does so. It must be a matter of fact. We want no empty profession. I remember hearing of a pious minister who was asked to speak one day upon the subject of joy in God. He stood up and said, "I am sorry that I have been requested to speak upon this topic; for the fact is, I am not walking in the light, but I am crying, 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.' I have grieved my heavenly Father, and I am in the dark." He sat down and sobbed; and so did all his brethren. This honest confession did far more good than if he had patched up a tale, and told of some stale experience years before. If you have not entered into rest, do not say that you have. Fictitious experience is dangerous to the forger of it. Experience borrowed from other people is like the borrowed axe, sure to fall into the ditch, and make its user cry, "Alas!"

"Well," cries one, "we do not rest, we are hard at work for our Lord." And so am I; but this is rest to me, now that I am at peace with God. The labor of love for Christ is only another word for rest. He says, "Take my yoke upon you: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Carry Christ's burden, and your shoulders shall have rest. We do not mean sleep or idleness when we speak of rest: that is not rest, but rust. Our rest is found in the service of God.

"Oh," says one, "I have such a world of trouble"! Do you think you are the only one? Some time ago, I met with a certain younger brother who has been made to suffer through taking the right side in the Down-Grade controversy. He wrote to me of his sore trials. I sympathized with him; but I reminded him that he was not alone in them. When Montezuma was being roasted alive by the Spaniards, one of his nobles, who was being tortured with him, cried out in his agonies. The king bade him be quiet, adding, "Dost thou think that I am on a bed of roses?" No, my friend, you are by no means alone. Tribulation is no strange thing to the favourites of heaven. Is it, therefore, impossible to rest? By no means. Does not our Lord say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The holy children enjoy their greatest peace in the seven times heated furnace. Our greatest joys swim on the crests of the huge billows of trouble. Through much tribulation we come to the kingdom, and even in the midst of that much tribulation, we glory, since we enter into rest.

“Oh,” says one, “I find a conflict going on within me.” Do you? So do I. Who does not feel a struggle while pressing forward towards perfection? Can there be rest where there is conflict? I answer, Assuredly. He that is at rest in his heart is the man to fight. While he cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” he is able at once to add, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed.” Our confidence in Christ is not shaken, though all confidence in ourselves is gone. The more we see of our wretchedness and vileness by nature, the more we rest in Jesus.

“Oh,” cries one, “sometimes my rest is broken.” So it may be, and yet you may have it still. Put the pieces together again, and have them well rivetted. Every now and then a child of God may fail as to the strength of his faith, and then he loses rest for a while; but as the object of his faith does not fail, since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, his rest soon comes back. Take down your harp. Your peace is like a river, and it flows with fresh waters. We have peace, and we must bear witness to it; for it is with many of us a matter of fact that by believing we enter into rest.

This declaration, that we have rest, should always be made with a holy purpose. We must not go about boasting of our peace. That is what little children do who know no better: they say, “Look at my new shoes.” There are many silly children nowadays who cry, “Look, how perfect I am!” “Dear child, it will be better for you to be seen, and not heard. When you bear witness to your own enjoyment of the rest of faith, let it be your purpose, first to glorify God, who has given you this rest, and next, that you may convince others that such a rest is possible. How can we hope to convince others that there is the rest of faith, unless we enjoy it ourselves? Not long ago, one of our ministers was preaching upon salvation, and the work of the Spirit in the heart, when one of the congregation rose and asked him respectfully, “Sir, do you know all this by the report of others, or has this taken place in your own experience?” The preacher was by no means put about by the question, but rather rejoiced in it; for he could honestly reply, “I have trusted Christ. I am saved, and I know and feel the peace which results therefrom.” If he could not have made that solemn statement, he would have had no influence over the person who had put the question. If we show by our daily lives that we rest in Christ, we shall be more likely to draw troubled ones to Jesus. The man who was born blind, when his eyes were opened, did not hesitate to say, “One thing I

know: whereas I was blind, now I see.” This was a powerful argument to prove the power and Godhead of him who had opened his eyes.

Brethren, if you can say as much as this—”By believing I have entered into rest,” be thankful; for this privilege is a gift of love. It is a wonderful instance of sovereign grace that such unworthy ones as we are should enter into God’s rest. But if you cannot say it, do not despair. Make it a point of question with yourself, “Why cannot I thus speak? Why have I not entered into rest? Is it because I have not believed”? Perhaps some fault of character may prevent your enjoying perfect rest. See where that flaw is. Are you living in any sin? If so the sun may have risen, but if there is a bandage over your eyes, you will still be in the dark. Get rid of that which blinds the eye. Or, are you trusting yourself as well as trusting in Christ? Are you relying on your experience? Then I do not wonder if you miss the rest of faith. Get rid of all that spoils the simplicity of your faith. Come to the Lord anew this morning. Possibly you are sickly in body, and this may cause you discomfort, for which you cannot otherwise account. Never mind, you may come just as you are, with all your sickness, weakness, or family trouble, and you may now rest in the Lord. Tell out your grief to Jesus, and he will breathe on you, and say, “Peace be unto you.” We ought to be at rest: we err when we are not. A child of God should not leave his bedroom in the morning without being on good terms with his God. We should not dare to go into the world and feel, “I am out of harmony with my Lord. All is not right between God and my soul.” A husband, if perchance he has had a difference with his wife, will not feel happy in going to business while that little cloud remains. In domestic life we are wise if we square all such matters before we separate. Let us part with a kiss. This method of unbroken fellowship should be carefully maintained towards God. Be at perfect rest with him. “Acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto thee.” Set all straight to-day, so that you can say, “We which have believed do enter into rest.” And when that is done, if anything should again happen to break the golden chain, renew it by faith; for by faith alone we stand. Destroy, by the power of God’s Spirit, everything which weakens faith; for this will disturb your rest in God. Oh, that all the way between here and heaven we may journey on with restful hearts, led beside the still waters! I have seen, in an old book, a portrait of Mr. Sibbs, the famous Puritan, and it says at the bottom of the likeness, “Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.” Now, that must be so with us, for nobody gets into heaven who does not get heaven into

himself first. Oh, to get heaven into us this morning, and keep it there for ever!

“Alas!” cries one, “I wish I had the rest you speak of, but I cannot find it, though I study much and work hard.” Hearken to a parable:-A little bird of the air found itself in a church. It was anxious to find its way into the open air, and so it flew aloft among the great timbers of the roof, where it was half buried, and almost blinded, by the dust which lay thick upon the beams. There were no seeds, nor fruits, nor waters in that dry and thirsty height. It then made a dash at a window, glorious with many colors; but it found no way of escape. It tried again and again, and at last dropped stunned upon the pavement of the aisle. When it recovered itself a little, it did not again fly aloft; but seeing the door open upon the level of the floor, it joyfully flew through it into the open country. You are that bird. Your pride makes you deal with high things up there in the roof. Among the lofty mysteries you are blinding yourself: there is no escape for you there, nor rest, nor even life. You seek a way through the glory of your own painted righteousness; but this will be death to you, if you persevere. Drop down upon the floor of honest confession and lowly penitence. Come to the ground by self-humiliation. When you get lower ideas of yourself you will see just before you the open door, Christ Jesus. As soon as you see him, use the wings of a simple faith, and you are at liberty, and no more a captive doomed to die. May God bring you down, that he may exalt you in due time, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

“JESUS WEPT.”

DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23RD, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLES NEWINGTON.

“Jesus wept.” — John 11:35.

A GREAT storm was stirring the mind of Jesus. We find, on looking at the original, that he was indignant and troubled. We have a very literal translation in the margin of the Revised Version; and instead of reading, “He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,” we find it, “He was moved with indignation in the spirit, and troubled himself.” What was this indignation? We cannot think that it was caused by the unbelief of his friends, or even by the pretended sympathy of those malicious Jews who hastened to accuse him to the Pharisees; but we look further and deeper for the reason of this heat. He now stood face to face with the last enemy, death. He saw what sin had done in destroying life, and even in corrupting the fair handiwork of God in the human body; he marked, also, the share which Satan had in all this, and his indignation was aroused; yea, his whole nature was stirred. Some read it, “He roused himself,” instead of reading, as we have it in our version, “He was troubled.” Certainly, there would seem to be an active sense in the expression: it was not so much that he was troubled, as that “He troubled himself.” The waters of his soul were clear as crystal, and therefore when troubled they were not muddled; yet they were all stirred. It could be seen that his holy nature was in a ferment, and an inarticulate expression of distress fell from him. Between indignation at the powers of evil, grief for the family who had been bereaved by death, sorrow over those who stood by in unbelief, and a distressing realization of the effects of sin, the Lord’s heart was evidently in a great storm. Instead of the thunder of threatening, and the lightning of a curse, all that was perceptible of the inward tempest was a shower of tears; for “Jesus wept.” A hurricane rushed through his spirit; all the forces of his soul were disturbed; he shuddered at the sight which was about to be set before him; he was thrilled from head to foot with emotion; yet the result of the storm was not a word of terror, nor a glance of judgment, but

simply a blessed shower of tears: "Jesus wept." If all our righteous indignation displayed itself in tears of pity, we should have fulfilled the text, "Be ye angry, and sin not."

"Jesus wept." I have often felt vexed with the man, whoever he was, who chopped up the New Testament into verses. He seems to have let the hatchet drop indiscriminately here and there; but I forgive him a great deal of blundering for his wisdom in letting these two words make a verse by themselves: "Jesus wept." This is a diamond of the first water, and it cannot have another gem set with it, for it is unique. Shortest of verses in words, but where is there a longer one in sense? Add a word to the verse, and it would be out of place. No, let it stand in solitary sublimity and simplicity. You may even put a note of exclamation after it, and let it stand in capitals, "JESUS WEPT!" There is infinitely more in these two words than any sermonizer, or student of the Word, will ever be able to bring out of them, even though he should apply the microscope of the most attentive consideration. "Jesus wept." Instructive fact; simple but amazing; full of consolation; worthy of our earnest heed. Come, Holy Spirit, and help us to discover for ourselves the wealth of meaning contained in these two words!

We read of other men that they wept. Abraham, when he Buried Sarah, wept; Jacob had power with the angel, for he wept and prevailed; of David we are continually reading that he wept. His friend Jonathan and he once wept together, and were not unmanned, but were the more truly men for weeping. Of Hezekiah we read that he wept sore, and of Josiah that he poured forth tears over the sins of Judah. Jeremiah was a weeping prophet; and I might continue the list, but if I did, it would not be at all remarkable that the sons of a fallen father should weep. With all the sin and sorrow that surrounds our manhood, it is no marvel that it should be said of any man, "He wept." The earth brings forth thorns and thistles, and the heart brings forth sorrow and sighing. Is there a man or woman here who has not wept? Have we not all, sometimes, felt a sweet relief in tears? Looking round upon this great assembly, I could point to you, one by one, and say, "He wept, and he wept; and she wept, and she wept"; and none would wonder that such has been the case. The marvel is that the sinless Son of God should, in the days of his flesh, know the meaning of strong crying and tears. The fact worthy to be noticed and recorded is that "Jesus wept." On that subject we shall meditate this morning; and may the Lord make our thoughts profitable!

First, I would remind you that “Jesus wept,” Because he was truly man: secondly, “Jesus wept,” for he was not ashamed of his human weakness, but allowed himself to reveal the fact that he was, in this point also, made like unto his brethren. Thirdly, “Jesus wept,” and therein he is our instructor. Fourthly, he is our comforter; and lastly, he is our example. We can only give a little space to each of these five things.

I. First, “Jesus wept,” for HE IS TRULY MAN. Many facts prove the completeness of our Lord’s taking up of our nature. Not in phantasm, nor in fiction was Jesus a man; but in reality and truth he became one of us. He was born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling bands, fed from the breast. He grew as a child, was obedient to his parents, and increased in stature and in wisdom. In manhood he worked, he walked, he wearied. He ate as we do: we find it mentioned that he fasted, and that he hungered. After his resurrection he ate a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, to show that his body was real. His human nature was sustained, as ours is, by supplying it with food. Though on one occasion, sustained by divine power, he fasted forty days and forty nights, yet as man he ordinarily needed food. He drank also, and gave thanks both for food and drink. We find him sleeping with his head upon a pillow, and resting upon the curb of the well of Sychar. He suffered all the innocent infirmities of our nature. He was an hungered, and was disappointed when, early in the morning, he came to a fig-tree seeking fruit, but found none. He was weary: “Jesus, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well.” That he thirsted we know, for he said to the Samaritan woman, “Give me to drink”; and on the cross he cried in burning fever, “I thirst!” In all things he was made like unto his brethren. “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” His humanity was our humanity to the full, although without sin. Sin is not essential to humanity: it is a disease of nature; it is not a feature found in humanity as it came from the Creator’s hand. The Man of men, in whom all true humanity is found in perfection, is Christ Jesus.

The fact that Jesus wept is a clear proof of this. He wept for he had human friendships. Friendship is natural to man. Scarcely is he a man who never had a friend to love. Men in going through the world make many acquaintances, but out of these they have few special objects of esteem, whom they call friends. If they think to have many friends, they are, probably, misusing the name. All wise and good men have about them choice spirits, with whom their intercourse is more free, and in whom their trust is more confident than in all others. Jesus delighted to find retirement

in the quiet home at Bethany; and we read that “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Alas, my brethren! every friendship opens a fresh door for grief; for friends are no more immortal than ourselves. “Jesus wept” at the grave of his friend just as you and I have done, and must needs do again. Behold your Lord, like David weeping for his Jonathan, and see how human he is in his friendships.

“Jesus wept,” for he was truly human in his sympathies. He did not merely walk about among us, and look like a man, but at a thousand points he came into contact with us. Jesus was always in touch with sorrow; happy are they that are in touch with him! Our Lord saw Mary and Martha weeping, and the Jews weeping that were with her, and he caught the contagion of their grief: “Jesus wept.” His sympathies were with sorrowing ones, and for this reason, among others, he was himself “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He loved first his Father in heaven, whose glory was his main object; but he loved intensely his chosen, and his sympathy with them knew no bounds. “In all their afflictions he was afflicted.” Jesus was far more tender towards humanity than any other man has ever been. He was the great Philanthropist. Alas! man is often the cruellest foe of man. None more unkind to man than men. Not the elements in their fury, nor wild beasts in their rage, nor diseases in their terror, have made such havoc among men as men drunk with the war spirit. When has there been such cruel hate on the part of the most savage monster towards man as has raged in the hearts of bloodthirsty warriors? To this hate our Lord was a perfect stranger. There was no flint in his heart. He was love, and only love; and through his love he descended into the depths of grief with the beloved ones whose lot was sorrowful; and he carried out to the full that sacred precept, “Weep with them that weep.” Jesus was no unsuffering seraph, no cherub incapable of grief, but he was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and therefore “Jesus wept.”

He was a man, dear friends, for he was stirred with human emotion. Every emotion that ever thrilled through your bosom, so far as it is not sinful, has had its like in the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could be angry: we read in one place that “he looked round about on them with anger.” He could be pitiful; when was he not so? He could be moved with compassion for a fainting crowd, or with scorn of a crafty ruler. Did he not speak with great indignation of the scribes and Pharisees? Yet, was he not tender as a nurse with a child, when cheering the penitent? He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; yet he uttered faithful warnings,

and made terrible exposures of hypocrisy. Our Savior, at the moment described in our text, felt indignation, pity, love, desire, and other emotions. He who is all bowels of tenderness, was stirred from head to foot. He was troubled, and he troubled himself. As when water is shaken in a vial, so was his whole nature shaken with a mighty emotion, as he stood at the grave of Lazarus, confronting death and him that hath the power of it. Our Lord proved himself a man when it was said that “Jesus wept.”

Note, too, that his pure body and his sinless soul were originally constituted as ours are. When his body was formed according to that Scripture, “A body hast thou prepared me,” that holy thing had in it the full apparatus of grief: the lachrymal gland was in his eye. Where there is no sin, one would say there should be no sorrow; but in the formation of that blessed body, all the arrangements for the expression of grief were as fully prepared as in the case of any one of us. His eyes were made to be fountains of tears, even as are ours. He had about his soul also all the capacity for mental grief. As I said aforetime, so say I yet again, it would seem that there should be no tears where there are no transgressions; and yet the Savior’s heart was made to hold sorrow, even as an amphora was made for wine. Yea, more, his heart was made capacious enough to be a reservoir wherein should be gathered up great floods of grief. See how the sorrow bursts forth in a mighty flood! Mark the record of that flood in these amazing words, “Jesus wept.”

Beloved, have a clear faith in the humanity of him whom you rightly worship as your Lord and your God. Holding his divinity without doubt, hold his manhood without mistake. Realize the actual manhood of Jesus in all lights. Three times we read he wept. Doubtless he sorrowed full often when he was not seen; but thrice he was known to weep. The instance in our text was the weeping of a Friend over the grave of a friend. A little further on, after a day of triumph, our Lord beheld the city and wept over it: that was the weeping of a Prophet concerning judgments which he foresaw. It is not recorded by any evangelist, but Paul tells us, in the Epistle to Hebrews, that with strong crying and tears, he made appeal to him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. This third record sets forth the weeping of our Substitute, a sacrificial weeping, a pouring out of himself as an oblation before God. Treasure up in your mind these three memories, the weeping of the friend in sympathy with bereavement, the weeping of the Judge lamenting the sentence which he must deliver, and the weeping of the Surety as he smarts for us, bearing

griefs which were not his own, for sins in which he had no share. Thus thrice was it true that “Jesus wept.”

II. Now, let us change the line of our thought a little, while we say, “Jesus wept,” that is, HE WAS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS HUMAN WEAKNESS. He could have repressed his tears — many men do so habitually. I do not doubt that there may be great sorrow, very great sorrow, where there is no open expression of it. In fact, most of you must have felt times when grief has struck you such a stunning blow that you could not weep, you could not recover yourself sufficiently to shed tears: the heart was all on fire with anguish, and the eyes refused the cooling drops. The Savior could doubtless, if so he wished, have hidden his grief; but he did not choose to do so, for he was never unnatural. As “the holy child Jesus,” he was free from pride, and wore his heart where men could see it.

For, first, remember his talk when he spoke to his disciples. He never concealed his poverty. There is an idea abroad that respectability is maintained by the pretense of riches, whereby real need is hidden. It is thought disreputable to seem to be poor, even when you are so. There may be something in the affectation, but our Lord did not countenance such a course; for he said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, and he was never ashamed to let it be known that he was poor. So, too, he was “despised and rejected of men,” and he did not pretend to be unaware of it. He did not try to make out that he was exceedingly popular, and that nobody had a word to say against him; but he owned that they had called the Master of the house Beelzebub. He knew what they had called him, and he was not ashamed of being made the butt of ridicule and the target of reproach. When they ascribed his miracles to the power of Satan he met the charges with an overwhelming reply; but he was not ashamed that slander had befallen him as well as poverty. As for his sufferings and death, how frequently do we find him talking to his disciples about it, till Peter would have stopped him if he could! Our Lord spoke of his being Betrayed into the hand of sinners, and despitefully entreated, and spat upon. He spoke openly of his being “lifted up.” He even dwelt upon the minute items of his coming passion: he had no wish to deny the fate which he knew awaited him. Why not die, and say nothing about it, if so it must be? Not so the Savior. He has become a man, and he is not abashed at that which necessarily follows as a part of his humiliation. Being found in fashion as a man he becomes obedient to all

that is required of his manhood, and before all observers he takes his place in the ranks. "Jesus wept."

Jesus wept on this occasion, although it might have been misunderstood and misrepresented. Do you not think that the Jews who stood there would sneeringly say, "See, he weeps! The miracle-worker weeps! He calls himself the Son of God, and yet he stands weeping there like any ordinary man!" Here was opportunity for scorn at his manifest weakness, and even for blasphemy at the evident token of it; but our Lord did not act upon policy; he allowed his true feeling to be seen. He did not, like the Stoic, claim respect for his manhood by holding himself within himself, and refusing to let men see that he was of like feelings with them. No, "Jesus wept." Tears may not be thought manly, but they are natural to man, and Jesus will not be unnatural. The enemies may say what they please, and even blaspheme both him and his God; but he will not act a part in the hope of silencing them. He acts the truth only, and weeps as his kind heart suggests. He thinks more of Mary and of Martha, and the comfort his sympathy may yield them, than of the cavilling ribaldry of unbelievers, which may forge an excuse for itself out of the loving weakness of his humanity.

"Jesus wept," and thereby he revealed his love to Lazarus, so that others saw it and cried, "Behold how he loved him!" This is one proof that our Lord does not hesitate to declare his love to his people. When he sojourned upon earth he was not ashamed to find friends among ordinary mortals. Our glorious Lord, now that he is enthroned, "is not ashamed to call us brethren." He is not ashamed to be written down in the same heavenly register as his poor people. His cheeks were bedewed with tears such as those which drop from our eyes, and by those tears all knew what manner of love he had towards his chosen. Blessed be his name! Many a great man might be willing to befriend a poor man with money, but not with tearful love; but here the blessed Master, in the midst of the assembled multitude, owns dead and rotting Lazarus as his friend, and seals the covenant of his love with tears.

"Jesus wept": he was not ashamed to own the affliction which sin caused to his holy soul, nor the gash which the sight of death made in his heart. He could not bear to see the grave and its corruption. May we never think of the sin and misery of our race without sorrow! I confess I can never go through this huge city without feeling unhappy. I never pass from end to

end of London without feeling a black and dark cloud, hanging like a pall over my spirit. How my heart breaks for thee, O sinful city of London! Is it not so with you, my brethren? Think of its slums, its sins, its poverty, its ungodliness, its drunkenness, its vice! These may well go through a man's heart like sharp swords. How Jesus would have wept in London! He could not stand in the front of a lone grave, about to look upon a single corpse, without weeping. He saw in that one death the representation of what sin has done on so enormous a scale, that it is impossible to compute the devastation; and therefore he wept. What hast thou not done, O Sin! Thou hast slain all these, O Death! What a field of blood has Satan made this earth! The Savior could not stand unmoved in the presence of the Destroyer, nor approach the gate of death's palace without deep emotion. Of this he was by no means ashamed; and therefore he did not hold back his tears: "Jesus wept." Brethren, holy emotion is not a weakness to be ashamed of. If at any time, in the midst of the world's wickedness and gaiety, you weep, do not hide those tears! Let the thoughtless see that there is one, at least, who fears God and trembles when the Holy One is provoked.

"Jesus wept," though he was about to work a wonderful miracle. The glory of his Godhead did not make him ashamed of his manhood. Singular thing, too, that he should weep just before the joy of raising the dead to life. He is God, for he is about to call Lazarus out of the grave; but he is man just as much as ever, and therefore he weeps. Our Lord was as much man when he raised the dead as when he worked in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. He was not ashamed to own his real manhood while he proved himself the resurrection and the life. This day in the glory of heaven he wears his scars, to show that, though God, he is not ashamed to be recognized as man. He makes this one of his glorious names — "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore"; therein describing his connection with our manhood in life and in death. Beloved, "Jesus wept" to show that he did not disdain the feebleness of that nature which he had taken up, that he might redeem it unto God.

Remember, that our Lord Jesus exercised three years of ministry, and each year was signalized by a resurrection. He began by raising the little daughter of Jairus, upon whose unmarred countenance death had scarcely set his seal. Then he went on to raise the young man at the gates of Nain, who was being carried out to his burial, dead but not yet corrupt; and now he consummates his glory by raising this Lazarus, who had been dead four

days already. Yet, when he came to this crowning marvel, and thus displayed the perfection of his Godhead, he did not disdain to stand before all and weep. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, yet “Jesus wept.”

III. Thirdly, OUR LORD JESUS IS OUR INSTRUCTOR IN WEeping. This is the most practical part of our discourse; be sure that you receive it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Observe why Jesus wept, and learn a lesson from it. He wept because this was his method of prayer on this occasion. A great miracle was to be wrought, and great power was needed from on high: as man, the Lord Jesus cries to God with intense earnestness, and finds the fittest embodiment for his prayer in weeping. No prayer will ever prevail with God more surely than a liquid petition, which, being distilled from the heart, trickles from the eye, and waters the cheek. Then is God won when he hears the voice of your weeping. The angel at Peniel will slip from your dry hands; but moisten them with tears, and you will hold him fast. Before the Lord Jesus puts forth the power which raises Lazarus from the grave, he appeals to God with strong crying and tears. The Father appears for his weeping Son; and you, dear friends, if you want to win in prayer, must weep in prayer. Let your soul arouse itself to eager desire, and trouble itself to anguish, and then you will prevail. “Jesus wept” to teach us how to baptize our prayers unto God in a wave of heart-grief.

“Jesus wept” again, because before he would arouse the dead he would be himself aroused. A word of his could have wrought the wonder; yea, his mere volition would have been enough. But for our instruction he did not make it so. There was a kind of evil which went not out but with prayer and fasting, and here was a kind of death which would not yield unless the Savior groaned and wept. Without great exertion of the life of Jesus, the death in Lazarus could not be subdued. Therefore the Lord aroused himself, and stirred up all his strength, troubling all his being for the struggle on which he entered. Learn hence, my brother, that if you think to do any great good in saving sinners, you must not be half-asleep yourself: you must be troubled even to tears. Perhaps the most difficult thing in winning souls is to get ourselves into a fit state. The dead may bury the dead, but they cannot raise the dead. Until a man’s whole soul is moved, he will not move his fellow. He might, possibly, succeed with those who are willing to be impressed; but the careless will be unmoved by any man who is unmoved himself. Tears storm a passage for warnings. If Christ’s whole

self must be stirred before Lazarus is raised, we must be thrilled before we can win a soul. The fingers of decay are unwinding the goodly fabric which once was worn by the soul of Lazarus, and no voice can effectually command them to pause but one, which sounds forth from a bursting heart. That “stinking,” of which Martha spoke, can only be turned into the sweet odors of grateful life by the salt tears of infinite love. It is still more so in our case. We must feel, if others are to feel. Come, my dear sister, you that are going to the Sunday-school class this afternoon, because you must go; you must not go in that spirit. You, my brothers, who are going to preach or talk to your classes, and have as yet only one eye open; this will never do. Your Lord was all alive, and all sensitive, and you must be the same. How can you expect to see his power exercised on others if you do not feel his emotion in yourselves? You must be quickened into tenderness as he was, or you will not receive his life-giving power. When I am weak, then am I strong. “Jesus wept” when he raised dead Lazarus.

Jesus wept in full knowledge of several things which might have prevented his weeping. You have sometimes thought to yourself when weeping at the grave of a dear child, or wife, or husband, that you have been wrong in so doing; but this may not be the case. Our Savior wept, though he knew that Lazarus was safe enough. I do not know what had happened to the soul of Lazarus: where Scripture is silent it is not mine to speak; but, wherever he was, he was perfectly safe; and yet “Jesus wept.” Moreover, Jesus knew that he was going to raise Lazarus to life; his resurrection was close at hand; and yet “Jesus wept.” Sometimes we are told that if we really believed that our friends would rise again, and that they are safe and happy even now, we could not weep. Why not? Jesus did. There cannot be any error in following where Jesus leads the way. Jesus knew, moreover, that the death of Lazarus was for the glory of God: he had said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God”; and yet he wept! Have we not thought, “Surely it must be wicked to weep when you know that the bereavement will glorify God”? Not so, or else Jesus would not have wept under similar circumstances. Learn instruction: tears which else we might have regarded as contraband have now free admission into the realm of holiness, since “Jesus wept.” Sister, you may weep, for Jesus wept. He wept, with full knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus, with full expectation of his resurrection, and with the firm assurance that God was glorified even by his death: we may not, therefore, condemn what Christ allows.

“Jesus wept,” but he did not sin. There was not even a particle of evil in any one of the Redeemer’s tears. Salt there may have been, but not fault. Beloved, we can weep without sin. I do not suppose we have ever done so; but it is possible. It is not a sin to weep for those whom God has taken away from us, nor for those who are suffering. I will tell you why there was no sin in Christ’s weeping: it was because he wept in his Father’s presence. When he spoke in his sorrow, the first word was, “Father”: he said, “Father, I thank thee.” If you can weep in such a way that all the while you feel God to be your Father, and can thank him, and know that you are in his presence, your weeping is not blameworthy, but healthful. Let such floods flow on, for Jesus wept, and said, “Father, I thank thee.” Brethren, we sin when we either laugh or weep behind God’s back. Absence from God is the element of sin. When you cannot smile nor weep except by forgetting God and his law, then are you offending; but if you can get up to your great Father’s bosom, and bury your head there, you may sob away without stint; for that which he permits is evidently no offense. “Jesus wept,” but he never murmured. “Jesus wept,” but he never found fault with God’s dispensations. “Jesus wept” sweetly in submission, not bitterly in rebellion. I think this is good instruction here: may the Holy Spirit teach it to us! May the Lord write it on every weeper’s heart. Thou, Hannah, a woman of a sorrowful spirit, did Eli accuse thee? Come to Eli’s Master, the great High Priest; for he will not blame thee, but he will tell thee that thou mayest weep, for he also wept.

IV. I must be brief upon my fourth point. “Jesus wept”: IN THIS HE IS OUR COMFORTER.

Let me speak to those who are of heavy heart. “Jesus wept”: herein is our honor. Thou weepest, my friend, in good company; for Jesus wept. Let no man censure thee lest they not only blame thee, but Jesus also.

“Jesus wept”: herein is our sonship vindicated. Thou sayest, “Can I be the child of God, and yet go weeping?” Was not Jesus the well-beloved Son? and yet he wept. Ah! the question lies another way: “What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” What child did God ever have that did not weep? He had one Son without sin; but he never had a son without sorrow. He had a Son that never deserved a stroke of the rod, and yet against that Son the sword was awakened. Mourner, thou art one of “The Worshipful Company of Weepers,” of whom Jesus is the Worthy Master. He is at the

head of the Clan of Mourners: thou mayest well wear the plaid with the black and red crosses upon it; for thy Chieftain wore the same.

See now the real sympathy of Christ with his people, for herein is comfort. His sympathy lies not alone in words, not even wholly in deeds — it is more tender than these can be. Only his heart could express his tender sympathy, and then it was by tears — tears which were brought up like gold from the ore-bed of the heart, minted in the eyes, and then put in circulation as current coin of the merchant, each one bearing the King's image and superscription. Jesus is our fellow-sufferer; and this should be our greatest solace. Oh, if we had a High-priest that knew not what it is to suffer as we do, it would be a most unhappy thing for us! If we fled to him for refuge, and found that he had known no grief, and consequently could not understand us, it would be killing to a broken heart. I saw a young bird yesterday fly where he thought he saw ready entrance; but, alas for him! there was an invisible barrier; he dashed against the glass, and stunned himself, and I was sad when I saw him lie dead outside my window. If in my grief I fled to Jesus, and there was about him a secret inability to sympathize, an incapacity to admit me to his heart; pure as crystal though that barrier might be, I should dash myself against it, and die in despair. A Jesus who never wept could never wipe away my tears. That were a grief I could not bear, if he could not have fellowship with me, and could not understand my woe.

Beloved, think how bravely our Lord endured: herein is confidence. Tears did not drown the Savior's hope in God. He lived. He triumphed notwithstanding all his sorrow; and because he lives, we shall live also. He says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Though our hero had to weep in the fight, yet he was not beaten. He came, he wept, he conquered. You and I take scot and lot with Jesus: we share the tears of his eyes, and we shall share the diamonds of his crown. Wear the thorn-crown here, and you shall wear the crown of glory hereafter.

Let this comfort you, too, that, though he wept, he weeps no more: herein is heaven begun below. "Death hath no more dominion over him" in any sense or degree. He has done with weeper. So shall it be with us before long. How I love that promise: "Neither shall there be any more pain"! Heaven is without a temple, for it is all devotion; and so is it without a hospital, for it is all health and love. "The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." "Oh for the no more weeping!" It will come to us before long,

for it has come to Jesus. "The Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." We shall soon have no cause for sorrow, and no possibility of grief; for as he is, such shall we be; and as he is perfectly blessed, we shall be beatified in him. "Jesus wept"; but his weeping is all over. "Jesus wept"; but his sorrow is now a thing of the past, and so shall ours be ere long.

V. Fifthly, and lastly, "Jesus wept": IN THIS HE IS OUR EXAMPLE. We should weep, for Jesus wept. Jesus wept for others. I know not that he ever wept for himself. His were sympathetic tears. He embodied that command, "Weep with them that weep." He has a narrow soul who can hold it all within the compass of his ribs. A true soul, a Christly soul, lives in other men's souls and bodies as well as in its own. A perfectly Christly soul finds all the world too narrow for its abode, for it lives and loves; it lives by loving, and loves because it lives. Think of other weepers, and have pity upon the children of grief. To-day I want to touch your heart-strings, and move you to pity the pains, the agonies, of the many now lying within the wards of our hospitals, and the even greater miseries of those who pine for want of medicine and care, because they cannot get into the hospitals, but have to wear themselves out in hopeless disease. How must those suffer who have bad nursing and little food, and in the winter are pinched with cold! You and I may never suffer as they do, but at least let us grieve on their account, and stand ready to succor them to the best of our ability.

In another matter our Lord is our example; learn from him that our indignation against evil will best show itself in compassion for sinners. Ah, my dear friend! I heard you declaiming tremendously against drunkenness. I am glad to hear you: you cannot say anything too hard or too heavy about that degrading vice; but, I pray you, wind up your denunciation with weeping over the poor drunkard. I heard you speak, my other friend, on behalf of the League of Purity, and you smote the monsters of lasciviousness with all your force. I wish more strength to your arm! But when you have done, sit down and weep, that such filthiness should defile men and women, who are your fellow-creatures. Appeal to Parliament, if you wish, for the putting down of vice; but Parliament itself first needs correcting and purifying. A flood of tears before the thrice Holy God will do far more than the hugest rolls of petition to our senators. "Jesus wept"; and his tears were mighty weapons against sin and death. You feel indignant at the lazy, idle, loafing vagabonds whose very illness is produced by their own vice: I cannot condemn your virtuous wrath. But if

you would in all things imitate Jesus, please note that it is not written that Jesus thundered, but that “Jesus wept.” Let indignation have pity mixed with it. I like not lightning without rain, nor indignation without tears. I know what you will say about the lack of thrift among the poor, about the absence of sobriety, the want of industry, and so forth. Admit all this sorrowfully; chide it tenderly; and then weep. You will do more good to the offenders, and more good to yourself, and more good to the best of causes, if pity moistens all. You may, if you will, beat the terrible drum, and sound the war-trumpet; but the noise will rather deafen than soften. The voice of your weeping will be heard deep down in the soul, and work more wonders than thunders of denunciation.

Lastly, when you have wept, imitate your Savior — do something! If the chapter before us had finished with “Jesus wept,” it would have been a poor one. Suppose, after they had come to the grave, we had read “Jesus wept, and went about his daily business,” I should have felt small comfort in the passage. If nothing had come of it but tears, it would have been a great failing off from the usual ways of our blessed Lord. Tears! what are they alone? Salt water. A cup of them would be of little worth to anybody. But, beloved, “Jesus wept,” and then he commanded, “Roll away the stone.” He cried, “Lazarus, come forth”! When Lazarus struggled out of the tomb, Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.” Some of you are full of pity for the sick; but I hope we shall not end in mere sentiment. Do not let us say, “We were moved to sympathize with the sick, but we gave an awfully bad collection!” I should be ashamed to think of this morning’s meditation if it ended so. No, no; if you cannot raise the dead, give something towards rolling away the stone which shuts the poor out of the hospital; if you cannot restore them to health, at least do something towards removing their maladies. Loose them from this crowded city, and send them into the country to a Convalescent Home. Brethren, we can thus practically prove the truth of our sympathy; therefore, pass the boxes round!

*Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon —
John 11:17-46; Hebrews 2:6-18.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 912, 265, 327.

GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL.

NO. 2092

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 30TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; end I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”-Isaiah 55:3.

THIS very memorable chapter may be called God's own gospel-sermon. In reading it we forget Isaiah, and only remember Jehovah. He speaketh not here by the prophet, but in the first person. God himself saith, “Incline your ear, and come unto me.” Now, we value every single word of Holy Writ, but especially those words which come direct from the mouth of God himself: not so much spoken for him as by him. Take heed that ye turn not away from him that speaketh from heaven. These are not my words, but the words of the living God: it is not I that invite your attention to myself; but your Maker, your God saith to you, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

From the very beginning, this chapter is a loving pleading with sinners: it is a lifting of stumbling-blocks, and a clearing away of objections. Perhaps some one laments thus: “Who am I, that I should come to God? I am a poor, penniless sinner.” The Lord forestalls the lament, by saying, “He that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” If you have no merit, if you have no claims, still come. Free grace sounds its golden harp, and mercy sings to it these words: “Without money and without price.”

If you stand back because you look upon your past life with sorrow, and you say, “Alas, my God, I have wasted much time in another Service!” he tells you that he knows your past folly, and he calls you to cease from it,

saying, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" He bids you now receive the substantial gifts of his grace; for these will satisfy the soul.

If anyone cries, "My needs are exceeding great; I want the largest and richest mercies, or else I am lost"; the Lord God admits that necessity, but meets it with a full supply, saying, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He knows that nothing but great mercy will serve your turn; but great mercy is ready for you. He has not brought you anything lean or mean, but "fat things full of marrow," a fullness of delight.

If there are any who feel timorous in the presence of such astounding grace, and are ready to cry, "Lord, we cannot think that thou wouldest give so great a salvation to us, for we deserve destruction and wrath"; see how he meets that doubt by the fourth verse. The highest proof of God's love to men is this, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." He points to his dear Son, and says, "Behold, I have given him! In the manger, behold, I have given him; on the cross, in the sepulcher, in his resurrection, in his enthronement, behold, I have given him!" What further proof of divine love do you require? What surer proof can you imagine? Come without distrust, and believe that since God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, he will also with him freely give us all things.

Furthermore, lest anyone should say, "I am a poor Gentile, but the Old Testament was written for the chosen people, the Jews"; the Father speaks to his dear Son. and cries, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee." To whatever race or nation you may belong, Christ calls you to run to him, and the like of you shall run to him. May that promise be fulfilled this very day in all the unconverted who hear these words!

Beloved, I have no need to preach this morning; I have only to follow the line of God's own Word. I do so with much confidence in the power of that Word. Gladly will I simply enlarge on what the Lord says, and give you none of my own suggestions. My word! ah, it is weakness itself! But the Lord's word is potent as when it said, "Let there be light," and light flamed forth, and scattered primeval night. It is as potent as when he made this dead, dull earth to teem with grass, and afterwards with cattle, and

placed man over all. Speak, Lord, thy fiat. Where thy word is, there is power.

Still, there may be some who say, “We feel ourselves to be strengthless and incapable.” The gracious Lord meets you there by laying upon you no heavy yoke: the precepts which he puts before you are simple and easy. He has given you ears, and he bids you use them, saying, “Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.” At this time we will look to the saving precepts laid down in the text; and then, we will consider the saving promises which go with the precepts: “Your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” Lastly, as God shall help us, we will hearken to saving pleadings, such as abound in the rest of the chapter. Oh, to speak only in the power of the Holy Ghost! Oh, for salvation-salvation for all my hearers!

I. Here are TWO SAVING PRECEPTS, which are pressed upon you at this time; for the Holy Spirit saith in all his commands, “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” These precepts are of simple character.

The first is, “Incline your ear.” This is placed in another form, “Hearken diligently unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.” You have ears to hear with, therefore hear. Some of you would hear fast enough if the faintest jingle of a guinea should invite you to gain it. Oh that you would now hear the voice of God! What does it mean-this “Incline your ear”? It means, Consider and think upon eternal things. It is the fault and folly of worldlings that they reckon eternal things to be second-rate, and unworthy of their immediate thought. Even from the cross our Lord complains, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.” The greatest event that ever happened in time or in eternity was the death of Jesus to save men from eternal woe; and yet this prodigy of love is disregarded. The soul-winner has to think of all sorts of ways by which to draw men’s attention to that which is their chief blessing. They are taken up with their farm and their merchandise: any petty piece of news in the daily paper will win their thought and excite their talk; but this event which most nearly concerns them is forgotten. For passing pleasure they have ears enough; but when we speak of heaven and hell they will not hear, charm we never so wisely. May the God of all grace this morning arrest the careless one, and constrain him to incline his ear! O thoughtless man, be like the wedding

guest who was spell-bound by the ancient mariner, and kept from the gay company while he heard the strange story of the sea. We have something of greater weight to tell than any romance of the salt sea. Do not deny yourself the benefit of hearing the truth. Rob not your soul of salvation. Your God invites you to give earnest heed to your soul, your immortal soul, and the place where it will spend eternity, and the way in which alone that eternity can become one of blessedness. Since you are not dogs nor horses, do think; and give most thought to that which is of most importance, namely, your eternal state. I should have hope of you if you would think. O souls, why will ye trifle where everything is of such infinite weight? Why need I plead for that which is so much for your own good?

But when you read, "Incline your ear," it means, Think about divine matters as God sets them before you. In these days those who judge themselves to be wise disdain to be taught by the revelation of God, but they elect to follow the conjectures of their own minds. They will not follow the Bible, but their own brains, such as they are. They endeavor to make for themselves a chart of a sea they have never sailed over. The way of happiness they picture as they would wish it to be. Surely the voice of wisdom advises us to incline our ear to one who knows more than we do. God has spoken: we are to learn from his words rather than from our own thoughts. Science is well enough, but omniscience is better. God has spoken, we need not conjecture: God hath revealed it. Would you be wise? This book is inspired by him: bend your powers towards this infallible record. Am I asking too much? Does the Lord require an unreasonable thing? If he speaks, shall we not listen? especially when he speaks only for our good.

Furthermore, remark that this attention to eternal things, this hearkening to what God the Lord will speak, must be hearty, honest, continual, earnest, and believing. "Incline your ear," as men do when they reach forward to catch every syllable, fearful lest they shall miss the meaning. "Hearken diligently." Not as a man does who hears and forgets. Hearken as they did who were pent up in Luck now, and longed for deliverance. How the Scotch woman rejoiced when she heard, or thought she heard, the sound of the Highlanders' bagpipes in the distance! Ah me! the bare hope of rescue from ferocious foes made them very quick of hearing. Beloved, give the gospel your best hearing. Hearken diligently: be attent and intent. When your mind has been attentive during the discourse, let it be retentive afterwards. Try to catch God's meaning in his Word, and see what Christ

would show to you. I say again, I am asking here, in God's name, of you nothing more than is due to him. I would come round these galleries, and down these aisles, and put it to every unconverted person—Is it not reasonable that you should consider your ways, and hearken to your God? I pray you, my friends, do not deny yourselves this favor, that you do now give attention to your souls' best concerns.

The second precept grows out of the first: "Incline your ear, and come unto me." This is to be the outcome of your inclining your ear. Come unto God. "How can I come to God?" saith one.

Come to him at least by thinking much of him. At present God is not in all your thoughts. Some of you are busy just now with sightseeing, but you seek not a sight of God: should it be so? Others of you are busy in money-making; you go out to business early, and come home late, and all those hours you are as little mindful of heaven as if there were no God at all. We have not much doctrinal atheism abroad, but we are drenched with practical atheism. The nations forget God. The Lord bids you turn your face Godward, and seek after him. Consider eternity, and how you will spend it, and what it must be for you if you pass into it without God.

When you have come to him in thought, then come by your desires. The son in the far-off country began to return to his father's house, where there was bread enough and to spare, before he had put a foot on the ground to go thither; his heart was on the road before his feet. If you feel as if you could not come to God anyhow else, come by desire at least; desire to be reconciled to God, long to become his child, hunger to taste of his love. This is a true coming.

Come to God by confession of sin. You have lived hitherto without him; confess that neglect. You have thought that repentance and faith might safely be put off to a more convenient season, and thus you have given your God a contemptuous putting-off. Confess the wrong you have done in this. You have violated the law, for you have not loved the Lord "with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind." Beside this, you have broken every command. Thus have you insulted your Maker; yet come to him with filial sorrow, and say, "Father, I have sinned."

Come to God in humble, believing prayer; ask him to save you, and believe that he that asketh receiveth. What! Will you not do that? He that will not

ask when the blessing is to be had for the asking, how can I excuse him, how can I pity him, if he shall perish of want? Come to the Lord by prayer, and let it not be said, “Ye have not, because ye ask not.” Oh, how I pray that you may come with your prayers while I am pleading with you by my preaching! Come and lay your burdens down at the feet of the great Burden-bearer! Come with all your sins and leave the load at the cross. Quit your evil way and your wicked thoughts, and turn to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon.

These are the two precepts-HEAR and COME. They are neither exacting nor unreasonable. How earnestly would I urge them upon you! I feel ashamed of myself that I do not preach with greater emotion; but let not my fault be the ruin of any of you. Be even more in earnest than I am, since it is your own soul that is in jeopardy. Fain would I save you if I could. I am eager to win you for my Lord. Be persuaded to hearken diligently to your God and Savior even now.

II. To encourage you in this, I come to my second head, which deals with SAVING PROMISES. Here are two promises corresponding to the two precepts.

You are bidden, in the first precept, to hearken, and incline your ear, and the promise given is this: “Your soul shall live.” What! Live through hearing? Yes, live as the result of hearing; for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” If any man would give himself diligently to the study of the revelation of God, to the searching of the Word of God, and to the hearing of loving, earnest, truthful, spiritual preaching, he would not fail to find life for his soul. If with heart’s resolve to find Christ in the Word a man hears it diligently, he has this promise, “Hear, and your soul shall live.” Some sit down, and say, “I cannot believe.” Of course you cannot believe until you know what you have to believe. But while you are hearing what it is, the inspired Word acts upon you with a self-evidencing power, and your conscience, and mind, and heart are affected thereby. The Holy Spirit quickens through the Word, and fulfils the promise, “Hear, and your soul shall live.”

There is such a power about the Word of God, that when it comes into contact with the heart which is seeking eternal life it breathes eternal life into it. I will try to sketch the manner of its operation. The man is an earnest hearer, and he says to himself, “How I wish I could meet with the salvation of God!” While listening he feels a tenderness stealing over him;

perhaps a tear trickles down his cheek. He gets absorbed in the truth to which he listens, and becomes serious, anxious, and impressible. The Word of God is like a fire which melts. Attended by the Holy Spirit, the influence of the Word upon the soul acts for the removing of the stony heart and the creation of a heart of flesh. Be much in the hearing of God's Word, and in thinking upon it, and a better feeling will steal over you. There will follow upon this feeling a measure of hope in the Lord. At the first it will be as a mere spark. You will whisper to yourself, "I think, after all, I may be forgiven, and accepted." This little hope will be like the first drop of a shower. This trembling hope will be the egg of a great joy, or the mustard-seed of the tree of holy confidence. Hope that comes by hearing the Word attentively, is a living and growing thing, and will increase to a blessed rest. By-and-by hope will rouse the soul to pleading. You, who first of all heard the Word carelessly, then heard it attentively, feelingly, and hopefully, will commence to pray that it may be fulfilled to you. I think I hear you crying, "O God, bless thy Word to me. I am come to a turning point, Lord lead me in the right way. Oh, that thou wouldest quicken me to run therein!" This prayer will continue to rise within the heart, and will never cease till it is heard, and the soul is made to live unto God. Having come thus far, the heart will soon possess a measure of trustfulness in the Lord Jesus, who is the revelation of the grace of God. Before you know it, you will find yourself trusting in the great sacrifice for sin. I do not know the manner in which faith is created by the Spirit in the human mind. In many it comes very gradually. Who can tell when the first light of the morning broke over this city? They that were wearily watching by the sick saw a grey light glide over the sky; but the sun was not yet risen. Then the light became clearer, and yet more clear; but if there were clouds in the east, even the watchers could not tell exactly when the sun was above the horizon, and the day had really dawned. The light came by degrees, but it came in truth. O my hearers, I want you, while hearing the word, to be praying-

*"While I see thee wounded, bleeding,
Dying on the accursed tree,
Fain I'd feel my heart believing
That thou suffer'dst thus for me."*

Thus, by the light of the Word, the man becomes a believer before he knows it. Is it not so in other matters? We feel that a thing is true, and we believe it without effort.

With that little faith will come gleams of joy; or if the faith be stronger, a full day will burst in upon the soul, lighting up the whole nature with heavenly brightness, Oh, that the Lord would give you joy and peace through believing at this very moment! I pray it may be so! I am glad that you are hearing the Word. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

I remember when I sought the Lord, I said to myself, "If the Lord is to be found by hearing, I will always be hearing." Three times on the Sabbath you might have found me, as a lad, in some place of worship or other; and I never lost a word. I gave earnest heed to all that was spoken. As Gideon's fleece drank in the dew, so did I receive the Word. The divine life came to me at last, though not at the first. So will it be with you, for there is the promise-the promise of God, that cannot lie-"Hear, and your soul shall live." May you understand that first promise by having it fulfilled within yourself!

Now consider the second promise, which is something very wonderful: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." This joins on to the second precept-"Come unto me." The soul cries, "Lord, if I were to come, wouldest thou receive me?" "Receive you!" saith the Lord, "I would enter into a covenant with you." If you come to God, simple as that coming seems, it shall involve infinite results; for the Lord will do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. Listen to this promise, you that are willing to hear God's word; and pray the Lord to fulfill it to you at once.

First, observe how he promises condescending intercourse: "I will make a covenant with you." It is in the Hebrew, "I will cut a covenant." Covenants were made by cutting a victim in two, and they who made a covenant passed between the two halves of the sacrifice to make the covenant sure. The Lord in effect says, "Poor, wretched sinner, you that have not a penny to buy water with, if you will come to me, I will enter into a sacred agreement and covenant with you!" "Covenant with me!" saith one, "What! God and I become contracting parties!" Yes. He will make a covenant with you. O my heart, how canst thou stay away? This means life; this means sure mercies; this means eternal blessedness. "I will make a covenant with you," with you, an obscure nobody, who can only look on yourself as a heap of dirt and filth. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you."

God is ready to enter into a binding contract with you. He will bind you to himself, and himself to you. "I will make a covenant with you." If once you come to him, he will put his fear in your heart, so that you shall not depart from him. He will cast about you the bands of his love, and will betroth you unto himself in a marriage union which shall never be dissolved. Do you enquire into the tenor of that contract? Well, I cannot tell you all about it this morning, for time would fail me; but it runs somewhat in this fashion:-"I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you. I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

This is a covenant of mercy. Yes, of "mercies" in the plural, as the text has it. God will enter into a contract with you to supply you with all manner of mercies between here and heaven, and to land you safely at his right hand. Oh, what a promise this!

God will thus enter into an unending alliance with you. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." I do remember how this attracted me to Christ. When I saw that his grace was everlasting, I longed to enjoy it. If I once got to the Lord Jesus, he would never let me go away from him; this created in me a vehement desire after him.

***"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from his love can sever."***

The eternity of the mercy is an essential ingredient in the preciousness of it. I should not care to preach to you a trumpery, temporary gospel, which would only yield hope for a short season; but I delight to proclaim my Lord's everlasting covenant. Come, poor sinner, come to Jesus, and you shall have life eternal. We do not offer you a ticket half-way from here to heaven; but a ticket all the way through, with no return to it. If you get into this covenant train, it is running all the way, and will never break down. Yield yourself to the Lord, to be his for ever, and he will make with you an everlasting covenant.

"Oh," you say, "but suppose I go to God, and trust him, and yet these things should fail?" They cannot fail, for he calls them "the sure mercies of

David." If thou believest in Jesus, thou art now forgiven. As sure as God is God, if thou comest to him through Christ Jesus thou art saved, not for time only, but for eternity. The covenant is ordered in all things and sure. God has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Oh, the mercy of God in this!

You see we liken what he gives to the sinner to what he did to David. The aged David lies dying; his strength is gone, he is a worn-out man, he will soon be in eternity. It is interesting to watch him. Tears are in his eyes as he thinks of Absalom, and the rest of his wayward family, and he exclaims, "Although my house be not so with God; yet"-blessed "yet"!-"yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." That is the kind of covenant which God will make with you. I am not talking of the man in the moon, but of you who are around me, you guilty ones, who incline your ear to him. The Lord says to you, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." When you come to die, I hope you may not have the faults of David to confess; but I trust you may have his covenant to fall back upon. I am thankful that David was not a perfect man by a long way, because I can now take comfort from his confidence. He was full of infirmities and sins, and yet he could rejoice in the covenant of grace; and I also, with all my faults, may venture to do the same. I, too, can say, "Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant." What a mass of gospel comfort lies in these words! Would God that all of you would so come to God that he would make with you an everlasting covenant!

The covenant is all in Christ, Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. With him this covenant is made. Great David's greater Son is given to us to be our leader. The covenant is with him. He stood for us in that dread day when the Judge of all the earth executed justice upon our Surety. The storm was made to burst upon his head; the sword of justice found its sheath in his heart; and now he stands the covenant-head of all believers; and God has made with us in Christ "an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." Thus have I put before you the precept and the promise.

III. Our third work is to urge the Lord's own SAVING PLEAS. These are not to be mine, but the Lord's. I keep to the chapter.

The first plea for which I would beg a hearing is, that God himself speaks to you. It is he that says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me." Can you realize for a moment the presence of God? Oh that he would make himself

apparent to you! I do not ask for thunder or lightning, to make you feel the terror of his majesty; but may you know of a surety that the Lord is here! Suppose you were to hear a strange, mysterious voice from yonder dome, saying, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." I am afraid the sole result would be that you would be startled rather than savingly impressed. But, indeed, it is the Lord God Almighty that saith, "Incline your ear, and come unto me." I beseech you, refuse not him that speaketh from heaven. By the long-suffering that has kept you in being until now, by the love that has borne with your ill manners and provocations, I beseech you now lend a willing ear to the Lord of mercy. You would hear your mother. Ah! how you wish that she were on earth to plead with you, though you despised her admonitions when she was yet alive! Soul, will you not hear your God, your benefactor? Turn, I pray thee, at his entreaty. Accept his tender invitation! Come now, without delay. Say, at once-

*'Lord, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.'*

Furthermore, the Lord pleads with you by the fact that your day of mercy is not ended. Read the sixth verse: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." God may be found. What a blessed fact! Hast thou been a drunkard? Yet God may be found. Wert thou last night in evil company? Yet thou art not yet shut up in hell, and the Lord of love may yet be found. Are you very old, and have you long despised your Savior? He has not yet closed the gate of mercy: he may be found. Seek him at once, while the search can be successful. "Call ye upon him while he is near." God is still within call. He is not far from any of you. Even though you speak not, he will hear the pulsings of your heart. O men and women, call upon your God while his ear is inclined toward you. Death is on his way, and may overtake you before this day concludes. Between the gathering of one congregation and another, someone among you will fall by death's javelin. Seek him, my hearers, while seeking time holds out. Before the death-sweat stands upon your brow, and your soul hovers upon the edge of a dark eternity, seek after the Lord with all your might. While

he is near to you, call upon him: while he may be found, seek him. Does not the voice of wisdom plead with you to do this?

The Lord very graciously mentions yet another fact, which should lead you to come to him, namely, that he is ready and willing to forgive the whole of your past offenses. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." I do not know what you think of those last words, "abundantly pardon"; but to me they are so sweet that I would set the whole orchestra of the Handel Festival to the singing of them. "Abundantly pardon! Abundantly pardon!" You have abundant sin; fatally abundant! But here is abundant pardon. You mourn your abundant hardness of heart! Yes, but abundant pardon will dissolve the stone. How abundant that pardon is the Lord does not tell; but certainly it is superabundant. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Note the word: grace not only abounded, but it did "much more abound." What a God is this who calls us to himself! Come, thou blackamoor sinner; Jesus is both willing and able to make thee white! Come, thou chief of sinners; for he is the chief of all Benefactors, and he can so bless thee that thy foulest stains shall be removed, and every virtue and grace shall adorn thy character. Such a gracious assurance should lead us to come to him; should it not? What more sweet-sounding bell can ring us unto God's table than these silver notes—"abundantly pardon"?

Then comes in the great persuasive of the magnanimity of God. Hear the words: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." No man here knows what great things God designs for him. You poor sinners who will incline your ears and come to your God, little know what great blessings and honors the Lord has decreed for you, nor what is his mind concerning you! Shall I tell you a secret? Before you were born, and before this round world was made, the Lord thought of you; your name was in his book, your person was on his heart; the Lord loved you, and chose you unto himself from of old. Do you hear that? You are his elect: he ordained you to eternal life, and that life he freely gives. Shall I tell you further of that secret? He gave you to his Son, to be his portion, his reward, his Bride; and that divine Son undertook to redeem you, to save you, and to bring you safely to his eternal glory. At this moment God ordains for you his service here below, and his presence in the world to come. If you

indeed hearken to his voice, he will make you his child; and, as a child, you shall be an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You think yourself to be the meanest of the mean, and least deserving of men, and so you may be; but the infinite grace of God will put you among the seed royal; for he taketh the beggar from the dunghill and setteth him among princes, even the princes of his people. Hear his gracious word: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." "Honourable! Why, I have lost my character!" Be it so, he is able to ennoble the fallen, and it is he that says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honorable." The Lord determines to do nothing less for thee than to set thee on his throne, in the image of Christ, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Is it not true that his thoughts are high, and his ways heavenly?

*"Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of my throne shalt be.
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"*

Your answer must be, "O Lord, I must come to thee; for thou dost draw me with such soft but mighty bonds." Oh, the glory of divine grace! Oh that you would come and learn how deep the mines of Jehovah's love, how high the blessings of his favor!

Did I hear one cry, "I feel so dull and stupid; I cannot come as I could wish"? Very well, come back to that first precept—"Hear, and your soul shall live." "I have long been a hearer," says one. Have you been an earnest, attentive hearer? Have you heard the Word of God as sure and infallible truth? Then be a more believing hearer. Expect the Word to bless you. Hear how the Lord pleads the power of his gospel: "My Word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in that thing whereunto I sent it." Harken to God's voice, and let it enter your heart; then it will quicken and save you as surely as the snow and the rain water the earth. Snow does not melt at once, but it turns to water before long, and is then doubly effectual in watering the soil.

The devil tempts you to give up hearing the gospel. Do not hearken to him. Hear with double diligence; for if he does want you to hearken, it is because he is afraid of losing you. Harken diligently, and believe steadfastly, and before long you shall be as much saturated with the power of grace as the earth is moistened with the snow and the rain, which fall

from heaven, but return not thither. Remember, it is God's Word, and in that fact lies your hope of getting life by it.

Lastly, the Lord persuades men to come to him by telling them of the joy they will obtain in coming. I know that I am addressing seeking souls who feel miserable and even despairing. "Alas!" cries one, "I shall soon go out of the reach of hope." "No," says the Lord, "you shall go out with joy." "Alas!" you sigh, "I shall be led forth to execution." "Nay," saith the Lord, "you shall be led forth with peace." These are no words of mine; these are the very words of the living God; hearken to them: "ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." It is a long time since you clapped your hands; but you shall do it with rapture, and all the trees shall join with you in your exultation. Hitherto the world has seemed to be as dull as you are; but it shall brighten up. You walked, the other day, in the fields, but you found little repose among the lambs and sheep, for you felt more like a wolf. The very birds on the bough seemed to taunt you with being silent and ungrateful towards God. At times the flowing river, with all its sparkle of joy, half tempted you to plunge into its depths, and find a watery grave. Earth is but the vestibule of hell to an unquiet conscience; but if you hearken to your God, he can make it the porch of heaven. Listen to this promise. Believe it, and you shall find it true. You shall enter upon a new life, and the world shall be a new world to you.

"Ah!" says one, "God will never make much of me. Even if I had a little joy and gladness, I should never be really an honor to him." He calls you to him by the effectual nature of his work. True, you are a thorny bit of ground, covered with briars, and thorns, and thistles. If you were left to barrenness it would be your righteous due; but his thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are his ways your ways. This is what he is going to do with you: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." That thorny temper of yours shall become gentle and generous. That briery malice shall give place to forgiveness and compassion. Blasphemy shall yield to devotion, vice to holiness, falsehood to truth, and pride to lowliness. That sin of drunkenness, which has been such a thicket of thorns to you, and your wife and family, shall give place to sobriety, industry, thrift, godliness, love to God, and joy in the Holy Spirit. If you hear and live, and come to God so

as to be in covenant with him, the day will come when you will not-know yourself, so great will be the change. Mercy, in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," laughed when she saw what the Lord was going to do for her; and if some of you could see what the Lord is about to make of you, you would laugh, too. You would not laugh like Sarah, who could not believe what was told her; but like Abraham, who felt the joy of the coming blessing by the realizations of faith. Beloved, at this moment I rejoice that I, an unworthy sinner, shall dwell with the Lord God in the glory.

*"I shall behold his face,
I shall his love adore;
And sing the wonders of his grace
For evermore."*

Yes, I shall do it; and so shall all of you who now believe the promise of our faithful God. May his sweet Spirit gently lead you to himself! and if it be so, "it shall be to the Lord for a name." He will get a great reputation out of his great grace; even as a doctor wins a name by curing grievous diseases. They will tell it in heaven that you are saved, and throughout eternity angels and principalities in the heavenly places shall see in you a monument of grace, a trophy of all-conquering love.

So may it be; and to the name of Jehovah, whose mercy endureth for ever, shall be glory and honor, world without end. Amen.

THE CURSE; AND THE CURSE FOR US.

NO. 2093

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is writ ten, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”-Galatians 3:10-14.

THE apostle tells us, in the eighth verse, that the gospel was preached to Abraham. Very briefly, very tersely, but very fully was the gospel proclaimed to him in those words, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” The true gospel is no new thing, it is as old as the hills. It was heard in Eden, ere man was driven from the garden, and it has since been repeated in sundry ways and in divers places, even to this day. Oh, that its very antiquity would lead men to venerate it, and then to listen to its voice! It is “gospel,” or good news-the best of news for fallen men. Oh, that they would receive it with gladness!

The gospel blessing which was thus preached to Abraham, and to his seed, came to him by faith. He was justified by his faith, as it is written, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” The blessing, which is the soul of Abraham’s gospel, must come to us in

the same way as it did to him, namely, by faith; and if we expect to find it in any other way, we shall be grievously mistaken. There were some in Paul's day who were "of the works of the law," and expected to obtain the blessing through their own doings; but they could not find it. We have many around us who are practically looking for gospel blessings upon legal principles. The object of our sermon is, to show them their certainty of failure; and, at the same time, to make clear that way of faith, by which the curse is rolled away, and the blessing comes to the chosen seed.

To begin with: our first head is this, Blessedness comes not to those who are of the works of the law; and the second head will be, Blessedness comes to those who are of faith. We shall need no other divisions, but we shall greatly need the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, that these may be plainly and powerfully set forth before our minds. I want so to speak that you shall go with me, not in hearing only, but in feeling and in believing, practically taking home and feeling the power of the truth. When a minister is studying a sermon, his best preparation comes through his feeling, himself, the power of his subject. He rehearses his discourse before the little audience of his own heart and conscience; and in observing the effect produced, he arrives at some idea of how the Word will operate upon others. He that has run the gauntlet of a truth, and felt all the heavy blows which it levels at his own conscience, is likely to deliver that truth to others with tender sympathy and full assurance. Such a preparation I think I have had, and I pray that you may be benefited by it.

I. Let us learn, at the outset, that BLESSEDNESS COMES NOR TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW.

First, observe the fact, as the apostle states it very positively: "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." You cannot be under the curse, and yet be partakers of the blessing. A man cannot be in darkness and in light at the same moment: he cannot be under the curse of the law and under the blessing of the gospel too. All who are of the works of the law are under the curse, and consequently none of them are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Note well the persons spoken of—"As many as are of the works of the law"; that is, all of you who hope, by the works of the law, to commend yourselves to God. We are all "of the works of the law" by nature, because it is our bounden duty, as creatures, to keep the law of our Creator. He is our Benefactor, our King, our Lord and God, and he has claims upon us

which we ought not to disown. He has set forth those claims in the law of the Ten Commandments, and these are binding upon all of us, without exception. Because we have disobeyed that law, and denied to God his just claims, our violation of the law has brought us under its penalty, which is described as “the curse.” No man has always kept all the law, and consequently every man that is of the works of the law has come under the curse, and must remain under it unless ransomed in the one appointed fashion. If you read those ten commands through, as you should do very carefully, you will have to pause at each one, and say, with solemn truthfulness, “I have broken this.” Especially will this be the ease if you remember the truth that the law is spiritual, and deals with thoughts, desires, imaginations, motives-yea, with your nature itself. Surely you will have to cry, “Guilty! guilty!” every way, and “guilty” every day. This being the case, you are under the curse. You may have been moral, and outwardly commendable; but the heart and intent are what the Lord looks at; and because you have not loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and have not loved your neighbor as yourself, you have come short of the demands of his righteous law, and you are under the curse.

I beseech you to remember that this is a matter which concerns you now. “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:” not only shall you be so in the day when “Depart, ye cursed,” will be the final and hopeless doom of the wicked; but to-day you are under the curse if you are of the works of the law. If the unsaved could really understand and believe this, they would hardly keep their seats. If you are not by Christ redeemed from the curse of the law, if you have not by faith appropriated his great sacrifice, you are under the present curse of God. Even the gospel does not bless you, for “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” O my hearer, I could weep to think that you are under the curse. A death-bed is a dreadful place to an unpardoned sinner; but I am not speaking of a death-bed, I am now talking of the seat whereon you now sit in health and strength: if you are of the works of the law, that seat now upbears a man under the curse. I am not talking now of thieves and murderers, and such like; I am speaking of as many as are of the works of the law, and specially of those who believe that they are keeping the law, and are looking for salvation by their obedience. Those who think that they are not to be numbered with the guilty, and need not to be saved by grace, these are of the works of the law by their own choice,

and they are under the curse. If you come before God in your own self-righteousness, you are, by that very act and deed, proven to be under the curse. This brand of Cain is not on your brow, but the curse is working in your heart. As this city of London seemed last night and this morning to lie under a cloud charged with tempest, SO does the man who looks to the law for life abide under a cloud of wrath which may burst upon him at any moment. Oh, that the gloom and oppression of spirit which comes of that cloud of threatening would pain you greatly, and drive you to Christ for shelter!

That you may no longer abide in false security, I pray you for a few moments weigh those words, "under the curse." I do not feel as if I could expand them or expound them; but I must simply repeat them: "UNDER THE CURSE!" The Lord make those words to pierce your souls! This is not my language, remember; it is not even the word of the apostle Paul as a man; for he speaketh by inspiration when he saith, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." How shall I pronounce these words with sufficient solemnity? When the sermon is printed, in what type shall the printer set up these words, "UNDER THE CURSE"? "The curse causeless shall not come," but this is a curse with a cause of overwhelming conclusiveness. It is a curse that was pronounced of old by the authority of the Lord, and confirmed by the Amens of assembled Israel; it is, in fact, the essence of all those curses which of old were declared on Mount Ebal, the rolling thunder of threatened wrath. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," even as the Shorter Catechism puts it, "They have lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so are made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." Dare you sleep to-night under the curse? Will you wake to-morrow and go forth to your business under the curse? Can you sport, and laugh, and frolic, under the curse? God grant we may be sufficiently sensible to be filled with anguish at the sound of these dreadful words—"under the curse"!

The apostle goes on to give a Scriptural confirmation of this fact. He says, "For it is written." He is writing a part of the New Testament under inspiration of the Holy Spirit; but he turns back to the Old, and gives authority to his writing by showing that it always was the mind of the Spirit, "for it is written." If anything be written by the pen of inspiration, it is true, and we accept it as infallible. I hope you are not among those who trifle with the inspiration of any part of Holy Writ; for if so, this text has no

power with you. "It is written" is a thing of omnipotent authority with many of us. "It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This is the summary of the whole passage in the twenty-seventh chapter of Deuteronomy, and also of the fifteenth verse of the eighth chapter of that book.

Attend to each word of the passage quoted. There is no exemption of persons. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law." Every offender comes under the curse. Is it the king, the priest, the nobleman?-he is under the curse. Or is it the poorest of the land-the slave, the beggar, the fallen woman?-sin brings them under the curse. Prince or pariah, it is all the same if the law be not perfectly continued in, the curse follows. The sentence is sweeping; there are no exceptions to its killing force. You may have kept the law in many points, but if you have broken it in one, you are under its curse. If you want to send a message by the telegraphic wire, it may be perfectly sound for one hundred miles, but if it is only broken in one inch, nay, if it is simply cut across, you cannot send the message by it. No blessing can come to a man by the law unless the law has been perfectly kept; but one single infraction of the law involves the curse. The possibility of blessing on the footing of justice is gone when sin enters in. Thus, every man of every rank and grade, and external character, since he has not continued in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, has come under the curse.

Observe that there is no limit of time. It says, "continueth not." What if a man should have kept the law, in his own judgment, for many years, his service is not over. Men join our army for a certain number of years, and then they are discharged; but a man is under the law so long as he lives; neither can he escape from under its yoke by the mere lapse of time. And so, if we had accomplished obedience for twenty years, yet still, if in the next year we broke the law, we should come under its curse. A thief is not excused because he was heretofore honest, nor a murderer because aforesaid he had not shed blood. He that "continueth not" comes under the lash. My conscience clearly sees the utter impossibility of my ever obtaining justification by the works of the law. If, up till now, I had never sinned, which, alas! is very, very far from being the case, yet I should still stand in jeopardy every hour; for, being tempted, I should yet fall and perish, if my footing were that of the law. Even the just could not live by

legal principles; their only hope is to live by faith. As for us defiled and polluted sinners, we are, from the beginning, out of the running, if the race be by works: no lapse of time will enable us to start; and if we did start, no time would arrive when we could say, "It is finished." A Methuselah would be under the law in his nine hundredth year. Still might the curse fall on him, even though, up till then, he had stood firm. Thus saith the Lord, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." On that footing none of us all could hope to remain free from the curse; but the case is worse, for if we are of the works of law, we are already under the curse.

Observe that there is no indulgence as to certain sins. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things." What a range these words have! Yet they do not so much concern ceremonial things as the moral conduct of daily life. If you will turn to Deuteronomy 27., from which Paul is quoting, you will find that the works which are mentioned in detail as bringing the curse, are not works of worship, and oblation, and ritual, but of morality or immorality; works which concern the moral law. We must continue in the keeping of the Ten Commandments, and abide in the spirit of them in "all things"; or, if not, it is utterly impossible that the law can ever save us: all it can do is to put us under its curse.

Once more, here is no narrowing of the demand. It is put, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." If a man does nothing wrong, yet if he fails to do that which is right, he is guilty. Omission is as truly a defect as commission. He misses the mark who shoots beyond it or falls short of it. If thou makest a single omission of duty, on the footing of law thou art a lost man. If thou hast omitted, at any time, to love the Lord thy God with the whole force and intensity of thy nature, if thou hast omitted in any degree to love thy neighbor as thyself, thou hast committed a breach of the law. Not to obey is to disobey. Who can plead innocence, if this be so? How cutting is the sentence, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"! It is an awful passage! It seems to me to shut up the gate of hope by works; yea, to nail it up. I bless God it does fasten this door effectually; for if there seemed to be half a chance of getting through it, we should find men still struggling for entrance. Salvation by self is man's darling hope: salvation by doings, feelings, or something or other of their own, is the favourite delusion of sinners. We may bless God that he has rolled a great stone at the mouth of the grave of

legal hope. He has dashed in pieces as with a rod of iron the earthen vessel which held the treasures of our conceit. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

To complete this, the apostle gives us a piece of what I must call side evidence. He has stated the fact, and confirmed it by Scripture; he now gives side evidence from other Scriptures. Some might say, "There have been just men: men have been justified in the sight of God." Yes, saith Paul, turning to one passage out of very many which he might have quoted from Holy Scripture, the Lord saith by his servant Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith." The only just men that ever have existed since the fall have been justified by faith; and that their faith was of the essence of their justification is clear, since they lived by faith. It is not said that the just shall rejoice by faith, but they shall "live by faith." Their very existence as just men hung upon their faith. They had no life before God except as they believed and lived. The apostle argues that since the just men of the old covenant were justified by faith, it is clear we cannot be justified by the law; for the law is not of faith, since the law saith nothing of believing, but speaks only of doing. The law speaketh nothing of grace, nothing of mercy, but only of justice and merit. If anything that may be called mercy is due to men, it is clearly not mercy, but justice; for all that is due is of justice. The law speaketh not of believing, it speaketh only of doing—"The man that doeth those things shall live in them." The one teaching of the law is- Obey and live; disobey and die." Inasmuch as those who did live unto God lived by their faith, it is clear it was not by the works of the law. Thus the apostle argues, negatively and positively, showing how men were not justified, and showing how they were justified; and thus he makes it plain as a pikestaff that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.

My dear hearers, let us deal faithfully and personally with the solemn truth now before us. I pray that everyone may examine himself to see whether he is of the works of the law. Are we legal in our feelings? Are we relying upon self and its doings? Does any one among us feel that there is not in London a more deserving person than himself? Because he is a good church or chapel-goer, does he think himself accepted of the Lord? Because of confirmation, or baptism, or attendance on the sacrament, does he hope to be saved? Because of his decent and respectable life, does he reckon himself just? If such be the hope of any one of you, you are confessedly "of the works of the law," and it is not my word, but the Word

of the Lord, that you are under the curse. Think of this, you who are so very good, so free from fault! There is nothing else for you but the curse. You are not in the same way as those men who are mentioned in the Scriptures as justified; for they lived by faith, and you hope to live by works. As you are not in the same way, neither will you come to the same end. It is a thought which vexes you, and possibly even makes you angry, that you should be under the curse; but it will be well for you to know the truth, however black it looks. Nothing remains but a fearful looking for of judgment; for where there is even now a curse, what else can there be but fiery indignation at the last?

We will stay no longer upon this most searching truth. Alas, I cannot bring it home to the conscience! It needs a miracle of grace to get this truth into the heart of man, and to make him feel the full terror of it. It is so repugnant to our proud human nature, that we incline to any error which will obscure it. Come, Holy Spirit, with thy divine light, and flash this truth upon the sinner's eyes in such a way that he must see it!

II. Secondly, THIS BLESSEDNESS COMES TO THOSE WHO ARE OF FAITH, even to those who look for salvation to the Lord Jesus, in whom God declares himself to be just, and the justifier of him that believeth.

On this point I shall run on much the same lines as under the first division of the subject. Here we have a blessed fact: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." If the former truth, that we are under the curse, should make us sit uneasily, this blessed doctrine should make us dance for joy. The ransom is paid; we are free. "Christ hath redeemed us"; that is, so many as believe in him. He hath "redeemed us from the curse of the law"; "he hath bought us out from under the curse." Our deliverance from the curse is by a process similar to that by which slaves are set free, namely, by their being bought with a price.

We are not merely delivered from the curse by a moral change in us, but by a redemptive work for us. Christ was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood. A ransomed captive is by the ransom justly freed, and has a right to his freedom which none may question. You that believe in Jesus, are freed from the curse of the law, and justly freed from it. The law cannot curse you, though you have broken it, and in your own persons incurred its penalty. Since you are in Christ Jesus, the law has not a word to say against you; the reason we will show you directly, but the fact is so, and therein you should rejoice. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." So

far from being condemned, the believer is “accepted in the Beloved,” and this is our happy privilege at this hour. Let us joy in God, and rest in peace, being justified by faith.

But then the apostle goes on to show the manner of it. The fact is clear; oh, for a grip of it! The manner of our deliverance is this- “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” I do not understand language at all, unless this means substitution. Christ was made a curse for us; that is to say, in our room, and place, and stead he bore our sin, and the curse which came of it. The curse of the law, which otherwise must have fallen upon us, fell upon the Anointed of the Lord, who stood sponsor for us. Jesus was accursed of men. Oh, how they hated and loathed him! How clamorously the Jews cried, “Away with him! Crucify him, crucify him!” The curse of men might have been of small account, though it cost our Lord many a sorrow; but his Father hid his face from him! Hear ye that bitterest of all bitter cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Here is the wormwood and the gall, the quintessence of woe. He was over blessed, yet was he made a curse. In him was no sin, yet “He made him to be sin for us.” He was always in himself the Beloved of the Father; but when he stood in the sinner’s stead, a voice was heard, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord.” “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” and then “it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” I do not like to use a word of my own, in trying to open up this mystery: I will not even try to explain it, but will bid you look down into the depths of it for yourselves. He was “made a curse for us”: he was not such by nature; it needed a special arrangement to put him in that condition. Not only did the curse pass over him in its results, but the word says, “He was made a curse.” It is wonderfully expressive; and yet more wonderfully it veils the inexpressible. “He was made a curse.” O thou divine Son, thou ever-blessed One, thou perfect One, thou altogether lovely One, how can such words apply to thee? Yet they do so apply, for the Holy Spirit speaketh of thee in this wise. Here is our hope, and here our joy, even in this abyss of woe: “He was made a curse for us.” The penal consequences of sin were so visited upon the great Substitute that he vindicated the law of God in the highest conceivable manner. Remember those words: “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” These are the echo of that prophetic sentence-“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” “He bare the sin of many.” “Behold the Lamb of

God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He bare our sins that he might bear them away by the fact of bearing them himself. This is the central doctrine of the gospel; and although to-day it is slighted, here I stand, by God’s grace, to declare it in plain terms while my tongue can move. I know no other hope for lost men but this—that the justice of God has been vindicated by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is by faith in him that men are delivered from the curse of the law, because he was made a curse for them.

The apostle, speaking in this second part, as it were, in the same way as in the former portion, goes on to confirm this by Scripture. He says again, “For it is written.” Beloved, that is the nail on which everything must hang: “It is written,” “It is written.” Never let us get away from “It is written.” May we hold fast to God’s Word, if we give up everything else! “It is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Read the twenty-third verse of the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy. The instructed in Jewish manners and customs tell us that the usual way of putting to death by the Jews was by stoning, and a person who committed murder was stoned to death usually, but he was afterwards hanged upon a tree. He was hanged up that men might see that he was taken from the earth, and that the curse of God was upon him for his crime. The law was that he should not remain on the tree after sundown, and this law saved the Jews from that barbarity which once defaced our own country, by gibbets with men hanging in chains upon them year after year. A man who had committed murder was hung up till the sun went down; and then he was buried, and, if I remember rightly, they usually buried the tree, and the nails, and the garments of the criminal, that the memory of him might be put away, and the land should not be polluted. This being the case, it was remarkable that our Lord should die by a death which was evidently intended in the divine decree to exhibit him as made a curse. The felon’s gibbet, the mode of death for slaves, was adopted by the Roman governor, who knew nothing whatever of the divine purpose, but yet carried it out. By the mode of his death our Lord was exhibited as “made a curse for us.” Oh, look you to the Crucified! While the darkness gathers around us on this murky morning, let it remind you of the gloom which gathered around your Savior. Remember the hour when the concentrated essence of darkness and of eternal night gathered about his blessed person while he hung exposed to death upon the tree. Darkness was the fittest surrounding for the agony which racked his soul. Our Lord endured within him a darkness greater than that without

him. The darkness seemed to say that his griefs could not be -seen or understood of men. He suffered within the sacred chamber of an impenetrable midday midnight. None could see the heights and depths of what was meant by his being “made a curse.”

*“There my God bore all my guilt;
This through grace can be believed;
But the horrors which he felt
Are too vast to be conceived.”*

Notice, furthermore, the consequence of all this “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” Our Lord Jesus Christ was made a curse for us that he might deliver us from the curse of the law, and that in consequence we might be blessed. The flood of blessing was ready to flow along its channel, but the river-bed was blocked by a huge rock. The stream was dammed up by our iniquity. What was to be done? The hindrance could only be moved by that great Lord, whose hands were pierced, and whose feet were nailed to the cross. He by his great self-sacrificing act of love, lifted the rock from its place, cast it right away, and enabled the stream of blessing to flow freely down to us. This day there is no curse for the believer; but every blessing awaits him. All who are in Christ, the great seed of Abraham, are blessed with faithful Abraham. The covenant may be summed up in this one word-Blessing, blessing, blessing-blessing for the believer, and blessing through him.

What was the blessing of Abraham? It was, first, justification. It was “accounted to him for righteousness.” God counts them righteous who believe in Jesus. He not only absolves you from sin, but he justifies you, accounts you as having kept the law. Oh, rejoice in this, and be glad!

The next blessing to Abraham was the promise. God had given him a great promise of a spiritual inheritance. To us the Holy Spirit is the earnest of that future inheritance: and Christ has so wrought for us “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Wherever the Spirit of God dwells, the covenant is fulfilled: you have in the Spirit the foretaste of the promised rest, you have the initial stages of the promised perfection, you have the dawn of the promised glory. The Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory. Beloved, see what has come to you, then, through the substitutionary work of Christ; justification is yours as truly as it was Abraham’s, and you are as assuredly justified as Abraham was. The

promise also comes to you even as it did to Abraham; for you are Abraham's seed in Christ, and you are blessed with faithful Abraham; therefore you may rejoice to-day with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

All this, you observe, is by faith: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." O dear hearers, I am very sorry for some of you, for you have no faith, and therefore no grace. Why should not my sorrow be turned into joy? May God the Holy Ghost lead you to believe in Christ Jesus to-day! My wonder is that any believe, from one point of view; and then my next wonder is that anybody should not believe. Is it not marvellous that God should give his own dear Son, God like himself, and that God should thus come among men, and put on human flesh and blood, and that in his wonderfully complex person he should bear the consequences of our sin? It is a miracle that God should, by suffering, magnify his own law, and that the Supreme Judge should himself bear the curse, instead of the culprit, and thus vindicate the principles of eternal rectitude. Even hell itself could not more fully prove the displeasure of God against evil, nor make the moral government of the universe more honorable. The doctrine of substitution must be true; it could not have been invented by human wit. *Prima facie* it bears the mark of truth upon it. It is the most wonderful story that ever was told: God himself condescends to suffer in the place of his enemies, he bears the sin of those who are rebels against his divine authority, that without injury to his justice or taint upon his righteousness, he might pardon sin, and receive the sinner into favor. Herein is love indeed! Here is justice truly vindicated, and great love glorified. Love both devised the plan and carried it out, and this day love makes it effectual in all who believe in Jesus.

O my hearers, I cannot be content to preach this glorious truth to you; I hunger and thirst that you may receive it! Oh, that you would now look to Jesus and live! Behold him on the cross! Behold your God, whom you have offended, clothed in your nature, and dying in your stead, that you may live! The serpent of brass is on the pole: the serpent has bitten the people, they are ready to die; and lo, on the pole another serpent is uplifted. The curse destroys you; the Lord uplifts him who was made a curse. Those who looked to the brazen serpent found life and healing in that look; and even so there is life from sin by looking to him who was made sin for us. Though the serpent's poison was deadly, its bites were cured by a look at the brazen serpent; and even so my Lord becomes a man, and, as a man, bears our sin in his own body on the tree, that he might from that tree cry

to guilty men, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Oh, that you would look to Jesus by faith! I began by lamenting that we are under the curse; but if you will trust in my Lord, I shall conclude by bidding you rejoice that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law."

I have done when I just say these two or three practical words: Humbly let us own the great evil of sin. What a horrible thing sin must be, that it should compel God to curse his creatures! God is love, but even love curses sin, God is full of pity and compassion; but this very God must curse those who hope to be saved by his law, and yet break that law. Child of God, dost thou ever trifle with sin? Cease from that fatal folly; for God does not trifle with it—he curses it. O man, see what a polluting thing thy sin must be, since there is no removing it save by the blood of the only begotten Son of God! If thou hast ever had faint views of thine own guilt, cease from them at once. Only by the interposition of God himself couldst thou be saved from guilt. How great that guilt! Lie low before thy Lord. Confess thy sin with a broken heart. Wonder that thy heart is not more broken than it is, and that thou hast not a greater horror of its tremendous, its infinite evil.

Next, let me say to you, heartily accept the way of salvation by faith in Christ. I cannot make out why men quarrel with justification by faith as they now do. There is an old proverb which saith, "It is a pity for any man to quarrel with his bread-and-butter." But to quarrel with the means of your livelihood is nothing in folly compared with cavilling at God's way of salvation. Why do you refuse a method so simple, so just to God, so safe to man? Why do men desire to find fault with it? I am very old-fashioned, so they say; but does their new fashion offer men anything better than the old way? I am not too old to learn; but I am not so young as willingly to go further and fare worse. I cannot see what there is in the new theology which even pretends to be better than the old. I suppose that eminent divine is eminently superior to me who is so orthodox as to say that our Lord Jesus Christ by his death did something or other, he does not know what, which in some way or other, he does not quite know how, is connected with the reconciliation of man to God. This is rather a cloudy gospel. I do not think that such a dim statement would cheer a mouse, much less a broken-hearted, dying sinner. I do not see that his plan, or want of plan, has any glory over that which I declare to you. But he is orthodox: very many of his brethren go far further, and altogether deny the

expiatory sacrifice. I cannot pretend to have fellowship with such: they take from me my hope. I was a broken-hearted sinner, crushed under guilt, crying out in despair, and expecting soon to be in hell; and it was only when I learned that the Lord Jesus suffered in my stead that I found peace of conscience. Substitution is still the rock on which I build, and I know of no other on which a man can wisely base his hope for eternity. Comfort in the cross I have never lost, and I am not going to cast away my confidence in it to please the philosophers of the season. The old farmer would not change his horse, "For," said he, "I have not seen a nag that will carry me better than my own." The doctrine of the cross has carried me so far without a stumble, and I hope to enter heaven by its means. I am glad to sing with the children-

*"He knew how wicked we had been,
And knew that God must punish sin:
So, out of pity, Jesus said
He'd bear the punishment instead."*

Glorious atonement! Accept it, poor soul! Do not let the devil set thee cavilling at thine only hope. This is the available way of salvation for thee, thou lost one! Thou self-condemned one, this is a way which will suit thee! If thou art so very good, and so very wise, I know that this gracious method will not attract thee; but thou wilt kick at it. This does not make me think any the less of it; for I remember that our Lord is set to be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense to those who stumble at his word, being disobedient. If you will not have him, do not deceive yourselves, we never thought you would. You do but prove that the Father hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. You come not to him because you are not of his sheep, as he said unto you. If you were brought low, and felt your need of him, then should we hope that Jesus reckoned you among his redeemed. If you would hear his voice and follow him, then should we know that you belonged to the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep; but as you. disregard him, you will be driven away with the goats.

Further, let us now gratefully extol our Redeemer. Join all of you to magnify the Lord your Savior. We do not half praise him as we ought. I might even ask, Do we say anything about him? Six days in the week we talk about all sorts of things, and say little or nothing about him, and yet he has redeemed us. The fact of his being made a curse for us ought to fill our mouths with thanksgiving and our tongues with singing all the day long.

Blessed be the Redeemer's name! "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Extol him now and evermore: if you have not done so before, begin at once. Get your music ready. "O sing unto the Lord a new song."

Then go and tell other people about your Lord's redemption. The theme will win attention if properly set forth. Let no one within fifty miles of you be without a knowledge of this great redemption by Christ's being made a curse for us. Men try to hide this truth, therefore cause it to shine out everywhere. Vindicate the name of your great Lord by telling everybody that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. If I could set you all preaching this blessed doctrine, I should rejoice indeed. Rest in it, and rejoice in it, and then repeat it till others also know and believe it. Even now the day begins to brighten up, the murky darkness is abating: I hope our hearts will rejoice in harmony with the day. The Lord send us out into a world delivered from darkness. May we make it brighter by setting before it this great truth! To our glorious substitute be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

FOUNDATION WORK.

NO. 2094

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 7TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed atones, to lay the foundation of the house.”-1 Kings 5:17.

“THE king commanded”: that is the beginning of all. Holy zeal waits for the king's orders. But as soon as the command was given there was neither pause nor hesitation; “the king commanded, and they brought.” Oh, that it were always so in the church of God; that the King's command were at once followed by his people's obedience! That obedience was true to every detail: “The king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” They did not omit one particular, or deviate in the least degree. The advice of the Blessed Virgin to the servants at the marriage-feast is our advice to all workers-“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” Work done without the Lord's command may be nothing more than mere will-worship, unacceptable with the Lord. Where the word of a king is, there is power; and you may expect that power to go forth with you when you go forth under the guidance and authority of the divine command.

Solomon began to build the temple at the foundation. You smile, and wonder how he could have begun anywhere else. Ah, dear friends! I wish common-sense ruled people in religion as well as in building temples; for many brethren begin their building at the top. To baptize an unbeliever on the ground of a faith which does not yet exist, is laying the topstone before the foundation. To gather into church fellowship those who are not gathered to Christ, is attempting to pile on the roof before there are any walls. For any of you to make a profession of religion without being born again, is building the third story before there is any basement. How much we have in this world of hanging up houses in the air!-I mean, making

professions without having anything upon which to base them. Begin with the foundation.

The foundation, in his case, had to be carried to a great height, because the area upon which the temple stood was on high above the valley. As there was not space enough on the mount, it was necessary to build up from the depth of the valley scores of feet in perpendicular height, to form a foundation upon which there would be sufficient space for the temple and its surroundings. Portions of the massive masonry which formed the foundation of the enlarged area remain, to be wondered at by all who gaze upon them. Solomon paid especial care to the foundation.

Very much of foundation work is out of sight, and the temptation is to pay but small attention to its finish. It was not so with Solomon. Although it was very much out of sight, the king took care that the underground portion of the temple should be worthy of the rest of the edifice: it was to be made of “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” Builders in these days would think it absurd to spend time and labor in the hewing of stones which would never be seen. Foundations may call for something firm and solid, but certainly for nothing costly, and hewn with care. Out of sight, out of mind; and therefore none will spend time and trouble upon it. Not so the wise king engaged in the service of God. He paid great attention to underground work; and “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones” were brought at his command to form the foundation of the temple. He designed to make it all of a piece: it was to be as truly “magnificent” in its foundation as in its roof. There was to be no poverty of material, no scamping of any portion of the work. It was for God, and it was to be built by the king of Israel; and it would neither honor God nor the king to have a bad foundation.

I want, dear friends, to urge that all our work for God should be done thoroughly, and especially that part of it which lies lowest, and is least observed of men. I shall first say, this is God’s method: he builds all his works with good foundations; secondly, this should be our method in all work for God; and, thirdly, this is a wise method. Briefly upon each, as the Holy Ghost shall help me.

I. First, THIS IS GOD’S METHOD. Wherever you turn your eye upon the work of God, it is perfect. It will bear the keenest inspection. You may look at it from a distance with the telescope, or you may search into it with the microscope; but you shall find no imperfection. The Lord’s work is

perfect, not merely on the surface, but to its center. If you cut deep, or if you pull it to pieces, dividing atom from atom, you shall see the wisdom of God in the minutest particle.

Observe the work of creation. God took care that even in the material universe there should be a grand foundation for his noble edifice. We have the story of the fitting up of the world, during the seven days, for the habitation of man; but we have not the history of the creation of the earth before that time. To prepare for the seven days' rapid furnishing of the earth for man, millions of years may have elapsed. The foundation was laid with great care. No limit can be set to the period preceding the making of man, if you only follow the Word of God in Genesis. "In the beginning"—that was a long, long while ago—"God created the heaven and the earth"; and during that process of creation it went through a great many stages; for God was determined that the house in which man should dwell should be thoroughly furnished for him. I cannot conduct you to the foundations of the earth; but I do ask you to go down with me into the cellar. Consider that vast deposit of salt for our comfort and health; and the mines of iron and other metals which lay the corner-stones of trade and commerce. Look at the store of coals laid up in the deep places for us. God would not send his child here in winter time, and put no coals in the cellar for him; but he took long ages to provide the world with that fuel which is necessary for a thousand useful purposes. Those metals which are the best treasures of the soil, are usually placed lowest by God. "In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also." If ever science shall be able to investigate below the crust of the globe into its fiery caldron within, they will discover fresh wonders of God's power and wisdom. What benefit may be bestowed upon us even by the secret fires which burn and rage within the world's innermost heart, or what may be the blessing derived by us from these underlying fountains of water gathered in the deeps, we cannot estimate. Suffice it to see that God's creation is not only full of glory in its loftiest pinnacles, but also in its utmost depths. God is the Master-builder, and he layeth the foundation well.

The same is true of God's work called Providence. No event happens but he has planned it, and ordained that a multitude of other events should precede or follow it. The doings of Providence are threaded together, like pearls upon a string; there is a relation of this to that, and of that to another. God does not allow events to blow about like scattered leaves in autumn; neither are they the inventions of a trying moment, when he is

driven to fresh expedients that his end may not be frustrated. Events dovetail the one into the other. Every fact is fitted and adapted to take its place in the design of the great Architect. Certain great principles underlie all history. One who had but little spiritual knowledge, yet confessed that “there is a power abroad which makes for righteousness”: he could not help seeing that; and he might have seen more had he opened his eyes. There is, in the affairs of man, many a touch of God’s own hand. History looks like a tangled skein; but when you and I shall see it disentangled, we shall wonder at the infinite wisdom and kindness and goodness of God. Behold, in all things everything is of him, and by him, and through him, to the praise of his glory. In God’s government of the universe he makes sure of his foundation.

But we come into clearer light when we look at the Lord’s greatest work of redemption. You and I are not saved haphazard. It is not as though God had saved us on the spur of the moment, as an afterthought which was not in his first intent. No; redemption plays an essential part in the ‘purposes of the Lord. I delight to look back upon the Lord’s redeeming thoughts before all time, and say of them, “These are ancient things.” Long before the stars flew like sparks from the anvil of omnipotence, God had contrived the way for the redemption of his own, In the covenant council-chamber the divine Persons of the sacred Unity arranged the procedure of all-glorious grace; and to-day all things are wrought according to the purpose of his eternal will, The foundation of redemption was securely laid in the covenant of grace, of which the Lord Jesus is the foundation. Infinite love, infallible wisdom, immutable faithfulness: all these combined to lay a foundation which can never be moved.

Go a little further, dear friends, and come to the day in which the Lord provided an atonement for, us, and thus laid an immovable foundation. It has been suggested that he might have saved us, if he willed, without a sacrifice, letting law and justice stand on one side. This is after the manner of the men of the day: the jerry-building of the hour scorns so mean a thing as a foundation. But God does not build in this vile fashion. God will have no flaw in the salvation of his people; and that there never might arise a question as to the justice of the divine act by which their iniquity is passed over, he has exacted a penalty at the hand of their Surety. Now the Lord justly forgives their transgression. Justice, vindicated by a glorious sacrifice, brings for a foundation “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” All the angels of God might search all heaven in vain to find a fit

foundation-stone for the temple of grace; but when the Only-Begotten of the Father offered himself without spot unto God, it was seen that he was in all respects fit to be the foundation of man's redemption. He is a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious, able to bear all that can be laid upon him. What a wonder it was that God would yield him up to die, to be the basis of our hope! Talk of the great stones and costly stones of Solomon's Temple, they are not worthy to be mentioned in the same day as this chief Corner-stone, on which all the hopes of his elect are laid; for they behold in him the sacrifice for sin, the destroyer of evil, and the reconciler of the lost. Glory be to God! in resting upon Jesus we do not build on the sand, but on a rock. He is the foundation of God, which standeth sure. The whole temple of the church is sustained by him.

When you are rejoicing in your sonship, your union to Christ, your high privileges, your eternal glory, do not forget the less visible, but equally essential, foundation blessings of eternal personal election, the everlasting covenant, the unchanging purpose, and the infallible oath of God. Sing evermore of the love which from eternity was fixed upon you, and of the purpose settled and established concerning you; for these lie at the foundation of all the favors you enjoy. Solomon's foundations astonish beholders on earth; but those of God will fill angels with amazement throughout eternity.

Once more: while illustrating the truth that God's method is to lay a good foundation, I must beg you to think of the application of redemption to the heart of every one of the redeemed in personal salvation. Beloved, when God saved us, it was no superficial work: the building of his grace in our souls is no wooden shanty, but a building which hath foundations. Look back at the early dealings of God with you before you knew him: he says, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Your experiences in your ungodly state were made to lay a foundation for the higher work of grace in your hearts. This was more fully seen in the operations of grace when God began to deal with you effectually. When he wrought in you conviction of sin, what an out-digging there was! With some of us the throwing out of the foundation lasted for years; and for myself, I began to think there never would be a trace of anything built up in my heart. What a trench was dug in my soul! Out went my supposed merits! What a heap of rubbish! Out went my knowledge, my good resolves, and my self-sufficiency! By-and-by, out went all my strength. When this out-digging was completed, the ditch was so deep that, when I went down into it, it

seemed like my grave. Such a grief it was for me to know my own sinfulness, that it did not seem possible that this could help my upbuilding in comfort and salvation. Yet so it is, that if the Lord means to build high, he always digs deep; and if he means to give great grace, he gives deep consciousness of need of it. Our convictions of sin, though painful and humbling, are a needful part of edification in righteousness. Since then we have been the subjects of a great deal of secret, unseen, underground work. The Lord has spent upon us a world of care. My brother, you would not like to unveil those great searchings of heart of which you have been the subject. You have been honored in public; and, if so, you have had many a whipping behind the door lest you should glory in your flesh. Whenever God has filled your boat with fish, and you have been more than ordinarily successful, that boat has begun to sink. Great mercies are great humblers of sincere souls. You have gone down in proportion as God has gone up with you. All those chastenings, humblings, and searchings of heart have been a private laying of foundations for higher things. Ay, and the Lord has done much more than this in his own- unseen but effectual way. He has given instruction, and revelation, and sanctified fellowship, and these have been your own, and not another's. No one has seen what the Lord has wrought in you; but if it had not been for this, you could not have been built up in holiness and usefulness. Thank God, he works the greater wonders of his love in the dark, out of sight. Yet, as the foundation is the most important part of the building, so the secret, humbling processes of grace have a value second to none. Yes, my brethren; for the upbuilding of a temple for his indwelling, the Lord "brings great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones to lay the foundation of the house."

II. I want now to see that THIS MUST BE OUR METHOD. We must build after this fashion, and make sure of our foundations.

First, let it be so in the building up of our own life. Every man and woman here, but especially those who are young, have a life to build up. It is a great thing to begin by believing good solid doctrine. Some people have believed twenty different gospels in so many years; how many more they will believe before they get to their journey's end it would be difficult to predict. I thank God I never knew but one gospel; and I have been so perfectly satisfied with it, that I do not want to know any other. Constant change of creed is sure loss. If a tree has to be taken up two or three times a year, you will not need to build a very large loft in which to store the apples. When people are always shifting their doctrinal principles, they are

not likely to bring forth much fruit to the glory of God. It is good to begin with a firm hold upon those great fundamental doctrines which the Lord has taught in his Word. Draw into their places in your belief, and in your experience, those “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones” of sure revelation which lay the doctrinal foundation of the temple of faith.

It is a great blessing to have a deep, solid, inward experience. Beloved, never think that you have taken hold of a truth till it has taken hold of you. We do a great deal of flimsy work in religion, to our cost and injury. If much of our supposed experience were laid on the wall of our confidence, the first real stone that pressed on it would crumple it all up. We want things solid, vital, real—“great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.”

Beloved, how much is done in private by every Christian who is really sanctified, in the matter of the mastering of sin. It is not fit, in cases of inward conflict, to open the door or the window, and bid everybody come and see. If you have the wild beast of sin to tackle, shut the door and have it out alone, God helping you. You will never attain to a holy life unless there are secret conflicts with sin. There must also be hidden communings with God. That grace which is Artesian is grace indeed. When you have tapped the deep that lieth under, up leaps the stream with an irresistible force, fresh from the very bowels of truth. I pray God to deliver us from the present superficialities of religion. Xavier is said to have made innumerable converts in India by going about with a little pot of water and a brush, and sprinkling them as he went along. If men do not in that way make converts now, I am afraid the work is not much deeper or more effectual. Unless men have new hearts, and right spirits, it is all in vain that they make new professions. We need to be baptized into the grace of God till every part of our old nature is buried with Christ, and the whole of our new nature is dyed in the color of almighty love. God grant it may be so! Be thorough; be real, be intense. In your building up of character, look well to the foundation.

So it must be, next, in the building up of a church, Is that a church of God which is not founded on everlasting truth? There are numbers of hasty builders with wood, hay, and stubble; but these neither attend to foundation nor to material laid thereon. Splendid stuff for rapid construction is good, well-trussed hay! Bring a truss at a time. What a pile of building we will show in a day!, You wanted a house, and we have built

you one in a trice. The wall is three feet thick, and wonderfully warm. We have built a house in a day. In this way new sects and parties have been marshalled and called churches of Christ. Is this worth while? "Thus saith the Lord, shall it prosper?" For my part, although I would be zealous in the service of my Lord, I had rather, by the grace of God, "lay great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" upon the solid, rocky old doctrines of the gospel, than gather the greatest crowd, without faith and life. The stones of the temple were so squared and polished that you could not get a knife in between them when they were placed side by side; the stones thus adjusted were like a solid, united mass. So let us build. "Slow work," say you. Yes, but it will be equally slow in coming down, and that is the thing we must care about: we build for eternity.

To maintain solid truth you need solid people. Vital godliness is therefore to be aimed at. Twenty thousand people, all merely professing faith, but having no energetic life, may not have grace enough among them to make twenty solid believers. Poor, sickly believers turn the church into an hospital, rather than a camp. Weak believers are poor stuff for building a church with. Alas! much has been done of late to promote the production of dwarfish Christians. The endeavor has been to increase breadth at the expense of depth. What would you think of those who should break the dams of our reservoirs to let the water spread over the country? The accident which did this in America has spread ruin throughout a great district. I fear that nothing but mischief can come of the present liberal regime which talks of universal fatherhood, and virtually breaks down the separating wall which is meant to guard the church of God. If, in order to spread our sea, we make it very shallow, and it breathes miasma and death over the plain, it will be a sorry exchange for life eternal. Oh, to have a church built up with the deep godliness of men who know the Lord in their very hearts, and will seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth! I look with great delight, although with much sorrow, upon our Society's church-building on the Congo. When we think of the many men who have died there, it has indeed been true already that "great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" have been laid for a foundation. If God will enable his church to make such sacrifices, he means to build a fair palace for his glory. When the great demands of a work call for unusual consecration, and unknown donors drop large sums into the treasury of the church, then also is there hope of a grand upbuilding. When Christian men, for the truth's sake can part with friends, lose popularity, and involve themselves

in loss, then are “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones” being built into the foundation of the temple of the Lord.

This morning a large number of friends are present who have been attending the Sunday-school Convention. I welcome them heartily, and I wish to turn my subject towards them, by saying—Dear friends, in the building up of character in others we must mind that we do the foundation work well. Sunday-school teachers are those who do the foundation work; for they begin first with young hearts, while they are tender and susceptible. It is a most important thing that we have our children and young people well instructed in divine truth and soundly converted. If we tone down the gospel which we teach, under the notion of making it more suitable to children, we shall greatly err: we may make it more childish, but we shall not make it more fit for children, nor a more effective instrument for their salvation. The same gospel which is preached in this great Tabernacle to this crowd is preached downstairs in our Sunday-school, to the young; and if I thought it was not so, I should despair of seeing any conversions. The lads and lasses want just the same truths as the adults, only it should be stated in simpler language, with more of parable and illustration. Fundamental truths are as much connected with the salvation of a child as with the salvation of a full-grown man. Christ receives adults, but he also suffers little children to come to him. Let us always take good heed that our Sunday-school teaching is as solidly truthful as our instruction of the church.

But be it never forgotten that the major part of teaching will lie in example; and, therefore, the life of the teacher must be of the very best. It is wonderful how children copy the conduct of a beloved teacher: for good or for evil, the force of example over the imitative faculty of youth is very great. When their hearts are tender they are moulded for God and good things, as much by what they see in our character as by what they hear from our lips. Most of you have seen in the British Museum the Egyptian brick which bears the mark of a dog’s foot upon it. When it was as yet soft mud, a dog, who was wandering through the brickfield, set his signature upon it, and there it stands—Dog of Nilus: his mark. Any casual word or foolish act may make a mark on a child’s character as indelible as the dog’s signature. This may be done when we are not intending it; how much more when with our heart’s intent we write upon a loving mind! An unhallowed remark, or an ill-advised act, may start a soul upon the line of destruction. As the Japanese copyist was very careful to imitate the crack in the plate,

and the flaw in the design, so shall we find young people peculiarly apt to follow our faults and infirmities. Oh, for holy teachers and preachers! Let us be such that we may dare to bid our disciples mark us, and have us for ensamples. How surely are the impressions of our early days retained when after-learning is forgotten! How easily may you who work upon the precious material of a young mind leave on it an undying record! I remember a man of God, who has now gone to his reward, who was the means of producing, under God, a library of useful lives. I do not mean books in paper, but books in boots. Many young men were decided for the Lord by his means, and became preachers, teachers, deacons, and other workers; and no one would wonder that it was so, if he knew the man who trained them. He was ready for every good word and work; but he gave special attention to his Bible-class, in which he set forth the gospel with clearness and zeal. Whenever any one of his young men left the country town in which he lived, he would be sure to have a parting interview. There was a wide-spreading oak down in the fields; and there he was wont to keep an early morning appointment with John, or Thomas, or William; and that appointment very much consisted of earnest pleadings with the Lord, that in going up to the great city the young man might be kept from sin, and made useful. Under that tree several decided for the Savior. It was an impressive act, and left its influence; for many men came, in after years, to see the spot, made sacred by their teacher's prayers. We ought to be ingenious in our methods, and spare no pains to influence young people for their good. "Great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" may be fitly used in such building as this. If the Lord by our means prepares but one soul for eternal bliss, we shall not have lived in vain.

But, beloved friends, one of the most important things about dealing with children is, that we teach them what we have well prepared. Their mental food must be carefully cooked. If ever a teacher goes to the class without preparing the lesson, the teaching is sure to be very poor work. Nobody sees you when you are preparing your lesson; nobody commends you for your diligent research. It is the public address which is noted; but the secret study is that to which the commendation really belongs. If this private preparation is neglected, it is a very serious omission. Indeed, bad work in places which are not looked at is a wretched order of things. Some time ago it fell to me, as executor, to arrange for the sale of the goods and effects in a house most elegantly furnished. Certain fine pictures were to go to Christy and Manson's. The drawing-room was expensively adorned, and

the wall decorations were elaborate with a pattern in which gold stars were somewhat plentiful. When the paintings were taken down, I was not a little surprised to see that behind them the wall was bare of ornament, so that at no time could those pictures have been shifted without showing how the decoration had been stinted. The owner was rich; yet his tradesman must needs practice such pinching economy of a little gilding. I am afraid if we were to take down the pictures in some Sunday-school teachers and Christian ministers, there would be seen ugly patches of neglect. It should not be so, brethren, in the work of the Lord. It must not be so! Our power under God will lie very much in the heartiness of our private work. Years ago, when I was suffering from gouty rheumatism, a gentleman sought an interview, who was confident that he could cure me almost immediately. He was a marvellously positive quack, and before long he had informed me that he had in his exclusive possession a most astounding medicine. I do not know whether a smell of it would not have cured all the ills of humanity. No, he could not even hint what the medicine was; and I did not press the point, for I could not expect to be favored with the golden secret; but I was indulged with some insight into the preparation of the miraculous drug. The professor said, "These pills are infallible in their effect, because they are so powerful. Their power does not lie in the mere ingredients, which are extremely simple; but their efficacy is the result of the careful preparation of the material by myself." Being a very healthy man, and full of life-force, the professor professed to work up these pills in such a way that he transferred to them the electric or biological energies of his own personality; and thus he infused health-power into the sick. I have never taken the aforesaid pills; but I have used their author's assertion as a lesson. I believe that if preachers and teachers work into their lessons the life of their souls, and the whole power of their minds, their teaching will be far more effectual for good than if they merely repeat good things, and put no heart into them. See to it that your heart and soul is worked into your teaching. Next time we are studying the Scripture lessons, let us think to ourselves, "This is foundation work. No one will know how I have worked at it; but the Lord, whom I serve, will take note of all that I do, and he will be pleased with conscientious foundation work." Brethren, we must put "good stones, costly stones, and hewed stones" into the unseen part of our edifice, that, as a whole, our work may be meet for the thrice-holy Lord.

III. My time fails me; but under my third head I must carefully, though briefly, set forth the reasons why this should be done. IT IS A WISE METHOD.

First, because it suitable for God. You build your temple for God, and not for men: you should, therefore, make that part of the building good which will be seen by him; and as he sees it all, it must be all of the best. The Lord sees just as much the foundation as he does the top-stone: all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Even heathens recognized this. A Grecian sculptor had to prepare an image of a god, for one of the temples. He was working away with all his might at the back of the head, and at the hinder garments of the figure. One said to him, "Your work is needless, for that part of the figure is to be built into the wall." "But," said he, "the gods can see in the wall. This is for the gods, and not for men." Let us catch the spirit of the heathen artist, and do work for God in a manner fit for the Omniscient. It is meet that the foundation which is invisible should be perfected, if we expect the Invisible God to accept it; for, otherwise, if we spend our strength on what is seen by men, it will be pretty evident that we, after all, are working for the praise of man, and not for the glory of God.

Next, look well to the foundation that is out of sight, for your own sake. No builder can afford to be negligent over the unseen part of a building; for it would involve a serious injury to his character. The very act of scamping is mean and degrading, and lowers a man's tone. I do not care who he is, if he habitually trifles over that which is not seen, the habit will defile his sincerity in other respects, and lead him to practical hypocrisy in religious concerns. The bare idea that we need not do our best if we are not seen, is debasing to the soul. To-day many aim at doing things cheaply, getting through work as fast as possible, and making a great show for the money. Let us avoid this popular form of lying! Let us do every part of our work as beseemeth men who are elect of God, redeemed by precious blood, and called into fellowship with Christ by the Holy Ghost. What if a sham might pass current with other men, yet it must not be adopted by those who are of heaven-born race, and have a quickened conscience within their bosom. "Why," saith one, "nobody would respect you any the less if you did such work slightly, for everybody else would do so." Listen: I should respect myself the less if I scamped my work, and I set a great value upon my own respect of myself. What if another esteems me? I am still wretched if I know that he is mistaken, and have not the approbation of my own

conscience. A conscience void of offense, both towards God and towards men, is of more worth than the applause of nations.

Further, lay the foundation well, and look to that part which is out of sight, because in this way you will secure the superstructure. There was a bit of a flaw in the foundation, but nobody saw it; for the builder covered it up very quickly, and ran up the whole concern as quickly as possible. The walls were built, and built well. It seemed clear that the fault down below was of no consequence whatever; and as it had a little cheapened the underground construction, was it not so much the better? How long was this the case? Well, the next year nothing happened: a longer time passed away, and then an ugly crack came down the wall. Had there been an earthquake? No, there was no earthquake. Perhaps a cyclone had beaten upon the work? No, there was no cyclone: the weather was the same as usual. What was the cause of that gaping space which marred the beauty of the building, and threatened to bring it down? It was that blunder long ago: that underground neglect produced the terrible mischief above, which would involve a great expense, and perhaps render it needful to take all the building down. That which was out of sight did not always remain out of mind; it only needed time to produce a dangerous settlement. If certain men of our acquaintance had been soundly converted at the first, backsliding and apostasy would not have followed, to our shame and grief. If certain preachers had done their work in the church of God better in years now past, those sad departures from the truth, which now vex the saints, would not have occurred. If today you do not teach your children the gospel fully and clearly, the evil may not be seen in your present classes, nor possibly even in this generation: but children's children will bear the impress of the slight work done at this hour. Years may be needed for the development of the full result of a false doctrine.

Besides, dear friends, to lay a good foundation, on Solomon's part, was the way to save himself from future fears. Buildings which have to hold a crowd endure seasons of test and trial. Years ago, I was preaching in a building which was exceedingly crowded, and, to my apprehension, there was a continuous tremor. I grew so anxious that I said to a friend, who understood such matters, "Go downstairs and see whether this building is really safe; for it seems hardly able to bear the weight of this crowd." When he returned he looked anxious, but gave me no answer. The service ended quietly, and then he said, "I am so glad that everything has gone off safely. I do not think you should ever preach there again; for it is a very frail

affair; but I thought that if I frightened you there would be more risk in a panic than in letting the service go on.” Solomon had built with “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones”; and therefore, when the vast multitudes came together around the temple, it never occurred to him to fear that the great weight of people might cause a subsidence of the foundation. Oh, no! he stood there, and prayed to God with collected mind, altogether undisturbed by any apprehension of possible disaster. He that builds well for eternity will escape a thousand fears. Doubts and fears are often born of a knowledge that something has been left undone, or has been done slightly, in the process of building upon Christ. Beloved members of this church, you that are often subject to doubts and fears, do you not think that these might be cured by a more real faith and truer dealings with God? Are you lax as to your private study of the Word, or negligent in your secret prayers? If so, I do not wonder that you have doubts, Here is a suggestion as to the way of curing and preventing them. Make your religion solid work: have no more of it in appearance than you have in reality. Get down to the rock every time. Do nothing with careless superficiality. If you pray, plead with your whole heart. If you hear the Word, put your very soul into it. “Sure work for eternity!” be this your motto. Specially look well to the underground and unseen parts of godliness; so shall your comfort be constant and joyful.

Beloved, lastly, do look well to the foundation, and to the secret part of your dealings with God, because there is a fire coming which will try all things. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” No matter where we build, nor how we build, the fire will come upon all the works of man. The wood, hay, and stubble builders cry, “Do not bring any fire here! The proposal is horrible!” But in vain do they protest, for God has determined that the fire shall be. Now, even should you build the upper and visible part of your life with stone, it will not avail if the under portion is of hay. The fire will bring it all down. What a blaze! What ablaze! Stand far off, and see the smoke thereof go up like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. What is left? Only a handful of black ashes! Is this the whole remaining result of an entire life? Is this the substance of a life of notoriety, and publicity, and honor? How terrible! Yet if the foundation part of your life is of consumable material, that must be the bitter end. God be thanked, the man that builds on the rock Christ Jesus, and builds on him gold, silver, and precious stones, has no cause to

fear the last conflagration. To-day he weeps, because he has built so little. "O Lord," saith he, "I wish I could have done a thousand times as much for thee!" But after the fire has gone through it and through it, and what is built remains, how thankful he will be! See how it shines amid the fire! The flames give it a glow and burnish never seen before. The rust and the tarnish are gone, and the whole fabric shines like the pure gold which it really is. Its precious stones are even more brilliant than before, and in nothing has the structure suffered loss. The Lord be praised! A life well grounded in Christ Jesus, made sound throughout by the power of the Spirit, will bear to be inspected of God, and even to be inspected by the envious eyes of men, who would fain find fault with it; and at last it will bear the trial of the judgment-day, and will be found to the praise and glory of God for ever and ever. Therefore, see to it that you lay the foundation of all your religion with "great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones," that so it may last for ever.

To those of you who are not converted, let this be the final word of my sermon: build on God's foundation, build on Christ, the sacrifice appointed of the Lord for the putting away of sin; and see to it that with sincere repentance, childlike faith, and gospel holiness, you build thereon "great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones," which shall lie firmly on the One Foundation, and never be removed therefrom, world without end. Amen.

THE LAMB IN GLORY.

NO. 2095

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 14TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”-Revelation 5:6, 7.

THE apostle John had long known the Lord Jesus as the Lamb. That was his first view of him, when the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He had been very familiar with this blessed personage, having often laid his head upon his bosom, feeling that this tender goodness of the Savior proved him to be in nature gentle as a lamb. He had beheld him when he was brought “as a lamb to the slaughter,” so that the idea was indelibly fixed upon his mind that Jesus, the Christ, was the Lamb of God. He knew that he was the appointed sacrifice, set forth in the morning and evening Lamb, and in the Paschal Lamb, by whose blood Israel was redeemed from death. In his last days the beloved disciple was to see this same Christ, under the same figure of a lamb, as the great revealer of secrets, the expounder of the mind of God, the taker of the sealed book, and the looser of the seals which bound up the mysterious purposes of God towards the children of men. I pray that we may have on this earth a clear and constant sight of the sin-bearing Lamb, and then, in yonder world of glory, we shall behold him in the midst of the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

The appearance of this Lamb at the particular moment described by John was exceedingly suitable. Our Lord usually appears when all other hope

disappears. Concerning the winepress of wrath, it is he who saith, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." In the instance before us, the strong angel had proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" And there was no response from heaven, or earth, or hell. No man was able to open the book, neither to look therein. The divine decrees must remain for ever sealed in mystery unless the once slain Mediator shall take them from the hand of God, and open them to the sons of men. When no one could do this, John wept much. At that grave moment the Lamb appeared. Old Master Trapp says, "Christ is good at a dead lift" and it is so. When there is utter failure everywhere else, then in him is our help found. If there could have been found another bearer of sin, would the Father have given his Only-Begotten to die? Had any other been able to unfold the secret designs of God, would he not have appeared at the angel's challenge? But he that came to take away the sin of the world now appears to take away the seals which bind up the eternal purposes. O Lamb of God, thou art able to do what none beside may venture to attempt! Thou comest forth when no one else is to be found. Remember, next time you are in trouble, that when no man can comfort and no man can save, you may expect the Lord, the ever-sympathetic Lamb of God, to appear on your behalf.

Before the Lamb appeared, while as yet no one was found worthy to look upon that book which was held in the hand of him that sitteth on the throne, John wept much. By weeping eyes the Lamb of God is best seen. Certain ministers of this age, who make so little of the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice, would have been of another mind if they had known more contrition of heart and exercise of soul. Eyes washed by repentance are best able to see those blessed truths which shine forth from our incarnate God, the bearer of our sins. Free grace and dying love are most appreciated by the mourners in Zion. If tears are good for the eyes, the Lord send us to be weepers, and lead us round by Bochim to Bethel. I have heard the old proverb, "There is no going to heaven but by Weeping Cross"; and there seems no way of even seeing heaven, and the heavenly One, except by eyes that have wept. Weeping makes the eyes quick to see if there be any hope; and while it dims them to all false confidences, it makes them sensitive to the faintest beam of divine light. "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." Those who have laid eternal matters to heart so much as to weep over their own

need, and that of their fellow-men, shall be the first to see in the Lamb of God the answer to their desires.

Yet observe, that even in this case human instrumentality was permitted; for it is written, "One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not." John the apostle was greater than an elder. Among them that are born of women, in the Church of God we put none before John, who leaned his head upon his Master's bosom; and yet a mere older of the Church reproves and instructs the beloved apostle! He cheers him with the news that the Lion of the tribe of Juda had prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. The greatest man in the Church may be under obligations to the least: a preacher may be taught by a convert; an elder may be instructed by a child. Oh that we might be always willing to learn!-to learn of anyone, however lowly. Assuredly, we shall be teachable if we have the tenderness of heart which shows itself in weeping. This will make our souls like waxen tablets, whereon the finger of truth may readily inscribe its teaching. God grant us this preparation of heart!

May we come in a teachable spirit to the texts and may the Lord open our eyes to see and learn with John! It is no small favor that we have the record of the vision. Does not the Lord intend us to be partakers in it? The vision is that of a Lamb, a Lamb that is to open the book of God's secret purposes, and loose the seals thereof. The teaching of the passage is that the Lord Jesus, in his sacrificial character, is the most prominent object in the heavenly world. So far from substitution being done with, and laid aside as a temporary expedient, it remains the object of universal wonder and adoration. He that became a Lamb that he might take away the sin of the world, is not ashamed of his humiliation, but still manifests it to adoring myriads, and is, for that very reason, the very object of their enthusiastic worship. They worship the Lamb even as they worship him that sits upon the throne; and they say, "Worthy is the Lamb," because he was slain and redeemed his people by his blood. His atoning sacrifice is the great reason for their deepest reverence and their highest adoration. Some dare to say that the life of Jesus should alone be preached, and that no prominence should be given to his death. We are not of their religion. I am not ashamed of preaching Christ Jesus in his death as the sacrifice for sin; but, on the contrary, I can boldly say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We do not so believe the doctrine of Atonement as to leave it in the dark as a second-rate article of faith; but we hold it to be the first and foremost teaching of inspiration, the greatest well

of the believer's comfort, the highest hill of God's glory. As our Lord's sacrificial character is in heaven most prominent, so would we make it most conspicuous among men. Jesus is to be declared as the sin-bearer, and then men will believe and live. May God the Holy Spirit help us in our attempt this morning!

I. Jesus in heaven appears in his sacrificial character; and I would have you note that THIS CHARACTER IS ENHANCED BY OTHER CONSPICUOUS POINTS. Its glory is not diminished, but enhanced, by all the rest of our Lord's character: the attributes, achievements, and offices of our Lord all concentrate their glory in his sacrificial character, and all unite in making it a theme for loving wonder. We read that he is the Lion of the tribe of Juda; by which is signified the dignity of his office, as King, and the majesty of his person, as Lord. The lion is at home in fight, and "the Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name." Like a lion, he is courageous. Though he be like a lamb for tenderness, yet not in timidity. He is terrible as a lion, "who shall rouse him up?" If any come into conflict with him, let them beware; for as he is courageous, so is he full of force, and altogether irresistible in might. Ho hath the lion's heart, and the lion's strength; and he cometh forth conquering and to conquer. This it is that makes it the more wonderful that ho should become a lamb-

*"A lowly man before his foes,
A weary man, and full of woes."*

It is wonderful that he should yield himself up to the indignities of the cross, to be mocked with a thorn-crown by the soldiers, and to be spit upon by abjects. O wonder, wonder, wonder, that the Lion of Juda, the offshoot of David's royal house, should become as a lamb led forth to the slaughter!

Further, it is clear that he is a champion.: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed." What was asked for was worthiness, not only in the sense of holiness, but in the sense of valor. One is reminded of a legend of the Crusades. A goodly castle and estate awaited the coming of the lawful heir: he and he only could sound the horn which hung at the castle gate; but he who could make it yield a blast would be one who had slain a heap of Paynim in the fight, and had come home victorious from many a bloody fray. So here, no man in earth or heaven had valor and renown enough to be worthy to take the mystic roll out of the hand of the Eternal. Our champion was worthy. What battles he had fought! What feats of prowess

he had performed! He had overthrown sin; he had met face to face the Prince of darkness, and had overcome him in the wilderness; ay, he had conquered death, had bearded that lion in his den; had entered the dungeon of the sepulcher, and had torn its bars away. Thus he was worthy, in the sense of valor, on returning from the far country to be owned as the Father's glorious Son, heaven's hero, and so to take the book and loose the seals thereof. The brilliance of his victories does not diminish our delight in him as the Lamb. Far otherwise, for he won these triumphs as a Lamb, by gentleness, and suffering, and sacrifice. He won his battles by a meekness and patience before unknown. The more of a conqueror he is, the more astounding is it that he should win by humiliation and death. O beloved, never tolerate low thoughts of Christ! Think of him more and more, as did the blessed Virgin, when she sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Make your thoughts of him great. Be-greaten your God and Savior, and then add to your reverent thoughts the reflection that still he looks like a lamb that has been slain. His prowess and his lion-like qualities do but set forth more vividly the tender, lowly, condescending relationship in which he stands to us as the Lamb of our redemption.

In this wonderful vision we see Jesus as the familiar of God. He it was who, without hesitation, advanced to the burning throne and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon it. He was at home there: he counted it not robbery to be equal with God. He is "very God of very God"; to be extolled with equal honor with that which is given unto the Lord God Almighty. He advances to the throne, he takes the book, he communes with Jehovah, he accepts the divine challenge of love, and unseals the mysterious purposes of his glorious Father. To him there is no danger in a close approach to the infinite glory, for that glory is his own. Now, it is he who thus stood on familiar terms with God who also stood in our place, and bore for us the penalty of sin. He who is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, became lower than the lowest, that he might save to the uttermost them that come to God by him. He who is Lord of all stooped under all the load and burden of sin. Fall down on your faces and worship the Lamb; for though he became obedient unto death, he is God over all, blessed for ever, the Beloved of the Father.

We observe, in addition to all this, that he is the prophet of God. He it was that had the seven eyes to see all things and discern all mysteries; he it is that opened the seven seals, and thus unfolded the parts of the Book one after another, not merely that they might be read, but might be actually

fulfilled; and yet he had been our substitute. Jesus explains everything: the Lamb is the open sesame of every secret. Nothing was ever a secret to him. He foresaw his own sufferings; they came not upon him as a surprise.

*“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne’er withdrew.”*

Since then he has not been ignorant of our unworthiness, or of the treachery of our hearts. He knows all about us; he knows what we cost him, and he knows how ill we have repaid him. With all that knowledge of God and of man, he is not ashamed to call us brethren; nor does he reject that truth, so simple, yet so full of hope to us, that he is our sacrifice and our substitute. “He who unveils the eternal will of the Highest is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Our Lord always was, and is now, acknowledged to be Lord and God. All the church doth worship him; all the myriads of angels cry aloud in praises unto him; and to him every creature bows, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth. When you call him King of kings and Lord of lords, lofty as these titles are, they fall far below his glory and majesty. If we all stood up with all the millions of the human race, and with one voice lifted up a shout of praise to him, loud as the noise of many waters and as great thunders, yet would our highest honors scarcely reach the lowest step of his all-glorious throne. Yet, in the glory of his Deity, he disdains not to appear as the Lamb that has been slain. This still is his chosen character. I have heard of a great warrior, that on the anniversary of his most renowned victory he would always put on the coat in which he fought the fight, adorned, as it was, with marks of shot. I understand his choice. Our Lord to-day, and every day, wears still the human flesh in which he overthrew our enemies, and he appears as one that has but newly died, since by death he overcame the devil. Always, and for ever, he is the Lamb. Even as God’s prophet and revealer he remains the Lamb. When you shall see him at the last, you shall say, as John did, “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”

Write, then, the passion of your Lord upon the tablets of your hearts, and let none erase the treasured memory. Think of him mainly and chiefly as the sacrifice for sin. Set the atonement in the midst of your minds, and let it

tinge and color all your thoughts and beliefs. Jesus bleeding and dying in your room, and place, and stead, must be to you as the sun in your sky.

II. In the second place, let us note that, IN THIS CHARACTER, JESUS IS THE CENTRE or ALL. "In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The Lamb is the center of the wonderful circle which makes up the fellowship of heaven. From him, as a standpoint, all things are seen in their places. Looking up at the planets from this earth, which is one of them, it is difficult to comprehend their motions—progressive, retrograde, or standing still; but the angel in the sun sees all the planets marching in due course, and circling about the center of their system. Standing where you please upon this earth, and within human range of opinion, you cannot see all things aright, nor understand them till you come to Jesus, and then you see all things from the center. The man who knows the incarnate God, slain for human sins, stands in the center of truth. Now he sees God in his place, man in his place, angels in their place, lost souls in their place, and the saved ones in their place. Know him whom to know is life eternal, and you are in the position of vantage from which you may rightly judge of all things. The proper bearings and relationships of this to that, and that to the next, and so on, can only be ascertained by a firm and full belief in Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice.

*"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,
The Holy, Just, and sacred Three,
Are terrors to my mind."*

*"But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins:
His name forbids my slavish fears,
His grace removes my sins."*

In Christ you are in the right position to understand the past, the present, and the future. The deep mysteries of eternity, and even the secret of the Lord, are all with you when once you are with Jesus. Think of this, and make the Lamb your central thought—the soul of your soul, the heart of your heart's best life.

The Lamb's being in the midst, signifies, also, that in him they all meet in one. I would speak cautiously, but I venture to say that Christ is the summing up of all existence. Seek you Godhead? There it is. Seek you

manhood? There it is. Wish you the spiritual? There it is in his human soul. Desire you the material? There it is in his human body. Our Lord hath, as it were, gathered up the ends of all things, and hath bound them into one. You cannot conceive what God is; but Christ is God. If you dive down with materialism, which by many is regarded as the drag and millstone of the soul, yet in Jesus you find materialism, refined and elevated, and brought into union with the divine nature. In Jesus all lines meet, and from him they radiate to all the points of being. Would you meet God? Go you to Christ. Would you be in fellowship with all believers? Go you to Christ. Would you feel tenderness towards all that God has made? Go you to Christ; for “of him, and through him, and to him are all things.” What a Lord is ours! What a glorious being is the Lamb; for it is only as the Lamb that this is true of him! View him only as God, and there is no such meeting with man. View him as being only man, and then he is far from the center: but behold him as God and man, and the Lamb of God, and then you see in him the place of rest for all things.

Being in the center, to him they all look. Can you think for a moment how the Lord God looks upon his Only-Begotten? When Jehovah looks on Jesus, it is with an altogether indescribable delight. He saith, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When he thinks of the passion through which he passed, and the death which he accomplished at Jerusalem, all the infinite heart of God flows high and strong towards his Best-beloved. He hath rest in his Son as he hath nowhere else. His delight is in Jesus; indeed, he hath so much delight in him, that for his sake he takes delight in his people. As the Father’s eyes are always on Jesus, so are the eyes of the living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders which represent the church in its divine life and the church in its human life. All who have been washed in his blood perpetually contemplate his beauties. What is there in heaven which can compare with the adorable person of him by whom they were redeemed from among men? All angels look that way, also, waiting his august commands. Are they not all ministering spirits, whom he sends forth to minister to his people? All the forces of nature are waiting at the call of Jesus; all the powers of providence look to him for direction. He is the focus of all attention, the center of all observation through out the plains of heaven. This, remember, is as “the Lamb.” Not as king or prophet chiefly, but pre-eminently as “the Lamb” is Jesus the center of all reverence, and love, and thought, in the glory-land above.

Once more, let me say of the Lamb in the center, that all seem to rally round him as a guard around a king. It is for the Lamb that the Father acts: he glorifies his Son. The Holy Spirit also glorifies Christ. All the divine purposes run that way. The chief work of God is to make Jesus the first-born among many brethren. This is the model to which the Creator works in fashioning the vessels of grace: he has made Jesus Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. All things ordained of the Father work towards Christ, as their center; and so stand all the redeemed, and all the angels waiting about the Lord, as swelling his glory and manifesting his praise. If anything could enter the minds of heavenly beings that would contribute to lift Jesus higher, it would be their heaven to speed throughout space to carry it out. He dwelleth as a King in his central pavilion, and this is the joy of the host, that the King is in the midst of them.

Beloved, is it so? Is Jesus the center of the whole heavenly family? Shall he not be the center of our Church life? Will we not think most of him-ranch more of him than of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or any party-leaders that would divide us? Christ is the center; not this form of doctrine nor that mode of ordinance, but the Lamb alone. Shall we not always delight in him, and watch to see how we can magnify his glorious name? Shall he not be also the center of our ministry? What shall we preach about but Christ! Take that subject away from me, and I have done. These many years I have preached nothing else but that dear name, and if that is to be dishonored, all my spiritual wealth is gone: I have no bread for the hungry, nor water for the faint. After all these years my speech has become like the harp of Anacreon, which would resound love alone. He wished to sing of Atrous and of Cadmon, but his harp resounded love alone. It is so with my ministry: with Christ, and Christ alone am. I at home. Progressive theology! No string of my soul will vibrate to its touch. New divinity! Evolution! Modern thought! My harp is silent to these strange fingers; but to Christ, and Christ alone, it answers with all the music of which it is capable. Beloved, is it so with you? In teaching your children, in your life at home, in your dealing with the world, is Jesus the center of your aim and labor? Does his love fill your heart? In the old Napoleon's days, a soldier was wounded by a bullet, and the doctor probed deep to find it. The man cried out, "Doctor, mind what you are at! A little deeper, and you will touch the Emperor." The Emperor was on that soldier's heart. Truly, if they search deep into our life they will find Christ. Queen Mary said that when she died they would find the name of Calais cut upon her heart; for

she grieved over the loss of the last British possession in France. We have not lost our Calais, but hold still our treasure; for Christ is ours. We have no other name engraven on our heart but that of Jesus. Truly can we say,

*“Happy if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
‘Behold, behold the Lamb!’*

III. Thirdly, our Lord is seen in heaven as the Lamb slain, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE EXHIBITS PECULIAR MARKS. None of those marks derogate from his glory as the sacrifice for sin; but they tend to instruct us therein.

Note well the words: “Stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” “Stood,” here is the posture of life; “as it had been slain,” here is the memorial of death. Our view of Jesus should be twofold; we should see his death and his life: we shall never receive a whole Christ in any other way. If you only see him on the cross, you behold the power of his death; but he is not now upon the-cross; he is risen, he for ever liveth to make intercession for us, and we need to know the power of his life. We see him as a lamb “as it had been slain”; but we worship him as one that “liveth for ever and ever.” Carry these two things with you as one: a slain Christ, a living Christ. I notice that feeling and teaching in the church oscillates between these two, whereas it should comprehend them both. The Romish church continually gives us a babe Christ, carried by his mother; or a dead Christ, on the cross. Go where we may, these images are thrust upon us. Apart from the sin of image-worship, the thing set forth is not the whole of our Lord. On the other hand, we have a school around us who endeavor to put the cross out of sight, and they give us only a living Christ, such as he is. To them Jesus is only an example and teacher. As a true and proper expiatory substitute they will not have him; BUT WE WILL. We adore the Crucified One upon the throne of God. We believe in him as bleeding and pleading: we see him slain, and behold him reign. Both of these are our joy; neither one more than the other, but each in its own place. Thus, as you look at the Lamb, you begin to sing, “Thou art he that liveth, and wast dead, and art alive for evermore.” The mark of our Savior is life through death, and death slain by death.

Note, next, another singular combination in the Lamb. He is called “a little lamb”; for the diminutive is used in the Greek; but yet how great he is! In

Jesus, as a Lamb, we see great tenderness and exceeding familiarity with his people. He is not the object of dread; there is about him nothing like "Stand off, for I am too holy to be approached." A lamb is the most approachable of beings. Yet there is about the little Lamb an exceeding majesty. The elders no sooner saw him than they fell down before him. They adored him, and cried with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb." Every creature worshipped him, saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto the Lamb." He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; yet he becomes so little that he dwells in humble hearts. He is so glorious that the seraphim veiled their faces in his presence: he is so condescending as to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. What a wonderful combination of mercy and majesty, grace and glory! Never divide what God has joined together: do not speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as some do, with an irreverent, unctuous familiarity; but, at the same time, do not think of him as of some great Lord for whom we must feel a slavish dread. Jesus is your next-of-kin, a brother born for adversity, and yet he is your God and Lord. Let love and awe keep the watches of your soul!

Further, let us look at the peculiar marks of him, and we see that he hath seven horns and seven eyes. His power is equal to his vigilance; and these are equal to all the emergencies brought about by the opening of the seven seals of the Book of Providence. When plagues break forth who is to defend us? Behold the seven horns. If the unexpected occurs, who is to forewarn us? Behold the seven eyes.

Every now and then some foolish person or other brings out a pamphlet stuffed with horrors which are going to happen in a year or two. The whole of it is about as valuable as the Norwood Gipsy's Book of Fate, which you can buy for two-pence; but still, if it were all true that these prophecy-mongers tell us, we are not afraid; for the Lamb has seven horns, and will meet every difficulty by his own power, having already foreseen it by his own wisdom. The Lamb is the answer to the enigma of providence. Providence is a riddle, but Jesus explains it all. During the first centuries, the Church of God was given up to martyrdom: every possible torment and torture was exercised upon the followers of Christ: what could be God's meaning in all this? What but the glory of the Lamb? And now today the Lord seems to leave his Church to wander into all kinds of errors: false doctrines are, in some quarters, fearfully paramount. What does this mean? I do not know; but the Lamb knows, for he sees with seven eyes. As a

Lamb, as our Savior, God and man, he understands all, and has the clues of all labyrinths in his hands. He has power to meet every difficulty, and wisdom to see through every embarrassment. We should cast out fear, and give ourselves wholly up to worship.

The Lamb also works to perfection in nature and in providence; for with him are “the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” This refers not merely to the saving power of the Spirit which is sent forth unto the elect; but to those powers and forces which operate upon all the earth. The power of gravitation, the energy of life, the mystic force of electricity, and the like, are all forms of the power of God. A law of nature is nothing but our observation of the usual way in which God operates in the world. A law in itself has no power: law is but the usual course of God’s action. All the Godhead’s omnipotence dwells in the Lamb: he is the Lord God Almighty. We cannot put the atonement into a secondary place; for our atoning sacrifice hath all the seven Spirits of God. He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Let us come to God by him. He has power to cope with the future, whatever it may be. Let us secure our souls against all threatening dangers, committing ourselves to his keeping.

How I wish I had power to set the Lord before you this morning evidently glorified But I fail utterly. My talk is like holding a candle to the sun. I am grateful that my Lord does not snuff me out; perhaps my candle may show some prisoner to the door, and when he has once passed it, he will behold the sun in its strength. Glory be to him who is so great, so glorious, and yet still the Lamb slain for sinners, whose wounds in effect continually bleed our life, whose finished work is the perpetual source of all our safety and our joy.

IV. I close with my fourth point, which is this: Jesus appears eternally as a Lamb, and IN THIS CHARACTER HE IS UNIVERSALLY ADORED.

Before he opened one of the seals this worship commenced. When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, and sung a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book.” While yet the book is closed, we worship him. We trust him where we cannot trace him. Before he begins his work as the revealing Mediator, the church adores him for his work as a sacrifice. Jesus our Lord is worshipped not so much for what benefits he will confer as for himself. As the Lamb slain he is the object of heavenly reverence. Many will

reverence him, I do not doubt, when he comes in his second Advent, in the glory of the Father. Every knee will bow before him, even of apostates and infidels, when they shall see him take to himself his great power and reign; but that is not the worship which he accepts, nor that which proves the offerer to be saved. You must worship him as a sacrifice, and adore him in his lowly character, as the “despised and rejected of men.” You must reverence him while others ridicule him, trust his blood while others turn from it with disdain, and so be with him in his humiliation. Accept him as your substitute, trust in him as having made atonement for you; for in heaven they still worship him as the Lamb.

That adoration begins with the church of God. The church of God, in all its phases, adores the Lamb. If you view the church of God as a divine creation, the embodiment of the Spirit of God, then the living creatures fall down before the Lamb. No God-begotten life is too high to refuse obeisance to the Lamb of God. Look at the church on its human side, and you see the four-and-twenty elders falling down and worshipping, having every one harps and vials. Well may the whole company of redeemed men worship the Mediator, since in him our manhood is greatly exalted! Was ever our nature so exalted as it is now that Christ is made Head over all things to his church? Now are we nearest to God, for between man and God no creature intervenes: Immanuel-God with us-has joined us in one. Man is next to the Deity, with Jesus only in between, not to divide, but to unite. The Lord in Christ Jesus hath made us to have dominion over all the works of his hands; he hath put all things under our feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, the fowl of the air, and fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

The Lord is adored by the church in all forms of worship. They worship him in prayer; for the vials full of sweet odours are the prayers of saints. They worship him in with a new song, and with the postures of lowliest reverence.

But, beloved, the Lamb is not only worshipped by the church, he is worshipped by angels. What a wonderful gathering together of certain legions of the Lord’s hosts we have before us in this chapter! “Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Their company cannot be enumerated in human arithmetic. With perfect unanimity they

unite in the hallowed worship, shouting together, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”

Nay, it is not merely the church and angelhood; but all creation, east, west, north, south, highest, lowest, all adore him. All life, all space, all time, immensity, eternity: all these become one mouth for song, and all the song is, “Worthy is the Lamb.”

Now, then, dear friends, if this be so, shall we ever allow anybody in our presence to lower the dignity of Christ, our sacrifice? [“No.”] A friend says, emphatically, No; and we must say, No. As with a voice of thunder, we say-, No, to all attempts to lower the supreme glories of the Lamb. We cannot have it: our loyalty to him will not permit. Besides, no man will willingly lose his all. Take the Lamb away you take all away. “Who steals my purse, steals trash”: who steals my Christ, steals myself, and more than myself-my hopes that are to be my future joys. Life is gone, when his death is rejected, his blood despised. Our souls burn with indignation when this vital truth is assailed.

*“Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross!
Lift high his royal banner,
It must not suffer loss!”*

Wherever you are, to whatever church you belong, do not associate with those who decry the atonement. Enter not into confederacy with those who, even by a breath, would disparage his precious blood. Do not bear that which assails the Lamb; grow indignant at the foul lie! The wrath of the Lamb may with safety be copied by yourself in this case: you will be angry, and sin not.

Once more, if this be so, if the glorious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus be so much thought of in heaven, cannot you trust it here below? O you that are burdened with sin, here is your deliverance: come to the sin-bearing Lamb. You that are perplexed with doubts, here is your guide: the Lamb can open the sealed books for you. You that have lost your comfort, come back to the Lamb, who is slain for you, and put your trust in him anew. You that are hungering for heavenly food, come to the Lamb, for he shall feed you. The Lamb, the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb: be this the sign upon the standard of the Church of God. Set that ensign to the front, and march

boldly on to victory, and then, O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, grant us thy peace! Amen.

“THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.”

NO. 2096

DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 21ST, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”-
Revelation 19:7, 8.

LAST Lord’s-day we saw clearly from God’s Word that our Lord is worshipped in heaven under the character of a Lamb. Now, by a Lamb was meant sacrifice, sacrifice for the putting away of sin: according to the text, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It is against the great doctrine of atonement and substitutionary death that the attacks of the present unbelieving age are constantly being made; and therefore I set before you the truth that substitution and sacrifice were not a temporary expedient, but that they continue all through the whole history of salvation, and remain in the very highest place, even in heaven itself, and will continue evermore. Do not forget that, whenever we read of Christ as a Lamb, it is to remind us of his sufferings and death in our room, and place, and stead, for the putting away of our sin, Under that character we looked to him, some of us, years ago, and found peace at the first. We are still looking to him under that same character; and when we attain to heaven, we shall not have to change our thought of him, but we shall still see him as a Lamb that has been slain. In our lowest place, when we came out of the Egypt of our bondage, he was the Lamb of God’s passover; and in our highest place, in the heavenly temple, we shall, still regard him as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

This morning my principal aim shall be to show you that the blessed and glorious union, which is to be celebrated between the church and her Lord, will be the marriage “of the Lamb.” The ever blessed and eternal union of hearts with Christ will be in reference to his sacrifice, specially and emphatically. The perfected union of the entire church of God with her divine husband is here described by the beloved apostle, who laid his head upon his Master’s bosom, and knew most about him, and who was under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in these words: “The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

Whatever else we think of at this time, my discourse will aim at this as the white of the target—namely, that Jesus Christ as the Lamb, the sacrifice, is not only the beginning, but the end; not only the foundation, but the topstone of the whole sacred edifice of the temple of grace. The consummation of the whole work of redemption is the marriage of the church to Christ; and, according to “the true sayings of God,” this is “the marriage of the Lamb.”

I will set forth this marriage as best I am able. It is divinely veiled as well as revealed in this Revelation. God forbid we should intrude where the Holy Spirit shuts us out; but still, what we do know of it, let us now think upon, and may the sacred Spirit make it profitable to us!

I. First, I invite your attention to THE ANTECEDENTS OF THIS MARRIAGE. What will happen before the public marriage is celebrated?

One great event will be the destruction of the harlot church. I have just read, in your hearing, the previous chapter, which declares the overwhelming destruction which will fall upon that evil system. Any church which puts in the place of justification by faith in Christ another method of salvation, is a harlot church. The doctrine of justification by faith in Christ is the article of a standing or a falling church. Where the blood is precious, there is life; where atonement by the sacrifice is preached and loved, there will the Spirit of God bear effectual testimony; but where human priests are put in the place of Jesus, where pardons can be purchased, where there is an unbloody sacrifice instead of the great propitiation, and sacraments are exalted as the means of regeneration; there the church is no longer a chaste virgin unto Christ, but she hath turned aside from her purity.

The Antichristian system is to be utterly extirpated and burnt with fire; for you will perceive, in the fourteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter, that

those who were associated with this false church, “shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings”; and there has been no more wicked nor more determined war with the Lamb, than that which has been waged by superstition supported by unbelief. The harlot church and the beast of infidelity are in real league against the simple faith of Christ. If you point men, no matter where-if you point them away from Christ, you point them to Antichrist. If you teach them what you may, no matter how philosophical it may seem-if in any way it takes them off from building upon the one foundation of Christ’s glorious and finished work, you have laid an Antichristian foundation, and all that is built thereon will be destroyed. Everything which sets up itself in opposition to the sacrifice of Christ, is to be hurled down, and made to sink like a millstone in the flood. I would God the hour were come! Oh, that the Lord’s own right arm were bare, and that we heard the cry, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” It is ours to expect the speedy coming of our Lord; yet, if he tarry, it may be many a day before “her plagues come in one day.” But, wait as we may, so it shall be; the day must come when the true church shall be honored, and the harlot church shall be abhorred. The Bride of Christ is a sort of Cinderella now, sitting among the ashes. She is like her Lord, “despised and rejected of men”; the watchmen smite her, and take away her veil from her; for they know her not, even as they knew not her Lord. But when he shall appear, then shall she appear also, and in his glorious manifestation she also shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Furthermore, in the immediate connection, we note that before the marriage of the Lamb, there was a peculiar voice. Read the fifth verse “And a voice came.” Where from? “A voice came out of the throne.” Whose voice was that? It was not the voice of the Eternal God; for it said, “Praise our God, all ye his servants.” Whose voice, then, could it be? No one but God could be upon the throne save the Lamb, who is God. Surely, it was he who said, “Praise our God.” The Mediator, God-and-man in one person, was on the throne as a Lamb, and he announced the day of his own marriage. Who should do it but he? “A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.” He speaks the word which calls on all the servants of God to praise him, because his complete victory had come. Longing to see of the travail of his soul, earnest to gather in all his elect, he speaks; for the

fullness of time has come, when his joy shall be full, and he shall rejoice over the whole company of his redeemed as for ever one with himself.

The voice from the throne is a very remarkable one; for it shows how near akin the exalted Christ is to his people. He saith to all the redeemed, "Praise our God, all ye his servants." It reminds me of his memorable words, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He was not then ashamed to associate his people with him in the high possession of his Father and his God; and up there upon the throne, he saith, "Praise our God." I do not know how this language strikes you; but to me it forcibly sets forth his love, his condescension, his fraternization, his union with his people. Since I know not how to set it out to you, I must leave you to think over it. He who has gone triumphantly up to the throne, the Savior whose conflicts are all over, who has gained the everlasting reward of sitting with the Father upon his throne, still joins with us in praise, and saith, "Praise our God, all ye his servants." He is not even ashamed to have fellowship with the least of his people; for he adds, "And ye that fear him, both small and great." Truly "the man is near of kin to us, he is our next kinsman."

*"In ties of blood, with sinners one,
Our Jesus hath to glory gone."*

In that glory he still owns his dear relationship, and in the midst of the church he singeth praise unto God. (Hebrews 2:11,12.)

Next, notice the response to this voice; for this also precedes the marriage. No sooner did that one august voice summon them to praise, than immediately "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude." He heard the mingled sound as of an innumerable host all joining in the song; for the redeemed of the Lord are not a few. No man can count them. "Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," they respond in that day to the voice of the Lamb, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." So loud was the sound of all those commingled voices, that it sounded like "many waters"; like cataracts in their roar, or like oceans in their fullness. It was as though all the billows of the Atlantic, and the Pacific, and the Northern, and Southern oceans lifted up their voices, and deep answered unto deep. Nor was the figure too strong; for John heaps upon it another comparison, and says, "As the voice of mighty thunderings." We have lately heard the thunder above the deafening din of our streets, and we have trembled at the dread artillery of heaven. Such

was the sound of the mingled voices of the redeemed when they all united to give honor to God, because the marriage of the Lamb had come. Who can imagine the acclamations of that glorious day? We now preach the gospel, as it were, in a corner, and few there are that will applaud the King of kings. Still, the Christ wendeth his way through the world as an unknown or forgotten man; and his church, following behind him, seemeth as a forlorn and forsaken woman-few there be that care for her. But in that day when her Lord is seen as the King of kings, and she is openly acknowledged as his spouse, what welcomes will be heard, what bursts of adoring praise unto the Lord God omnipotent!

Observe that this tremendous volume of sound will be full of rejoicing and of devout homage. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him." Double joy will be there, and its expression will be homage to the Lord God. The joy of joys will be the delight of Christ in his perfectly gathered church. There is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth; but when all these repenting sinners are gathered into one perfected body, and married to the Lamb, what will be the infinite gladness? Heaven is always heaven, and unspeakably full of blessedness; but even heaven has its holidays, even bliss has its overflowings; and on that day when the springtide of the infinite ocean of joy shall have come, what a measureless flood of delight shall overflow the souls of all glorified spirits as they perceive that the consummation of love's great design is come—"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"! We do not know yet, beloved, of what happiness we are capable. We have sometimes wished that we could

*"Sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss."*

But then we were only feeling the spray of the ocean of blessedness. What must it be to bathe in it? Here we drink from cups of consolation; but what draughts we shall have when we lie down at the well-head, and drink in our joy immediately from God! If you and I enter glory soon without our bodies, we shall not even then know to the utmost degree what will be the bliss of our perfected manhood, when the body shall be raised incorruptible from among the dead, and joined to the sinless soul. Nor would this give us more than a bare idea of the infinite blessedness of myriads of such perfected manhoods united in a perfected church; from which no one single

member shall be missing, nor one member maimed, or sick, or stained.
Praise the Lord Jesus as you sing-

*“Thou the whole body shalt present
Before thy Father’s face;
Nor shall a wrinkle, or a spot,
The beauteous form deface.”*

Oh, what joy! I feel as if I could not preach to you: I want to get away to think it over, and chew the cud of meditation for myself. You must just sit where you are and muse. Here we have the essence of heavenly music in a few plain words. “The marriage of the Lamb is come” Oh, may I be there! May I be a part of the perfected body of the church of God! Oh, that I might be but part of the soles of her feet, or the least hair of her head! If I may but see the King in his beauty, in the fullness of his joy, when he shall take by the right hand her for whom he shed his precious blood, and shall know the joy which was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, I shall be blest indeed!

Thus, I have given you a hint of what will precede the marriage of the Lamb, in all of which you may observe that Jesus wears his character of the Lamb. The harlot church hath fought against the Lamb, and the Lamb hath overcome her forces. He it is that, on the throne, speaks to his people as his brethren; it is to him that the response is given; for the joy and the delight all spring from the fact that the marriage is that of the Lamb whom the Father glorifies, and who glorifies the Father. The voice said, “Let us rejoice, and give honor to him.” Was not that his prayer of old, “Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee”? To glorify the Father, Jesus died as a sacrifice; and to glorify Jesus, the Father gives him his church, which is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

II. Now may I be helped by the Spirit of God, while I lead you on to THE MARRIAGE ITSELF. “The marriage of the Lamb is come.” Often as you hear about this marriage of the Lamb, I greatly question whether any here have any precise idea what it means. Dean Alford says, “This figure of a marriage between the Lord and his people, is too frequent and familiar to need explanation.” With all deference to the excellent divine, that was a very sufficient reason why he should have carefully explained it, since that which is often noted in Holy Scripture must be of first importance, and should be well understood. I do not wonder that many are shy of such a

theme, for it is a difficult one. Alas, how little do I, personally, know of such a matter!

The marriage of the Lamb is the result of the eternal gift of the Father. Our Lord says, "Thine they were, and thou gayest them me." His prayer was, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The Father made a choice, and the chosen he gave to his Son to be his portion. For them he entered into a covenant of redemption, whereby he was pledged in due time to take upon himself their nature, pay the penalty of their offenses, and set them free to be his own. Beloved, that which was arranged in the councils of eternity and settled there between the high contracting parties, is brought to its ultimate end in that day when the Lamb takes unto himself in everlasting union the whole of those whom his Father gave him from of old.

Next: this is the completion of the betrothal, which took place with each of them in time. I shall not attempt elaborate distinctions; but as far as you and I were concerned, the Lord Jesus betrothed each one of us unto himself in righteousness, when first we believed on him. Then he took us to be his, and gave himself to be ours, so that we could sing—"My beloved is mine, and I am his." This was the essence of the marriage. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, represents our Lord as already married to the church. This may be illustrated by the Oriental custom, by which, when the bride is betrothed, all the sanctities of marriage are involved in those espousals; but yet there may be a considerable interval before the bride is taken to her husband's house. She dwells with her former household, and has not yet forgotten her kindred and her father's house, though still she is espoused in truth and righteousness. Afterwards, she is brought home on an appointed day, the day which we should call the actual marriage; but yet the betrothal is, to Orientals, of the very essence of the marriage. Well, then, you and I are betrothed to our Lord today, and he is joined to us by inseparable bonds. He does not wish to part with us, nor could we part from him. He is the delight of our souls, and he rejoices over us with singing. Rejoice that he has chosen you and called you, and through the betrothal look forward to the marriage. Feel even now, that though in the world, you are not of it: your destiny does not lie here among these frivolous sons of men. Our home is henceforth on high.

*“My heart is with him on his throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away;’”*

The marriage day indicates the perfecting of the body of the church. I have already told you that the church will then be completed, and it is not so now. Adam lay asleep, and the Lord took out of his side a rib, and fashioned thereof a help-meet for him: Adam saw her not when she was in the forming, but he opened his eyes, and before him was the perfect form of his help-meet. Beloved, the true church is now in the forming, and is therefore not visible. There are many churches; but as to the one church of Christ, we see it neither here nor there. We speak of the visible church; but the term is not correct. The thing which we see is a mixture of believers and mere pretenders to faith. The church which is affianced unto the heavenly Bridegroom is not visible as yet; for she is in the process of formation. The Lord will not allow such simpletons as we are to see his half-finished work. But the day will come when he shall have completed his new creation, and then will he bring her forth whom he has made for the second Adam, to be his delight to all eternity. The church is not perfected as yet. We read of that part of it which is in heaven, that “They without us should not be made perfect.” Unless you and I get there, if we are true believers, there cannot be a perfect church in glory. The music of the heavenly harmonies as yet lacks certain voices. Some of its needful notes are too bass for those already, and others are too high for them, till the singers come who are ordained to give the choir its fullest range. At the Crystal Palace you have seen the singers come trooping in. The conductor is all anxiety if they seem to linger. Still, some are away. The time is nearly up, and you see seats up there on the right, and a vacant block down there on the left. Even so with the heavenly choir: they are streaming in: the orchestra is filling up, but yet there is room, and yet there is demand for other voices to complete the heavenly harmony. Beloved, in the day of the marriage of the Lamb, the chosen shall all be there—the great and the small—even all the believers who are wrestling hard this day with sins and doubts and fears. Every living member of the living church shall be there to be married to the Lamb.

By this marriage is meant more than I have told you. There is the home-bringing. You are not to live here for ever in these tents of Kedar, among a people of a strange tongue; but the blessed Bridegroom cometh to take

you to the happy country, where you shall no longer say, "My soul is among lions." All the faithful shall soon be away to thy land, O Emmanuel! We shall dwell in the land that floweth with milk and honey, the land of the unclouded and unsetting sun, the home of the blessed of the Lord. Happy indeed will be the home-bringing of the perfect church!

The marriage is the coronal-avowal. The church is the bride of the great King, and he will set the crown upon her head, and make her to be known as his true spouse for ever. Oh, what a day that will be when every member of Christ shall be crowned in him, and with him, and every member of the mystical body shall be glorified in the glory of the Bridegroom! Oh, may I be there in that day! Brethren, we must be with our Lord in the fight if we would be with him in the victory. We must be with him in wearing the crown of thorns, if we are to be with him in wearing the crown of glory. We must be faithful by his grace, even unto death, if we are to share the glory of his endless life.

I cannot tell you all it means, but certainly this marriage signifies 'that all who have believed in him shall then enter into a bliss which shall never end; a bliss which no fear approacheth, or doubt becloudeth. They shall be for ever with the Lord, for ever glorified with him. Expect not lips of clay fitly to speak on such a theme. Tongues of fire are needed, and words that fall like fire-flakes on the soul.

A day will come, the day of days, time's crown and glory, when, all conflict, risk, and judgment ended for ever, the saints, arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, shall be eternally one with him in living, loving, lasting union, partaking together of the same glory, the glory of the Most High. What must it be to be there! My dear hearers, will you be there? Make your calling and election sure. If you are not trusting in the Lamb on earth, you will not reign with the Lamb in his glory. He that doth not love the Lamb, as the atoning sacrifice, shall never be the bride of the Lamb. How can you hope to be glorified with him if you neglect him in the day of his scorning? O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I must be one with thee, for this is my very life! I could not live apart from thee. If, my hearer, thou canst thus speak, there is good hope that thou shalt be a participator in the marriage of the Lamb.

III. But we pass on now to dwell emphatically upon the fact that THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM APPEARS IS THAT OF THE LAMB. "The marriage of the Lamb is come."

It must be so, because first of all our Savior was the Lamb in the eternal covenant; when this whole matter was planned, arranged and settled by the foresight and decree of eternity. He is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” and the covenant was with him, as one who was to be the surety, the substitute, the sacrifice for guilty men. So, and not otherwise, was it of old.

It was next as the Lamb that he loved us and proved his love. Beloved, he did not give us words of love merely when he came from heaven to earth, and dwelt among us “a lowly man before his foes”; but he proceeded to deeds of truest affection. The supreme proof of his love was that he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. When he poured out his blood as a sacrifice, it might have been said, “Behold, how he loved them!” If you would prove the love of Jesus, you would not mention the transfiguration, but the crucifixion. Gethsemane and Golgotha would rise to your lips. Here to demonstration, beyond all possibility of doubt by any true heart, the Well-beloved proved his love to us. See how it runs: “He loved me, and gave himself for me,” as if that giving of himself for me was the clear proof that he loved me. Read again: “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” The proof of his love to the church was the giving up of himself for it. “Being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” So, you see, as a Lamb he proved his love, and as a Lamb he celebrated his marriage with us.

Go a step further. Love in marriage must be on both sides, and it is as the Lamb that we first came to love him. I had no love to Christ, how could I have, till I saw his wounds and blood? “We love him, because he first loved us.” His perfect life was a condemnation to me, much as I was compelled to admire it; but the love that drew me to him was shown in his substitutionary character, when he bore my sins in his own body on the tree. Is it not so with you, beloved? I have heard a great deal about conversions through admiration of the character of Christ, but I have never met with one: all I have ever met with have been conversions through a sense of need of salvation, and a consciousness of guilt, which could never be satisfied save by his agony and death, through which sin is justly pardoned, and evil is subdued. This is the great heart-winning doctrine. Christ loves us as the Lamb, and we love him as the Lamb.

Further, marriage is the most perfect union. Surely, it is as the Lamb that Jesus is most closely joined to his people. Our Lord came very close to us when he took our nature, for thus he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He came very near to us when, for this cause, he left his Father and became one flesh with his church. He could not be sinful as she was; but he did take her sins upon himself, and bear them all away, as it is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." When "he was numbered with the transgressors," and when the sword of vengeance smote him in our stead, then he came nearer to us than ever he could do in the perfection of his Incarnation. I cannot conceive of closer union than that of Christ and souls redeemed by blood. As I look at him in death, I feel forced to cry, "Surely a husband by blood art thou to me, O Jesus! Thou art joined to me by something closer than the one fact that thou art of my nature; for that nature of thine has borne my sin, and suffered the penalty of wrath on my behalf. Now art thou one with me in all things, by a union like to that which links thee with the Father." A wonderful union is thus effected by our Lord's wearing the character of the Lamb.

Once more, we never feel so one with Jesus as when we see him as the Lamb. I shall again appeal to your experience. When have you had the sweetest fellowship with Christ in all your lives? I answer on my own account-it has been when I have sung:

*"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of his soul-redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!"*

If I had my choice to-day, while abiding in this present state, to see my Lord in 'his glory, or on his cross, I should choose the latter. Of course, I would prefer to see his glory, and be away with him; but, while dwelling here surrounded with sin and sorrow, a sight of his griefs has the most effect upon me. "O sacred head once wounded," I long to behold thee! I never feel so close to my Lord as when I survey his wondrous cross, and see him pouring out his blood for me. I have been melted down when we have sung together those sweet lines:

*"See from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"*

I have almost felt myself in his arms, and like John, I have leaned on his bosom, when I have beheld his passion. I do not wonder, therefore, that since he comes closest to us as the Lamb, and since we come closest to him when we behold him in that character, he is pleased to call his highest eternal union with his church, “the marriage of the Lamb.”

And O beloved, when you come to think of it, to be married to him, to be one with him, to have no thought, no object, no desire, no glory but that which dwells in him that liveth and was dead-will not this be heaven indeed, where the Lamb is the light thereof? For ever to contemplate and adore him who offered up himself without spot unto God, as our sacrifice and propitiation; this shall be an endless feast of grateful love. We shall never weary of this subject. If you see the Lord coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, from the winepress wherein he has trampled on his foes, you are overawed and overcome by the terror of that dread display of justice; but when you see him clad in a vesture dipped in no blood but his own, you will sing aloud evermore, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; to thee be glory for ever and ever.” I could go on singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” throughout all eternity. The theme has an inexhaustible interest about it: there is everything in it: justice, mercy, power, patience, love, condescension, grace and glory. All over glorious is my Lord when I behold him as a Lamb; and this shall make heaven seven times heaven to me to think that even then I shall be joined to him in everlasting bonds as the Lamb. [Here a voice from the gallery cried, “Praise the Lord!”] Yes, my friend, we will praise the Lord. “Praise ye the Lord” is the command which was heard coming out of the throne-“Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

IV. Now we come to the last point, THE PREPAREDNESS OF THE BRIDE: “His wife hath made herself ready.” Up till now the church has always been spoken of as his bride, now she is “his wife”-that is a deeper, dearer, more-matured word than “bride”: “his wife hath made herself ready.” The church has now come to the fullness of her joy, and has taken possession of her status and dower as “his wife.” What does it mean-

“hath made herself ready?”

It signifies, first, that she willingly and of her own accord comes to her Lord, to be his, and to be with him for ever. This she does with all her

heart: "she hath made herself ready." She does not enter into this engagement with reluctance. Some unwisely speak of the grace of God, as though it were a physical force, which sets a constraint upon the will of the quickened man. Beloved, I never preach to you in that fashion. Free will is an unknown thing, except it be wrought in us by grace. Grace is the great liberating force. The will is a slave to evil, till grace comes, and makes it free to choose that which is good. No action of the soul is more free than that by which it quits sin, and closes with Christ. Then the man comes to himself. The heart is free from compulsion, when its love goes forth towards the Lord Jesus. I ask you that love him, do you feel that you are going against your will in so doing? Far from it: you wish to love him more. In the ultimate union of all the chosen with Christ, will you want any forcing to take your part in the marriage of the Lamb? Did not the words I used just now state your longings—"My heart is with him on his throne." Are you not panting to behold his face? Compulsion to a hungry man to eat would seem more likely than compulsion to be joined unto Christ. His wife hath gladly made herself ready: free grace has made her freely choose him.

Does it not mean that she has put away from herself all evil, and all connection with the corruptions of the harlot church has been destroyed? She has struggled against error, she has fought against infidelity, and both have been put down by her holy watchfulness and earnest testimony; and so she is ready for her Lord.

Does it not also mean that in the great day of the consummation the church will be one? Alas, for the divisions among us! You do not know what denomination my friend belonged to who prayed just now. Well, I shall not tell you. You could not judge from his prayer. "The saints in prayer appear as one." Denomination! A plague upon. denominationalism! There should be but one denomination: we should be denominated by the name of Christ, as the wife is named by her husband's name. As long as the church of Christ has to say, "My right arm is Episcopalian, and my left arm is Wesleyan, and my right foot is Baptist, and my left foot is Presbyterian or Congregational," she is not ready for the marriage. She will be ready when she has washed out these stains, when all her members have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Unity is a main part of the readiness here spoken of.

I beg you to notice what the preparation was. It is described in the eighth verse: "To her was granted." I will go no further. Whatever preparation it

was that she made, in whatever apparel she was arrayed, it was granted to her. Observe that the harlot church wore fine linen also, but then she had with it purple, and silk, and scarlet, and precious stones, and pearls. I do not know whence the harlot obtained her apparel, but I know where the true church found her wedding dress, for it is written, “to her was granted.” This was a gift of sovereign grace, the free gift of her own Beloved: “To her was granted.” She had a grant from the throne, a royal grant, an indisputable right. We also go to heaven by royal grant. We have nothing of our own to carry us there by right, nothing of boasted merit; but to us also is granted acceptance in the Beloved. Oh, it is a glorious thing to hold your own by letters patent, under the Great Seal of heaven! When we shall be united to Jesus, the ever blessed Lamb, in endless wedlock, all our fitness to be there will be ours by free grant.

Look at the apparel of the wife, “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.” How simple her raiment! Only fine linen, clean and white! The more simple our worship, the better. The true church of Christ is content with white linen, and no more. She asked not for those fine things we read about in connection with the harlot. She envied not the unchaste one her harpers, and musicians, and pipers, and trumpeters: she was content with her simple harp and joyful song. She did not need all manner of vessels of ivory, and precious wood, brass and iron, and marble. She did not seek for cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, nor aught else of that finery with which people nowadays try to adorn their worship. The simpler the better. When in worship you cannot hear the voices of the people beyond the noise which might be made by the twitter of half-a-dozen sparrows, because a flood of noise from a huge organ is drowning all the praise-I think we have lost our way. The simpler the worship the better, whether in prayer or praise, or anything else. The harlot church bedecks herself with her architecture, and her millinery, and her perfumery, and her oratory, and her music; but those who would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, will keep their worship, their practice, and their doctrine pure and simple, avoiding all the blandishments of carnal policy and human wisdom, content with the truth as it is in Jesus. What more beautiful than pure white linen?

In the Greek, our text runs thus: “Fine linen, clean and white, for fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.” Our Revised Version has, in this case, not given us a translation, but an explanation, and that explanation is a contraction of the sense. The revisers word it, “Fine linen is the righteous

acts of saints.” That word “acts” is of their own insertion. The word “righteousnesses” has a fuller meaning: it is exceeding broad, and they have narrowed it, and misapplied it. We shall have a complete array of righteousnesses in Christ’s righteousness, active and passive—a garment for the head, and a garment for the feet, and for the loins. What righteousnesses we have! Righteousness imparted by the power of the Spirit; righteousness imputed by the decree of God. Every form of righteousness will go to make up the believer’s outfit; only, all of it is granted, and none of it is of our own purchasing. We shall not have Christ’s righteousness to cover up our sin, as some blasphemously say—for we shall have no sin to cover. We shall not want Christ’s righteousness to make an evil heart seem pure: we shall be as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, we shall have no spot upon us or within us. We shall have a complete righteousness; and in this arrayed, we shall be covered with the beauty of holiness. This garment is most befitting, for it is “The righteousness of saints.” Saints ought to have righteousness. They are themselves made holy, and therefore they ought to be adorned in visible holiness; and so they shall be.

Best of all we shall be arrayed in that day with that which pleases the Bridegroom. Do I not remember how he said, “I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment”? Yes, she has remembered his bidding. She has nothing else but that “fine linen” which is the “The righteousness of saints”; and this he delights in. She comes to the Lamb, bearing about her the result of his own passion, and of his own Spirit. and she is well pleasing in his eyes. The Lord sees in her of the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied.

I have done when I have again put this question: Do you trust the Lamb? I warn you, if you have a religion which has no blood of Christ in it, it is not worth a thought: you had better be rid of it, it will be of no use to you. I warn you, also, that unless you love the Lamb you cannot be married to the Lamb; for he will never be married to those who have no love to him. You must take Jesus as a sacrifice, or not at all. It is useless to say, “I will follow Christ’s example.” You will not do anything of the sort. It is idle to say, “He shall be my teacher.” He will not own you for a disciple unless you will own him as a sacrifice. You must take him as the Lamb, or have done with him. If you do despite to the blood of Christ, you do despite to the whole person of Christ. Christ is nothing to you if he is not your atonement. As many of you as hope to be saved by the works of the law, or by anything else apart from his blood and righteousness, you have un-

Christianized yourselves; you have no part in Jesus here, and you shall have no part in him hereafter, when he shall take to himself his own redeemed church, to be his spouse for ever and ever. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE MEDIATOR—THE INTERPRETER

NO. 2097

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 28TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.”—Exodus 20:18-20.

THE GIVING of the law was glorious with pomp of power. The blaze of splendor was intended to impress the people with its sense of the authority of the law, by letting them see the greatness of the Lawgiver. It was meet that with great solemnity the law of the Most High should be proclaimed, that Israel might have a holy reverence for its commands. This terrible grandeur may also have been intended to suggest to the people the condemning force of the law. Not with sweet sound of harp, nor with the song of angels, was the law given; but with an awful voice from amid a terrible burning. Not in itself is the law condemnatory; for if there could have been life by any law, it would have been by this law: but by reason of man's sinfulness, the law worketh wrath; and to indicate this, it was made public with accompaniments of fear and death: the battalions of Omnipotence marshaled upon the scene; the dread artillery of God, with awful salvos, adding emphasis to every syllable. The tremendous scene at Sinai was also in some respects a prophecy, if not a rehearsal, of the Day of Judgment. If the giving of the law, while it was yet unbroken, was attended with such a display of awe-inspiring power, what will that day be when the

Lord shall, with flaming fire, take vengeance on those who have willfully broken His law?

To us, that day at Horeb is a type of the action of the law in our nature: thus doth the law deal with our consciences and hearts. If you have ever felt the law spoken home to you by the Spirit of God, you have heard great thunderings within. You have been forced to cry with Habakkuk, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones.” And God intended it to be so, that you might look to the flames which Moses saw, and abandon forever all hope of acceptance by the works of the law.

The glorious majesty which surrounded the institution of the law is not, however, our subject at this time. I shall handle the text in another manner. The Lord God, in this instance, came as near to man as was possible; yea, He came nearer than man could bear. Until a Mediator was found, the approach of God brought to man nothing but terror. Although under no great apprehension of guilt at the time—for they had only then heard the law for the first time—yet the people removed, and stood afar off, and cried out, “If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die.” God was near them in special condescension; for Moses said, “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?” Yet this memorable manifestation caused them alarm. Does it ever happen now that the Lord comes to His people in a way which dismays them? I think so. It is not really so, that God will fight against His people; but, to our apprehension, so it seems at certain times. Of these tempestuous manifestations of the Lord to our hearts I am going to speak at this time; and may the heavenly Comforter use it to the spiritual profit of his tried family!

Our first head is this: the Lord has ways of communing with His people which fill them with fear; but, secondly, this endears the Mediator to them; and thirdly, this Mediator teaches them to interpret wisely the Lord’s darker dealings with them. When we have thought upon these things, we shall close by saying to you that this sacred art of interpretation should be practiced by us now.

I. First, let me remind you that THE LORD HAS WAYS OF COMMUNING WITH HIS PEOPLE WHICH FILL THEM WITH FEAR. You must not think that the Lord always appears to His people in robes of light: sometimes He enrobes Himself in clouds and darkness. His paths drop fatness, and yet He

often hath His way in the whirlwind. True, He manifests Himself to us as He doth not unto the world; but in the brightest of those manifestations He may make us fear as we enter into the cloud. It is not every revelation of God which inspires the saints with joy; for in many cases it is far otherwise, even as with Daniel, who said, “I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.” This experience may not have occurred to some of you; it is, however, known to many of the people of God, who have had long dealings with Him. If any of you do not understand this matter, lay the sermon by till you do.

Sometimes the near approach of the Lord fills His people with apprehension and alarm; and this sure to be the case when His coming includes a close application of the law to their hearts. We used to talk of “law-work” in days which are not past, and are by moderns looked upon with contempt; and, my brethren, our talk was not without good reason, for there is such a work, and it ministers greatly to our good. Certain servants of God, who had experienced this law-work to a very deep degree, fell into the error of regarding a marked measure of it as absolutely necessary to every child of God. We will avoid that evil, for it was a grievous cause of uncharitableness; but we will not conceal the fact that many souls, in coming to God, and in God’s coming to them, have been made to feel a hewing and burning work from the law of God. The law has rent them in pieces, because they themselves have rent in pieces. The law has wrought in them a sense of bondage, burden, and despair. Even after we have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel, after we have a full assurance that our iniquities are put away, the Lord sometimes works in us a further work of the law, in which He makes us to see its exactness, its spirituality, strictness, and infinite compass. It is no little thing to see how the law judges the thoughts, desires, and imaginations of the heart. As the plummet of the holy law is held up, we see how out of the perpendicular we are, and we are therefore distressed. Brethren, when I have carefully considered, and inwardly perceived, the holiness of God’s law, I have felt as though the sharp edge of a saber had been drawn across my heart, and I have shivered and trembled. Though the law did not actually cut or wound, yet its very presence, in all the keenness of its two edges, has made me shudder. So pure, so just, so uncompromising is the law of God, that when it is really understood, it makes us quail, and brings us to our knees. The law searches to the dividing asunder of joints and

marrow, and it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Its excessive light strikes us, like Saul of Tarsus, to the earth, and makes us cry for mercy, When you begin to judge yourself, and estimate your actions by its infallible rule, you cease from boasting, and are filled with self-
 abhorrence. I believe it to be one of the best means to growth in humility, to be well instructed in the law, in the force and power of it. No man knows the brightness of the gospel till he understands the blackness of those clouds which surround the law of the Lord. Much of the shallowness of current religion is the result of a failure to apprehend the demands of divine justice, and a want of clear perception of the heinousness of disobedience. Let but God set up the throne of His law in your heart, and make you feel the power of that law in any one item of your daily conduct, much more in the whole circle of your life, and you will feel as the Israelites did when they could not abide the presence of the Most High.

The Lord also may most truly and profitably come to a man, and in His coming may unveil to him the depravity of his nature. If any man could see his own heart as it is by nature, he would be driven mad: the sight of our disease is not to be borne unless we also see the remedy. When the Lord permits the fountains of the great deep of our depravity to be broken up, then are the tops of the hills of our self-sufficiency drowned in fear. When we see what we are capable of being, apart from divine grace, our spirit sinks. When believers are allowed to see how much there is still about them that is akin to hell, when sin becomes exceeding sinful, and we feel that the taint of it has defiled our whole nature, then it is that we are horrified and appalled. What an abyss of evil is within our bosoms! Probably some of you know very little about it. I pray that you may never discover it by its painful results; but I desire that you may believe it, so as to take a firmer grip upon the doctrines of grace, and exercise greater watchfulness over your hearts. Sin which dwelleth in us is no enemy that we can safely despise. Even in one single member of our fallen nature, namely, the tongue, there dwells a world iniquity: "It defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." What poor creatures we are! The best of men are men at the best; and, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, and the power of divine grace, hell itself does not contain greater monsters of iniquity than you and I might become. Within the magazine of our hearts there is powder enough to destroy us in an instant, if omnipotent grace did not prevent. When this is distinctly perceived, we are troubled before the presence of the thrice holy God.

Standing before the Lord, we cry with the prophet, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” This is a true manifestation of God; but it is by no means a cause of comfort to us.

The Lord may also come to us, and lead us, by His light, to a discovery of actual sin in our life. We may sit here, and think ourselves very good; but if so, we are in the dark. If a beam of divine light is now entering our mind, our apprehension of our own character will be changed. The sins of a single day, if fully known in all their bearings, would drive us to despair, apart from the infinite grace of God. Apart from the divine plan of justifying the ungodly in Christ Jesus, any one hour would shut us up in hell. Beloved, think a minute of your omissions during the past week, how much you might have done, and ought to have done, which you have not done. It is on the side of omission that some of us are most vulnerable. Honestly looking down upon our lives, we may be able to say that we do not know of any overt offense against God, and for this we bless the divine grace; but when we come to think of what we have left undone, we feel like a traveler who, when crossing a glacier, suddenly sees an unfathomable crevasse opening just before him, and widening fast as he looks down into its blue depths of frozen death. Oh the sadness of that confession, “We have left undone the things which we ought to have done!” There is as much of lamentation in it as in the cry which precedes it—”We have done those things which we ought not to have done.” When we think of all our omissions, how can we stand before the Lord?

Think again of your failure in what you have done. Brethren, you have prayed this week. I only refer to this week; for seven days are more than enough for my purpose. You have prayed: you have kept your regular times for devotion. But how have you prayed? With fervency? With careful consideration? With concentrated mind? Brethren, have you prayed with faith? With importunity? Surely, each of these questions must cut into you like a whip of wire. If you are as I am, you cannot answer to this examination without wincing. Why, even in the one matter of prayer, the sins of our holy things may shrivel us up before the burning eye of the Lord, who searcheth the heart. Your Bible also: you have read your Bible, of course you have; but with what attention? with what intention? with what devout belief? with what resolve to feel its force, and obey its commands? Have we not sinned against this Book enough to cast us into the lowest hell in the space of four-and-twenty hours?

When the Lord begins to take a man to pieces by coming near to him, another matter will often trouble him, and that is his falseness, even were, in a measure, he is sincere. You prayed in public, and expressed most proper emotions and desires; but were they really your own emotions and desires, or did you steal the expressions of another man? You preached about the things of God; did your testimony come from your heart? Do you act in accordance therewith? You, my Christian friend, expressed yourself strongly, but, in your heart of hearts, can you justify the expression? Do we not often go further with our lips than we go with our hearts? Is not this, to some degree, hypocrisy? Must it not be very displeasing to God that we should use words towards Him which we have not weighed, and which are not fully true, as we use them? O brethren, if the Lord sets out secret sins in the light of His countenance, we too, like Israel, shall start and shrink from the presence of the Lord.

If we add to these apprehensions of our own unworthiness a sense of the divine glory, then we cower down and hide ourselves in the dust. When a peal of thunder rends the heavens, and is followed up by a crash, as if the house would fall about your ears, while flames of fire blind you with their excessive brilliance, you feel that the Lord is terrible out of His holy places. God's nearness has inspired you with an awe which has been shaded with dread. The one attribute of power suffices to make the strongest believer feel that Jehovah is to be feared above all gods. But, my brethren, if properly apprehended, God's omniscience inspires an equal awe, while His goodness, His love, and His holiness are even more overwhelming when fully realized. One might possibly stand with unblanched cheek in the presence of divine power; but when the Lord reveals His holiness, a man might far sooner gaze into the sun than look into the face of God. Even His love is as the fire of a furnace to our unloveliness. At the sight of our God we say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The nearness of God to sinful man is a killing thing, and those who have known it will confess that it is so.

What, my brethren, if, in addition to this, there should come to you a succession of alarming providences? These Israelites not only knew that God was near, but they heard the thunder, they saw the lightning, they looked into the thick darkness, they marked the mountain altogether on a smoke, and by all this they were horror stricken. Has it come to pass that the lord has laid many blows upon His servant? Has He taken away the

desire of thine eye with a stroke? What if there be one, two, three little graves in yonder cemetery? What if love and friend have forsaken thee? What if thy business fail thee, and if thy health fail thee also? What if thy spirits sink? Oh, then, indeed I marvel not that thou art scared with forebodings of still worse calamities, and art ready to give up the ghost! Now art thou afraid because of the nearness of the great God, who is trying thee.

If to this be added an apprehension of speedy death, as in the case of the Israelites, who cried, “This great Fire will consume us”; then, indeed, it is difficult to remain calm and hopeful. It will be no trifle to stand before the face of the Eternal. Since heaven and earth shall flee from thy face, and rocks shall melt, and stars shall fall, and the moon shall be turned black as sackcloth of hair, who shall stand before Thee, thou great and glorious One!

Thus have I spoken to you upon the fact that our God does sometimes commune with His people in a way that fills them with overwhelming dread; let us advance to our next theme.

II. Secondly, ALL THIS ENDEARS TO US THE MEDIATOR. The Israelites turned at once to Moses. They had already murmured against him: they afterwards said, “As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him”; once they took up stones to stone him; but now they are of another mind. Terrified by the presence of God, they cry to Moses, “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord Our God shall speak unto thee.” The Mediator is everything to them now. They had found out by experience the necessity for an interposer; and they had not made a mistake either, for God Himself said they had well spoken what they had said. There is in God’s esteem an urgent need for a Mediator. When we sang just now—

*“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind,”*

we did not give utterance to morbid or ungrounded fear. It is so in truth; and the next verse is accurate also:

*“But if Immanuel’s face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins.”*

It is a matter of fact that we need a Mediator; and these people were driven to see it. Brethren, be sensible of your sin, and you will no more attempt to approach an absolute Deity than you would walk into a volcano’s mouth. You will feel that you need a sacrifice, a propitiation, a Savior, a Mediator. Perceive the infinite difference between your nothingness and the divine infinity, and you will feel that there is no drawing nigh to the Eternal but by Jesus Christ. How can we, of ourselves, draw nigh unto God? It is wisdom to say unto the Well-beloved, “We pray thee, stand between the Lord and us.” When your trembling is upon you, when your heart faints with awe, then you perceive how much you need an Advocate. Bless God that He has appointed one to be High Priest for you, who can safely go into the thick darkness, and stand in the presence of the Thrice Holy Majesty, and represent you without fail.

Moses was well fitted to be the type of the true Mediator of the gospel covenant. He was himself in great favor with God, so that the Lord hearkened to his voice. Behold his dauntless courage in the presence of God, and, at the same time, his intense tenderness towards the people. Mark his faithfulness Godward as a servant over all his Master’s house, and then note his self-sacrifice for Israel, so that he once said, “Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.” He offered himself to be a sacrifice for them. But, O beloved, consider Jesus Christ our Mediator. Where is the like of Him? He is man, like ourselves; in all respects a sufferer, poor, needy, knowing even the pangs of death; and therefore He can lay His hand upon us with a warm, brotherly love. But then He is “God over all, blessed forever,” equal with the Most High, the Well-beloved of the Father; and thus He can give His hand to the eternal God, and so link our humanity with God. I feel most safe in trusting all my concerns with that dear Advocate, that Interpreter, one of a thousand. O Jesus, who can rival thee?

*“God, and yet man, thou art,
True God, true man, art thou;
Of man, and of man’s earth a part,
One with us thou art now.”*

Into the thick darkness our Mediator went. Forth from it He came. He interprets to us the language of the Eternal, and He takes our petitions up to heaven, and translates them into the tongue of the Holy One, so that God hears us and accepts us in the Well-beloved.

I know that some of you imagine that you would believe the gospel if God were to speak to you out of the skies. Do not wish for it. The terror of His voice would overwhelm you, but it would not convert you. The Israelites were happy with a Mediator, and so will you be. If you hear not Jesus, neither would you hear though God should thunder. A Mediator is provided. Could you, with all your wit, suggest a better Mediator than Christ? I entreat you, accept the gospel in Christ, and come to God through Him. As there is no other way, so assuredly there could be no better way. If you had all wisdom and all power in your hands with which to make a way of acceptance with God, could you devise one more pleasant, more simple, more perfect, more adequate, more exactly what you need? Come, then, dear heart, come at once to God in Christ; and remember, Jesus says, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”; “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

III. Now I come to my third point, upon which I would lay stress: THE MEDIATOR TEACHES US TO INTERPRET WISELY THE LORD’S DEALINGS. Moses became an interpreter of the Lord’s terrible appearance to the trembling people, and he put a cheering construction upon it. You, to whom God has been speaking in a way of terror, and I know there are such here, for I have had to comfort them; you have a Mediator to explain to you the ways of the Lord. Be ready to learn the lesson which He teaches you: it is this—”Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.” These rough dealings of God with your conscience, with your body, with your family, and with your estate, are not for your destruction, but for your instruction: not for your killing, but for your healing. As He came in tempest and thunder to teach the children of Israel, so has He come to you. If God is teaching you, He cannot mean to destroy you: the law does not provide a schoolmaster for a convict who is to be hanged tomorrow. The discipline in God’s house, however severe it may be, is a sure proof of love. We educate sons, and not enemies. The Lord is teaching you what you are, and what He is. If He had meant to destroy you, He would not have showed you such things as these, If a criminal must needs die, we do not put him through a rehearsal of the pains of death. No, no, there would be no use in such a course—it

would be sheer cruelty, and depend upon it, the Lord will not show you His own greatness merely to make you miserable, nor reveal to you your own ruin merely to drive you to despair. He does not afflict willingly. Infinite love dictates the apparent severity with which He afflicts your conscience. You are being judged here, that you may not be judged hereafter with the ungodly; you are now made to abhor yourself, that the Lord may not abhor you in the day of the judgment of the wicked.

The Mediator here explains to trembling Israel that God had come to test them. We all need testing, do we not? Would you like to cross a railway bridge if it was reported to you that it had never been tested by a train? When the first Exhibition was built, I remember how they marched troops along the galleries to test them. Do you not desire to have your hope for eternity tested? The Lord draws near to us in ways which inspire our fears because He would test us. What is the result of the test? Do you not feel your own weakness? Does not this drive you to the strong for strength? You feel your own sinfulness; and you fly to the Lord Jesus for righteousness. Testing has a practically good effect in slaying self-confidence, and driving you to put your confidence where God would have it rest.

When God came to these people in cloud and storm, it was to impress them, to put depth into their thought and feeling. We are filled with fear at times on purpose that our religion may not be a flimsy, superficial thing. Our tendency is to slur spiritual work. We easily get to be trifling and careless. Levity in religion is an easily-besetting sin with many; but when we are made to see the plague of our heart, and the awful majesty of God, that fear of the Lord which endureth forever soon drives out the triflers from the temple. Fear plows deep, and then faith sows, and love reaps; but godly fear must lead the way. Godly fear makes prayer to be fervent prayer; it makes the hearing of the word to be quite another thing from listening to the chatter of the world's vanity. Holy awe of God makes preaching to me to be the burden of the Lord. It may be light work to your men of genius and learning; but to me it is life and death work. Often have I thought that I would rather take a whipping with a cat-o'-nine-tails than preach again. How can I answer for it at the last great day unless I am faithful? "Who is sufficient for these things?" When I have felt the dread responsibility of souls which may be lost or saved by the word they hear, the fact that God is so near has made my flesh creep, and made me wish that I had never ventured on so bold a life-work. How shall I give in an

honorable account of my commission at last? Beloved, God, by such apprehensions as these, is deepening in us the work of His grace, making us more alive to our position, and better fitting us for it. It is all in love that He allows our awe of Him to darken into dread, our sense of weakness to deepen into faintness of heart.

Above all, it is explained to us that the dealings of the Lord are meant to keep us from sin. What does David say? "Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Does not Hezekiah tell us that by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit? We are so worldly, that we need our nest to be stirred to keep us on the wing. Six days we are taken up with business, mixing with those who despise heavenly things; and we should come to think lightly of them too, were it not that God comes to us in His dread majesty and makes us think, consider, and fear. This holy trembling drives off the shams which else would grow over us like mold on decaying matter. Our inward tempests clear the air, and keep us from stagnation and the pestilence which breeds in it. God's love will not suffer us to settle down in mere pretenses, and so glide into gross sins: He empties us from vessel to vessel, and thus discovers our evil sediment, and cleanses us from it. Many people, when they hear a sermon, say, "How did you enjoy it?" If you always enjoy sermons, the minister is not a good steward. He is not acting wisely who deals out nothing but sweets. God's people need that the word should at times be medicine to them, and we do not enjoy medicine. The word is as fire, and the iron does not like the fire; yet it is needful to its melting. It is as a hammer, and the rock does not love the hammer; yet it is needful to its breaking. Experiences which are painful may be therefore all the more profitable. That which makes us hate sin is a thing to be valued. I pray you, after this manner read the dispensations of God with you. When He chides He loves; when He chastens He shows fatherly affection; and when He scourges He receives into peculiar familiarity. Do not therefore run away from a chastening God. If fear drives thee away, let faith draw thee near. He means thy highest good. Never doubt it. Steadfastly believe that His heart loves even if His face frowns.

IV. I close by asking you to PRACTICE THIS ART OF SACRED INTERPRETATION. Whensoever thy Lord speaketh with thee in thunder and writeth bitter things against thee, by faith read between the lines, and after the example of Moses, the mediator, put a comfortable construction upon rough words.

Faith sees many reasons for refusing to read as fear would suggest: here is one of them. When the Lord spoke to these people with the voice of trumpet and thunder, He did not speak in anger after all, but in love; for His first words set the key-note. Here they are: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of Bondage." What gracious words! What happy memories they arouse! What loving-kindnesses they record! It is true that your Lord has taken your wife or your child away, or has made you sick, or has tried your soul by the hidings of His face; but it is not an enemy who has done this. It is your God who has done it, even the same God that delivered you from the power of sin, and made you free in Christ Jesus. The Lord of love has chastened you, and chastened you in love. Learn Job's philosophy, and say from your heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Think of His former loving-kindness. Consider what He has done for you through the Lord Jesus and His death on your behalf. He brought you out of the bondage of your natural depravity, and He set you free from the Pharaoh of your evil passions. He has washed you from your sins, and brought you through the Red Sea of your fears by His own right hand. Can you not believe that He means well to you? What if He does speak roughly; may He not do so without being distrusted? He is the same God: He changeth not, and therefore you are not consumed: can you not rely on His faithful love? Will you take good from His hand, and will you not also take evil? He who humbles us is our covenant God, bound to us by His promise and His oath. He gave His Son to redeem us, He cannot now do us a displeasure: let Him do as seemeth Him good. We give Him *carte blanche* to do what He wills, for His love is beyond dispute. He died that I might live, and now it is impossible for Him to mean anything other than good towards me. I sometimes think that if I never had a gleam of love from His face again, I would live on that one text: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation from sin and death and hell should make us interpret every trying revelation, and every afflicting providence, and every painful experience, by the key of His ancient love; and so interpreted, every sorrowful line is sweetened.

Notice next, dear friends, in your process of interpretation, that God cannot mean to destroy us, since this would be contrary to His word. He hath said, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Can "everlasting

life" be destroyed or die? How, then, could it be "everlasting life?" Can God declare it everlasting, and yet end it? Yes, He has given us everlasting life in His dear Son; and, what is more, He has laid up that life in Christ; for "your life is hid with Christ in God." Can He destroy the life which He has hid in His own immortal Son? Does not Jesus say, "Because I live ye shall live also?" What are you afraid of, then? God cannot destroy you. He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." What if He speaks severely to thee, it is that He may deliver thee from sinning. Wilt thou not bless Him? He will not curse thee, for He hath blessed thee in His Son, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Bow thyself, and take from thy Father's hand whatever He appoints.

Remember, that you are not, after all, in the same condition as Israel at the foot of Horeb. Though I have drawn a sort of parallel this morning, yet there remains a wonderful difference. "Ye are not come unto the mount that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Ye are not come to a terrible voice which mortal ears could not endure. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." You are come to the land of pardon, peace, and promise: you are in the home of life, love and liberty. You have come to the Lord of adoption, acceptance and glory. Wherefore, do not, I pray you, construe the acts and dealings of God with your soul after the mean and slavish manner which unbelief suggests to you, but believe your God in the teeth of all you hear, or see, or feel. The Lord hath come to prove thee, to put His fear before thy face, and to keep thee from sin; wherefore look for sweet fruit from the bitter tree of thy present grief, and flee not from thy God.

Again, dear friend, here is our great comfort: we have a Mediator. When God dealeth with thee by the law, or by His rod, or by His searching Spirit, thou art apt to say, "How can I endure His hand?" Hide behind the Mediator. Let Jesus be thy shield, even as He is the Lord's Anointed. Beseech the Lord God not to look on thee as thou art in thyself, but to see thee in Christ Jesus. Say

*Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus's wounds on me.*

Take care that thou lookest through Jesus' wounds on God; and if thou dost, thou wilt see in Him infinite love and boundless kindness. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is unutterable love. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him", and when they fear Him most, His pity goes out to them in streams of tenderness. If thy God use the knife on thee, it is to cut out a deadly cancer. If thy God break thee, and grind thee, it is to get away thy bran, and make thee as the fine flour of the meat-offering. He may seem to slay thee, but by this He makes thee live. Though He slay thee, still trust thou in Him. Never believe anything which would militate against the truth of His love, or the wisdom or the tenderness of it. Cling to Him when He frowns. The closer thou canst cling the less thou wilt feel the blows of His hand when He chastens. A faith which believes when it smarts will soon have done with the rod. If thou wilt have nothing but good to say of God, He will take thee out of the fire, for it is evident that thou dost not need more of it. A full and firm belief in God when He seems to be against us, is a grand mark of sanctification. To be able to spell out "love" when it is written in cruciform characters, shows a high state of spiritual education.

And now, beloved, if you can take the Lord in this way, henceforth and forever believing in His love, and never staggering through unbelief, thou wilt glorify thy God and get good to thyself in every way. If thou believest, then thou wilt be strong; for faith is the backbone of the spiritual man. If thou believest, thou wilt love, and love is the very heart of the spiritual man. Believing and loving, thou wilt endure with patience, and thy patience shall be a crown to thee. Believing, loving, and enduring, thou shalt become equipped for every holy service, and in that service thou shalt acquire more and more of likeness to thy Lord, till when thou hast endured to the full, thou shalt be in all points a brother of Him who is the Firstborn. Like Him, thou shalt be able to go into the thick darkness, and have that communion with God which only they can know who have felt the consuming fire passing through them again and again, and burning up that corruption of the flesh which makes God to be a terror to men. Like our Mediator, may we be made to plead with God for men, and with men for God. May we go up into the mount and see God and eat and drink; and then come down with faces shining with the heavenly light. God give us thus to have a Mediator, to interpret our God through a Mediator, and then to grow like our Mediator by the work of his own Spirit.

I have said a great deal that must be very terrible to ungodly men, since it even tries the holiest. O my hearers, if you are unconverted, I do not suppose that the terrors of the Lord, even though they make you fear, will work any lasting good in you; for I remember that those very people who trembled at Sinai were found, in a very few weeks, madly dancing before a golden calf, and saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of Egypt.” Fear alone will work no saving or sanctifying effect on the heart. It plows, but it does not sow. In the child of God, mixed with faith, fear becomes a holy tonic, a salutary medicine; but, as for you who have cause for fear, there is something else for you. Flee to the Mediator, trust in Christ Jesus, who stands between man and God, look unto Him at once, and looking you shall live. To our adorable Mediator be glory forever and ever. Amen, and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Exodus 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 5.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”
—92 (PART 1), 433, 281.

WHITHER GOEST THOU?

NO. 2098

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 4TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold.”—Job 23:10.*

On several Sabbath mornings of late I have earnestly handled spiritual subjects which I trust may have been for the edification of the people of God; but it will not do to continue in that line. I am a fisher of men as well as a shepherd of the flock. I must attend to both offices. Here are souls perishing, sinners that need to be saved by Christ, and therefore I must leave the flock, and go after the wanderers. I must lay down the crook and take up the net. By a simple sermon, full of earnest expostulation, I would reason with the careless. At this moment I have not so much to expound doctrine as to arouse hearts. Oh, for the power of the Holy Ghost, without which I must utterly fail in my design! We have this morning been praying for the conversion of many: we expect our prayers to be heard. The question is not, Will there be any converted under this sermon? but, Who will it be? I trust many who have come here with no higher motive than to see the great congregation and to hear the preacher, may, nevertheless, be met with in God's infinite mercy, and placed in the way of eternal life. May this be the spiritual birthday of many—a day to be remembered by them throughout eternity!

Job could not understand the way of God with him; he was greatly perplexed. He could not find the Lord, with whom aforetime he constantly abode. He cries, “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.” But if Job knew not the way of the Lord, the Lord knew Job's way.

It is a great comfort that when we cannot see the Lord, He sees us, and perceives the way that we take. It is not so important that we should understand what the Lord is doing as that the Lord should understand what we are doing, and that we should be impressed by the great fact that He does understand it. Our case may be quite beyond our own comprehension, but it is all plain to Him who seeth the end from the beginning, and understands the secrets of all hearts.

Because God knew his way, Job turned from the unjust judgments of his unfeeling friends and appealed to the Lord God Himself. He pleaded in the supreme court, where his case was known, and he refused the verdicts of erring men. He that doeth right seeketh the light; and as Job saw that the light was with God, he hastened to that light, that his deeds might be made manifest. Like a bird of the day, which begins to signal the return of the morning, he could sing when he stood in the light of God. He was glad that the Lord knew his way, his motive, and his desires; for from that truth he inferred that he would be helped in his trials, and brought safely through them: "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

These words afford rich consolation to the saints; and if I were to use them for that purpose, I should expect the Lord's people greatly to rejoice in the Lord, whose observant eye and gracious thoughts are always upon them. Our whole condition lies open to Him with whom we have to do. Though never understood by men, we are understood by our God.

***"'Tis no surprising thing
That we should be unknown:
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."***

As the Son of God was known to the Father, though unknown to all the world, so are we hidden from the knowledge of men, but well known of the Most High. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "Thou hast known my soul in adversities."

I quit the design of comforting the people of God for the more presently pressing work of arousing the unconverted. Their way is evil, and the end thereof is destruction. Oh, that I could arouse them to a sense of their condition! To that end I shall ask four questions of every man within reach of my voice. God knoweth the way that you take. I will ask you first: Do you know your own way? Secondly: Is it a comfort to you that God knows

your way? Thirdly: Are you tried in the way? and, if so, fourthly: Have you confidence in God as to the result of that trial? Can you say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"?

I. My hearer, I ask you, first: Do You have a way. There is a way which you have taken, chosen, selected for yourself: there is a way which you follow in desire, word, and act. So far as your life is left to your own management, there is a way which you voluntarily take, and willingly follow. Do you know what that way is? It is not everyone who does know as much as that. It is a very simple question to put to you; but yet it is a very needful one to a great many; for many walk on as in a dream.

Do you know where you are going? "Of course," says one, "everybody knows where he is going." Do you know where you are going, and do you carefully consider your end? You are steaming across the deep sea of time into the main ocean of eternity: to what port are you steering? Whither goest thou, O man? The birds in the heaven know their time and place when they fly away in due season; but do you know whither you are speeding? Do you keep watch, looking ahead for the shore? What shore are you expecting to see? For what purpose are you living? What is the end and drift of your daily action? I fear that many in this vast congregation are not prepared to give a deliberate answer which will be pleasant to utter and to think upon. Is not this suspicious? If I were to go out tomorrow by sea, I should not walk on board a steamboat and then enquire, "Where are you going?" The captain would think me a crazy fellow if I embarked before I knew where the vessel was going. I first make up my mind where I will go, and then select a vessel which is likely to carry me there in comfort. You must know where you are going. The main thing with the captain of a Cunarder will be the getting his vessel safely into the port for which it is bound. This design overrules everything else. To get into port is the thought of every watch, every glance at the chart, every observation of the stars. The captain's heart is set upon the other side. His hope is safely to arrive at the desired haven, and he knows which is the haven of his choice. He would not expect to get there if he did not set his mind on it. How is it with you, dear friend? You are speeding towards heaven or hell: which of these is your port? I know of no ultimate abode of souls except the brightness of the Father's glory, or the darkness of Jehovah's wrath: which of these will be your end? Which way are you intentionally going? What is it you are aiming at? Are you living for God? or are you so living that the result must be eternal banishment from His presence?

Surely, to press this inquiry upon you needs no eloquence of speech. The question is vital to your happiness, and self-interest should induce you to weigh it. I shall not use a single metaphor or illustration; for I am not here to please, but to arouse. I charge every man and woman in this house now to consider this question: Whither are you going? What will be the end of the life you are now leading? Do not cast away the inquiry. It is not impertinent; it is not unnecessary. In the name of the Lord, I beseech you answer me.

If you answer that question, allow me to put another: Do you know how you are going? In what strength are you pursuing your journey? If you feel able to say, "I am seeking that which is right and good", I then press the inquiry, In what strength are you pursuing it? Are you depending upon your own power, or have you received strength from on high? Do you rely on your own resolves and determinations, or have you received help from the Spirit of God? Remember, there are days in every life-voyage in which the storm-fiend puts all human power to a nonplus. Even in the fairest weather we are all too apt to run on rocks or quicksands; but the voyage of life is seldom altogether a pleasant one, and we must be prepared for tempests. Our own unaided strength will not endure the waves and the winds of the ocean of life; and if you are trusting to yourself disaster will befall you. The Lord brings men to the desired haven; but left to themselves, they are no match for the thousand dangers of their mysterious voyage. Is God with you? Has the Lord Jesus become your strength and your song? Do you sail beneath the blood-red flag of the Cross? If you are trusting in the Lord alone, disappointment, failure, and shipwreck are impossible; but if you are hastening on with out God for your Guide and Protector, then will your weakness and folly be made clear before long to your inevitable ruin. You may put on all steam and forge ahead in the teeth of the wind; but all in vain: you will never reach the Fair Havens.

Are there any here who decline to answer my question? Will you not tell us whither you are going? When a great vessel is crossing the sea and another comes within sight, they propose the question, "Where are you bound?" If the other vessel took no notice, gave no answer whatever, it would look suspicious. A craft that will not say where it is going! We don't like the look of it. If one of Her Majesty's vessels were about, and it challenged a sail, and received no reply to the question, "To what port are you bound?" I think they would fire a shot across her bows and make her heave to, till she did answer. Might not the silent craft prove to be a pirate? When a man

confesses that he does not know where he is going, or what his business may be, the policeman concludes that he is probably going where he ought not to go, and has business on hand which is not what it should be. If you are afraid to consider your future, your fear is a bad omen. The tradesman who is afraid to look into his accounts will before long have them looked into for him by an officer from the Bankruptcy Court. He that dares not see his own face in the glass must be an ugly fellow; and you that dare not behold your own characters, have bad characters. Not know where you are going! Ah me! do you wish to find yourselves in hell on a sudden? Would you, like the rich man, lift up your eyes in hopeless misery? I am suspicious of you who cannot tell where you are going; and I wish you would be suspicious of yourselves. You who do not like self-examination are the persons who need it most. You who shun awkward questions are the very people who need to face them. I usually speak out—pretty plainly, and those of you who are used to me are not displeased; but sometimes strange hearers are offended, and say that they will not come to be spoken to in such a fashion. Ah, my friend! your ill humor shows that you are in an ill condition and do not care to be corrected. If you were honestly desirous to be set right, you would like straight talks and honest rebukes. Do you prefer to go to a doctor who is known to say, “There is not much the matter: a little change, and a dose of physic, will soon put you all right”? Do you pay your guineas to be flattered? No; the man who is wise wants to know the truth, however alarming that truth may be. The man who is honest and hopeful desires a thorough examination, and invites the preacher to deal truthfully with him, even if the result should cause distress of mind. If you decline to see whither you are going, it is because you are going down into the pit. If you decline to answer the question, What is your way? I fear your way is one that you cannot defend, whose end will cause you endless lament.

Is anyone here compelled to say, “I have chosen the evil road”? Remember, the Lord knows the way that you take. I am anxious that you should yourself know the truth about your condition and prospects. I dread much your going on in ignorance. I wish every man here who is serving Satan to be aware that he is doing it. “If Jehovah be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him”: be hearty one way or the other. If you have chosen the service of sin, own it like a man, to yourself, at least. Choose your way of life in broad daylight. If you propose to die without hope in Christ, say as much. If you resolve to let the future happen as it may, and to run all risks,

then put down in black and white your daring resolution. If you believe that you shall die like a dog and see no hereafter, do not at all conceal from yourself your doggish degradation, but be true to your own choice. If you choose the way of evil pleasures, do it deliberately and after weighing all that can be said on the other side.

But there is this comfort to me, if it does not comfort you—that if you have chosen the wrong way, that choice need not stand. The grace of God can come in, and lead you at once to reverse your course. Oh, that you may now say, “I had not thought of it, but I certainly am going in the wrong direction, and, God helping me, I will not go an inch further!” Through our Lord Jesus Christ the past can be forgiven; and by the power of the Holy Spirit the present and the future can be changed. The grace of God can lead you to turn away from that which you have eagerly followed, and cause you to seek after that which you have disregarded. Oh, that today your cry might be, “Ho for holiness and heaven!” You have not been hitherto on the Lord’s side, but now enlist in the army of the Lord Jesus. I would fain stay your vessel in her evil voyage. I am firing a shot across your bows. I solemnly warn you to consider your ways. Bethink you, what will the end of these things be? Break off your sins by righteousness; for it is time to seek the Lord. “Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel?” This is the voice of God’s own Word to you: hear it, and be admonished, and, God helping you, turn at once.

But, my friend, are you drifting? Do you say, “I am not distinctly sailing for heaven, neither am I resolutely steering in the other direction. I do not quite know what to say of myself”? Are you drifting, then? Are you like a vessel which is left to the mercy of the winds and the waves? Ignoble condition! Perilous case! What! Are you no more than a log on the water? I should not like to be a passenger in a vessel which had no course marked out on the chart, no pilot at the wheel, no man at watch. Surely, you must be derelict, if not water-logged; and you will come to a total wreck before long. Yours is a dark prospect. Some time ago, I read in a paper of a gentleman being brought up before the magistrate. What was the charge against him? “Nothing very serious,” you will say. He was found wandering in the fields. He was asked where he was going, and he said he was not going anywhere. He was asked where he came from, and he said he did not know. They asked him where his home was, and he said he had none. They brought him up for wandering as—what?—a dangerous lunatic. The man who has no aim or object in life, but just wanders about

anywhere or nowhere, acts like a dangerous lunatic, and assuredly he is not morally sane. What! Am I aiming at nothing? Have I all this machinery of life, making up a vessel more wonderful than the finest steam-boat, and am I going nowhere? My heart-throbs are the pulsing of a divinely-arranged machinery: do they beat for nothing? Do I get up every morning, and go about this world, and work hard, and all for nothing which will last? As a being created of God for noblest purposes, am I spending my existence in a purposeless manner? How foolish! Why, surely, I have need, like the prodigal, to come to myself; and if I do come to myself, I shall ask myself, Can it be right that I should thus be wasting the precious gifts of time, and life, and power? If I were nothing, it were congruous that I should aim at nothing; but, being a man, I ought to have a high purpose, and to pursue it heartily. Do not say that you are drifting; it is a terrible answer, implying grievous danger, and casting a suspicion upon your sanity. If you have reason, use it in a reasonable way, and do not play the fool.

But can you say, "Yes, I am bound for the right port"? It may be that your accents are trembling with a holy fear; but none the less I am glad to hear you say as much. I rejoice if you say, "Christ commands me; I am trusting to his guidance; he is my way, my life, my end." Dear friend, I congratulate you. We will sail together, as God shall help us, under the convoy of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord High Admiral of the sea of life. We will keep with His squadron till we cast anchor in the glassy sea. But now that you know your way and are assured that you are on the right tack, put on all steam. Exert your strength in the work to which your life is consecrated. Waste not a single moment; let no energy lie dormant; arouse every faculty. If you are serving the Lord, serve Him with all your might. Is it not written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"? Those words sound to me like great strokes of the soul's paddle wheels! They urge us to press forward in the holy voyage. Brothers, we must run, for our life is to be a race. It must be hard running, too. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." If we really are on the right way, let us press forward with all our powers; and may God help us that we may win the prize! Answer this first question, and know of a surety whose you are, and where you are, and whither you are going.

II. Secondly, IS IT A COMFORT TO YOU THAT GOD KNOWS YOUR WAY? Solemnly, I believe that one of the best tests of human character is our

relation to the great truth of God's omniscience. If it startles you that God sees you, then you ought to be startled. If it delights you that God sees you, you may reasonably conclude that there is within your heart that which is right and true, which God will approve of. You are among those who do the truth, for you come to the light, and cry, "Search me, O God." Allow me to apply the test to you now, by asking what you think of the truth that the Lord knows you altogether. Remember, if your heart condemn you, God is greater than your heart and knoweth all things; but if your heart condemn you not, then have you confidence towards God.

Dear friend, it is quite certain that God does know the way that you take. The Hebrew may be read, "He knoweth the way that is in me"; from which I gather that the Lord not only knows our outward actions, but our inward feelings. He knows our likes and dislikes, our desires and our designs, our imaginations and tendencies. He knows not only what we do, but what we would do if we could. He knows which way we should go if the restraints of society and the fear of consequences were removed; and that, perhaps, is a more important proof of character than the actions of which we are guilty. God knows what you think of, what you wish for, what you are pleased with: he knows, not only the surface-tint of your character, but the secret heart and core of it. The Lord knows you altogether. Think of that. Does it give you any joy, this morning, to think that the Lord thus reads all the secrets of your bosom? Whether you rejoice therein or not, so it is and ever will be.

The Lord knows you approvingly if you follow that which is right. He knoweth them that put their trust in Him; that is to say, He approves of them. If there be in you even a faint desire towards God, He knows it and looks with pleasure upon it. If you practice private prayer, if you do good by stealth, if you conquer evil passions, if you honor Him by patience, if you present gifts to Him which nobody ever hears of, He knows it all, and He smiles upon it. Does this give you pleasure, greater pleasure than if men praised you for it? Then it is well with you; but if you put the praise of men before the approval of God, you are in an evil case. If you can say this morning, "I am glad that He knows what I do, for his approval is heaven to me," then conclude that there is a work of grace in your heart, and that you are a follower of Jesus.

God knows your way, however falsely you may be represented by others. Those three men who had looked so askance upon Job, accused him of

hypocrisy, and of having practiced some secret evil; but Job could answer, “The Lord knoweth the way that I take.” Are you the victim of slander? The Lord knows the truth. Though you have been sadly misunderstood, if not wilfully misrepresented by ungenerous persons, yet God knows all about you; and His knowledge is of more importance than the opinions of dying men. If you are not afraid to put your character and profession before the eye of the Lord, you have small reason for disquietude, though all men should cast out your name as evil.

The Lord knows the way that you take, though you could not yourself describe that way. Some gracious people are slow of speech and they have great difficulty in saying anything about their soul affairs. Coming to see the elders of the church is quite an ordeal. I am half afraid that they even feel it a trial to see me, poor creature that I am. They are timid in speech, though they would be bold in act. They could die for Jesus, but they find it hard to speak for him. Their heart is all right; but when they begin to talk, their tongue fails them. They are unable to describe their conversion, though they feel it. They love repentance, but can barely describe their own repenting. They have believed in the Lord Jesus, but it would puzzle them to tell what faith is. Trembling one, fall back on this—”He knoweth the way that I take.” If I cannot express my faith, yet He accepts it: if I cannot describe His work in my soul, yet He discerns the work of His own hands.

Another great mercy is, that God knows the way we take when we hardly know it ourselves. There are times with the true children of God when they cannot see their way, nor even take their bearings. It is not every saint that knows his longitude and latitude; nay, it is not every saint that is sure that he is a saint. We have to ask, “Is my repentance real? Is my faith true? Have I really passed from death to life? Am I the Lord’s own?” I do not wish you to be in such a state: it is a pity that such a question should be possible; but I know full well that many sincere saints are often put to the question, and not altogether without reason. Herein is comfort: the Lord knows His children, and He knows the truth of their graces, the preciousness of their faith, the heavenliness of their life; for He is the former, the author of them all. He knows His own work, and cannot be deceived. Wherefore, dear friends, let us feel confident in God’s knowledge of us, since He is greater than our hearts, and His verdict is more sure than that of conscience itself.

Once more, remember that at this very moment God knows your way. He knows not only the way you have taken and the way you will take, but the way you are now choosing for yourself. He knows how you are acting towards the sermon you are hearing. It may be, you conclude that the preacher is very tiresome. Be it so: but still the subject is one which ought to be pressed upon your consideration; therefore, bear with me. But if you reply, "No, it is not that; but I do not want to be probed and pressed in this way." Well, the Lord knows that you are taking the way of resisting His Spirit, and hardening your neck against rebuke. Do you like that fact? I think I hear one say, "I really wish to be right, and I am afraid I am not right. Oh, that I could be made so! "God knows that feeling; breathe it into His ear in prayer. If you can say, "I am willing to be tested; I know to what port I am going; I am no pirate; I am bound for the New Jerusalem," then I rejoice. Well, well, the Lord knows. He dearly sees your present thought, your present wish, your present resolve. He knows your heart. Is that a comfort to you? If it is, well. But if it saddens you that God should know your present condition, then be afraid, for there is something about you to be afraid of. He that sews fig leaves together, as Adam did, that he may hide himself from God, must know that he is naked. If he were clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, he would seek no concealment, but would be willing both to examine himself, and to be examined of the Lord.

Thus have I handled these two questions: Do you know your way? Is it a comfort to you that God knows your way?

III. Thirdly, DO YOU MEET WITH TRIALS IN THE WAY? I anticipate your answer. Out of the many here present, not one has been quite free from sorrow. I think I hear one saying, "Sir, I have had more trouble since I have been a Christian than I ever had before." I met with such a case the other day: a man said to me, "I never went to a place of worship for many years, and I always seemed to prosper. At last I began to think of divine things, and I attended the house of God; but since then I have had nothing but trouble." He did not murmur against God, but he did think it very strange. Friend, listen to me. These troubles are no token that you are in the wrong way. Job was in the right way, and the Lord knew it; and yet he suffered Job to be very fiercely tried.

Consider that there are trials in all ways. Even the road to destruction, broad as it is, has not a path in it which avoids trial. Some sinners go over hedge and ditch to hell. If a man resolves to be a worldling, he will not find

that the paths of sin are paths of peace. The wicked may well be ill at ease; for God walks contrary to them because they walk contrary to him. No man, be he on the throne, or on the wool-sack, or up in a mill, or down in a coal-pit can live without affliction. In a cottage near a wood there are troubles as well as in the palace by the sea. We are born to trouble: if you look for a world without thorns and thistles, you will not find it here.

Then, remember, the very brightest of the saints have been afflicted. We have in the Bible, records of the lives of believers. Can you remember the life of a single believer who lived and died without sorrow? I cannot. Begin with father Abraham: the Lord did try Abraham. Go on to Moses, a king in Israel. Were not his trials many and heavy? Remember David and all his afflictions. Come down to New Testament times. The apostles were so tried that one of them said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." Through much tribulation they reached their rest. If the saints of God confessed that theirs was a troublous way, you need not suppose that you are out of the road because your way is full of difficulty. Is there any ocean upon which a ship can sail in which it shall be quite sure that no storms will arise? Where there is sea there may be storms, so where there is life there will be changes, temptations, difficulties and sorrows.

Trials are no evidence of being without God, since trials come from God. Job says, "When he hath tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, but he had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the dogs of affliction are muzzled until God sets them free. Nay, against none of the seed of Israel can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow anyhow, but they grow as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When he hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?"

thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods; that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God.

Once more upon this point: if you have met with troubles, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, “When he hath tried me.” As much as to say, He will not always be doing it; there will come a time when He will have done trying me. Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm; and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms. Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him; and so will it be with you. You young beginners, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts. If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised. Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way; “for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries. Pluck up courage. The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou wert not God’s child thou mightest be left unchastened; but inasmuch as thou art dear to Him, He will whip thee when thou dost disobey. If thou wert only a bit of common clay God would not put thee into the furnace; but as thou art gold and He knows it, thou must be refined; and to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon thee. Because thou art bound for heaven thou wilt meet with storms on thy voyage to glory.

IV. Fourthly, HAVE YOU CONFIDENCE IN GOD AS TO THESE STORMS?

Can you say, in the language of the text, “When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if he is everything to you, you may say this confidently; for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last. I do not like people to come

and trust Christ with a temporary faith as though he could keep them for a day or two, but could not preserve them all their lives. Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word “everlasting.” I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ. I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a hand of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost. I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me, so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it; “I shall come forth.” Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter, yet the Son of man will be with me in the furnace, and “I shall come forth” with not even the smell of fire upon me. Yes, “I shall come forth,” and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward. Hath He not promised that we shall never perish? shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord’s knowledge of us. “He knoweth the way that I take”: therefore, “when he hath tried me, shall come forth as gold.” If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril; But He knows our way even to the end, and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked; but our Lord’s foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms do lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through. If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heartmelting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming on. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and “when he hath tried us, we shall come forth as gold.”

This confidence must be sustained by sincerity. If a man is not sure that he is sincere, he cannot have confidence in God. If you are a bit of gold and know it, the fire and you are friends. You will come forth out of it; for no

fire will burn up gold. But if you suspect that you are some imitation metal, some mixture which glitters but is not gold, you will then hate fire, and have no good word for it. You will proudly murmur at the divine dispensations. Why should you be put into the fire? Why should you be tried? You will kick against God's providence if you are a hypocrite; but if you are really sincere, you will submit to the divine hand, and will not lie down in despair. The motto of pure gold is, "I shall come forth." Make it your hopeful confidence in the day of trouble. I want you to have this sense of sincerity which makes you know that you are what you profess to be, that you may also have the conviction that you will come forth out of every possible trial. I shall be tempted, but "I shall come forth"; I shall be denounced by slander, but "I shall come forth." Be of good cheer: O gold, if thou goest into the fire gold, thou wilt come forth gold!

Once more, he says, "I shall come forth as gold." But how does that come forth? It comes forth proved. It has been assayed, and is now warranted pure. So shall you be. After the trial you will be able to say, "Now I know that I fear God; now I know that God is with me, sustaining me; now I see that He has helped me, and I am sure that I am his." How does gold come forth? It comes forth purified. A lump of ore may not be so big as when it went into the fire, but it is quite as precious. There is quite as much gold in it now as there was at first. What has gone? Nothing but that which is best gone. The dross has gone; but all the gold is there. O child of God, you may decrease in bulk, but not in bullion! You may lose importance, but not innocence. You may not talk so big; but there shall be really more to talk of. And what a gain it is to lose dross! What gain to lose pride! What gain to lose self-sufficiency! What gain to lose all those propensities to boastings that are so abundantly there! You may thank God for your trials, for you will come forth as gold purified.

Once more, how does gold come forth from the furnace? It comes forth ready for use. Now the goldsmith may take it and make what he pleases of it. It has been through the fire and the dross has been got away from it, and it is fit for his use. So, beloved, if you are on the way to heaven and you meet with difficulties, they will bring you preparation for higher service; you will be a better and more useful man; you will be a woman whom God can more fully use to comfort others of a sorrowful spirit. Spiritual afflictions are heavenly promotions. You are going a rank higher: God is putting another stripe upon your arm. You were only a corporal, but now He is making a sergeant of you. Be not discouraged. You that have set out

for heaven this morning, do not go back because you get a rainy day when you start. Do not be like Pliable. When he got to the Slough of Despond, and tumbled in, all he did was to struggle to get out on the side nearest home. He said, "If I may only once get out of this bog, you may have that grand city for yourself for me." Come, be like Christian, who, though he did sink, always kept his face in the right way and always turned his back to the City of Destruction. "No," he said, "if I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I will go down with my eyes towards the hills whence cometh my help." "I am bound for Canaan, and if all the Canaanites stand in the way in one block, I will die with my face towards Jerusalem: I still will hold on, God helping me, even unto the end." May the Lord so bless you, for He knows the way you take; and when He hath tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 139.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—914, 139, 701.

CONCERNING THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD.

NO. 2099

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 11TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Are the consolations of God small with thee?
is there any secret thing with thee?”-Job 15:11.*

THESE are the words of Eliphaz, one of those three friends of Job who blundered dreadfully over his case. Their words are not to be despised; for they were men in the front rank for knowledge and experience. Eliphaz says, “With us are both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father.” Their errors were not the superficial mistakes of fools, but the profound reasonings of men of light and leading. Their utterances are, at least, equal to anything our own learned men may have to say on the same problem. However wrong Eliphaz may have been in reference to Job—and in reference to him his remarks were grossly unjust—yet many of them are correct in themselves, and may usefully be applied to our own hearts. Inasmuch as Eliphaz, in this verse, teaches no doctrine, but only asks two searching questions, he cannot mislead us; but he may do us good service. May God the Holy Spirit enable us so to consider these questions that we may be profited thereby!

The text is in the form of question, and its sense I shall endeavor to bring out by other questions, each of which will have a practical relation to ourselves. The passage in the original has proved hard to translate; but I think that in four questions I can set forth the essence of the meanings which have been found therein.

If we are indeed believers in the gospel, and are living near to God, our consolation should be exceeding great. Passing through a troubled world

we have need of consolations; but these are abundantly provided by our God, and their influence upon us should be exceeding great. We ought not to be unhappy; for we have joy urged upon us by the precept, "Rejoice in the Lord alway"; and that precept is in substance often repeated. It is both the duty and the privilege of Christians to be of good cheer; if we are not glad, even amid our trials, there is a reason for it, and we shall do well, at this time, to use the text as a candle by which to search out that reason. "Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?"

I. Our first question follows the interpretation given by most authorities: "DO YOU REGARD THE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD AS SMALL?" Do you judge that the comforts of faith are insignificant? "Are the consolations of God too small for thee?"

I would ask you, first, Do you think religion makes men unhappy Have you poisoned your mind with that invention of the enemy? Have you made yourself believe that godliness consists in morbid. self-condemnation, despondency, apprehension, and dread? If so, permit me to warn you that there are many popular errors, and that, in this case, "common fame is a common liar." Do you find in the preacher, and the members of his church, any confirmation of this silly assertion? We can personally assure you that the joys of religion are by no means meagre in our case. We beseech you not to let a groundless prejudice blind your eyes to the truth. I will hope that, like the Bereans, you are of a noble spirit, and will examine that which is told you.

Is not your verdict different from that of those who have tried godliness for themselves? Do you not know that many, for the joy they have found. in the love of Christ, have renounced all sinful pleasures, and utterly despised them? They were once fascinated with the world, but they tasted higher joys, and shook off the spell. He that drinks of the river of the water of life will count the streams of sin to be foul and. brackish, and will no more drink thereof. Many a believer for the joy that is set before him has, in the service of God, encountered much ridicule, endured severe losses, and borne great hardships; and has done so with delight. Have you not also remarked, in many afflicted. Christians, a peace which you yourself do not know? Have you not observed their patience under adversity? They have been poor, but perfectly content; they have been sick, and yet cheerful; racked with pain, and yet joyous. Under the apprehension of surgical

operations, have you not seen them happily resigned? Have you ever seen one of them die? How often have we heard them singing in their death-throes, which have been to them death joys! Is it not a fact which cannot be disputed, that faith in our Lord Jesus has uplifted the sorrowful, and has rendered others supremely happy? This joy has sprung entirely from their hope in Christ, their communion with God, their delight in the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. Have we not among us in Christian fellowship many notable proofs that

*“’Tis religion which can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live”?*

Therefore, my questioning friend, it behoves you to look into this matter, and not to remain under the impression that the consolations of God are small. Those whose experience asserts that the joys of religion are great are not foolish or disreputable persons: give due weight to their witness, and believe that the consolations of God are precious beyond expression. Amid many pains and afflictions, I can personally assure you that it is a blessed thing to trust in the Lord.

Will you follow me a while as I ask you, Upon consideration, will you not amend your judgment? What are these consolations of God? The more you know of them, the more ground will you see for believing that they must be great. They are the “consolations of God.” If God himself deigns to comfort men, will he not greatly cheer them? Knowing human sorrow, and stepping from the height of his glory to comfort it, is it conceivable that he will labor in vain? Do you think that the All-sufficient cannot provide consolation equal to the affliction? The consolations we speak of are applied by the Spirit of God; and to prove how earnestly he performs his work, he has taken the name of “Comforter.” Will the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, think you, come to any human heart with insufficient consolations? Will he trifle with our griefs? Can it be that he does not know how to give sunlight when our day is dark with sorrow? Think not so. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, is the substance of those consolations. He is called “The consolation of Israel.” Can a man have Christ to be his portion, and yet be poor? Can a man have Jesus for his joy, and yet be weighed down with sadness? Might he not well ask, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” I cannot for a moment dream of a joyless Christ.

See again, my friend, these consolations of God deal with the source of sorrow. Whence came the curse, but from the sin of man? Jesus has come to save his people from their sins. Those thorns and thistles which now rend our flesh are not the natural fruits of the earth as God created it. Sin sowed all these. The consolations of God deal with sin. As for the guilt which we have incurred, and the inevitable punishment, both are removed by pardon full and free. Jesus bore the guilt of sin, and put it all away by his death upon the cross; and, in consequence, sin can be blotted out. Is not this the grandest of all consolations-the consolation of God? When we lay hold on Jesus, and receive forgiveness, affliction may remain, but sin is gone for ever; and hence the affliction itself loses its bitterness. Sin reigning in the heart is the death of peace; but the dethronement of the usurper is provided for, and hence another divine consolation. Until we get the mastery over evil, we must be uncomfortable; but the consolations of God assure us of a new heart and a right spirit, and of a power supreme and divine, which enters the nature of the believer, and subdues, destroys, and at last annihilates the propensity to sin. Is not this a rich and rare consolation? Comfort which left us under the power of evil would be dangerous comfort; but comfort which takes away both the guilt and the power of sin is glorious indeed. Dream not that it can be small!

Remember, too, that the consolations of God reveal to us a reason for the sorrow when it is allowed to remain. There is a needs-be that we are in heaviness. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If suffering be a fire, the consolations of God assure us that it is a refining fire, which only consumes our dross. Do you not think that the comfortable fruits of righteousness, which are brought forth in those believers who are exercised by trial, are the source of great comfort to the afflicted of the Lord?

*"Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food."*

Another reflection sweetly cheers the heart of the tried one during his tribulation, namely, that he has a comrade in it. We are not passing through the waters alone. We have a fellow-sufferer, of whom we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Our Lord drank long ago of that cup whereof we sip. He knows the sting of treachery, the stab of calumny, the spit of scorn; for he was "in all points tempted like as we are." Many of us have

found this to be an eminent comfort. Do you not think it must be so? Has not many a man, at the sound of another's voice, been cheered in the darkness of the night when pursuing a dangerous way? Has not the presence of a stronger and wiser one acting as guide been quite enough to remove all dread? If the Son of God be with us, surely there is an end of every sort of fear. Does he not use this as his own note of cheer, saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee?"

Besides, "the consolations of God" lie also in the direction of compensations. You have the rod; yes, but this is the small drawback to heavenly sonship, if drawback indeed it be. You have become a son of God, and "what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?" You are an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ; and in accepting heirship will you not cheerfully take the cross therewith, seeing it is part of the entail? It is true that you have special sorrow; but then you have the royal nature to which that sacred sorrow is a witness. God has given to you a nature that wars against evil: hence these tears! Would you be of the seed of the serpent, and have your meat as plentiful as dust? Would you not far rather be of the seed of the woman, and have your heel bruised? What is the bruising of the heel compared with the eternal dominion to which that seed is predestinated? Compensations abound in every case of trouble. You have lost your child, but you believe in the resurrection. You will die yourself, it may be; but you shall rise again from the dust. You have lost your property; but you are an heir of all things in Christ Jesus. You have been persecuted; but in this you rejoice as a partaker of the sufferings of Christ. The compensations of the covenant of grace are so overflowing that we call our troubles "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," and they work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Besides, there is one consolation, with which I finish; not because I have completed my list, but because time does not permit me to enlarge: there is the consolation that you are on your journey home, and that every moment you are coming closer to the eternal rest. When we once reach heaven, we shall forget the trials of the way. An hour with our God will make up for a life of pain. You languish on that bed; but if you languish into immortality, you will no more remember your anguish. When your head wears the crown and your hand waves the palm, you will count it all joy that you were thought worthy to be persecuted for Christ's sake.

O sirs, we have the best of it! Whatever trouble may come to us as Christians, so much more of joy comes with it, that we have the best of the bargain. We give up drops of poisonous delight, but we dive into rivers of ineffable joy. The Christian's joy far excels the best that earth can afford. Grace is the dawn of glory. Faith brings heaven down to us, while love bears us up to heaven. Celestial fruits are gathered upon earthly ground by those who look up for the manna. Let us begin the song which with sweeter voices we shall continue, world without end- "Unto him that loved us and laved us in his own blood, be glory for ever!"

Still I fear there are some to whom it appears as if the joys of religion and the consolations of God were small. Let them correct their mistake; for the truth is far otherwise.

II. But now a second question comes up, which will come home to many Christian people. HAVE THESE CONSOLATIONS BEEN SMALL IN THEIR EFFECT UPON YOU? Have these consolations, though great in themselves, been small in their influence upon you?

I will begin my examination by putting to one disciple this question: Have you never very much rejoiced in God? Have you always possessed a little, and but a very little, joy? Are you one of those who are only up to the ankles in the river of grace? Why is this? Dear friend, you are believing upon a slender scale; you are living on a low plane. Why is it so? You hope you are saved, but it is by the skin of your teeth; you hope you are a child of God, but you are not very sure about it; and, consequently, you get very little joy out of it. This is mischievous. Whence comes it? Is it ignorance? Do you not know enough of the great doctrines of the gospel, and of the vast privileges of the redeemed? It may be so. We have heard of persons in Australia who walked habitually over nuggets of gold. We have heard of a bridge being built with what seemed common stones, but it contained masses of golden ore. Men did not know their wealth. Is it not a pity that you should be poor in comfort, and yet have all this gold of consolation at your foot? You have, lying within the leaves of your Bible, cheques for millions, and yet you have scarcely a penny to spend. What a pity! Is it listlessness? Have you never felt desirous to know the best of the Christian life? Have you never had the sacred ambition to gain all the blessings which are provided in the covenant of grace? It is wonderful how indifferent some people can be: they can fret when within reach of unutterable joy! I have heard of a person who walked some seven hundred miles to see the Falls of

Niagara. When he was within seven miles, he thought he heard the roar of the cataract, and he called to a man working in the fields, and said, "Is that the roar of Niagara?" The man answered, "I don't know, but I guess it may be. What if it is?" With surprise, the good man said, "Do you live here?" "Born and bred here," the man answered. "And yet you don't know whether that thundering noise is from the waterfall?" "No, stranger," said he, "I don't care what it is. I have never seen those Falls. I look after my farm." No doubt there are many within hail of heaven's choicest joys who have never cared to know them. They hope they are saved, but they don't care for great joy. They use their spade and their hoe, and dig their potatoes; but Niagara is nothing to them. Many look well to this life, but do not arouse themselves to gain present spiritual joy. Oh, sad, that you should be so much a Christian, that we should not wish to question that you are converted, and yet you are half-asleep, and self-content! You labor under the notion that those good people, who rejoice in the Lord are enthusiasts, or else you say to yourself, "It would be presumption on my part to aspire to have the same joy." What nonsense! Go in for everything that God can give you. If you are his child, nothing in his house is denied you. He saith to you, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Do not you, like the elder brother, complain that you have served him all these years, and yet he never gave you enough to make you merry with your friends.

But it may be, dear friend, that you once did joy and rejoice. Well, then, is it of late that you have lost these splendid consolations, and come down to feel them small with you? I suggest to you that you observe what alteration you have made of late. Is it that you have more business, and have grown more worldly? You cannot get out to prayer-meetings now, nor to week-night services. "No," you say, "I cannot; and if you knew what I have to do, you would not blame me." Just so, a little while ago you had not so much to do; but you chose to load yourself with an extra burden, knowing that you would not be able to get so much of spiritual food as aforetime. Somewhere in that line you will find the reason why your joy has declined. If anybody said to me, "The days are darker now than they used to be," I should remember that the sun is still the same. Perhaps my friend has not lately cleaned his windows; or he has not drawn up his blinds; and that is why he thinks there is less light. It is very possible to be much more in the dark than you need to be. The gloom may be in the eyes rather than in the

heavens. May I suggest a little looking at home, that you may see why your former blessedness is gone?

Do you reply to me that you do use the means of grace? ho the outward means fail to bring you the consolation they once did? To what means do you refer? Are you as much in prayer as ever? and is prayer less refreshing than it used to be? Do you read the Scriptures as you formerly did, with the same regularity, attention, and devotion? Do you no longer draw the waters of comfort from these wells of salvation? Do you really go on hearing the Word as you once did, with the same hunger for it, and love to it, and yet do you find it unsatisfactory to you? I must again remind you that these things have not altered in themselves; for the ministry is the same to other saints, the Scriptures must be the same, and the mercy-seat is not removed. The fault is not in these, but in yourself. Surely, dear friend, some evil thing within you has curdled the milk of blessing, and stopped the flow of joy. Search yourselves, I pray you, if the consolations of God are small with you. He has not forgotten to be gracious, neither has he ceased to hear prayer and to speak to his servants through his sacred Word. You shut the door from within; he bars it not from without.

I may come near to your experience if I ask-ho you revive occasionally, and then relapse? I think I hear you say, "Oh, yes; I sometimes can clap my hands; for I feel delighted while hearing the gospel. I could shout Hallelujah, I do so rejoice. I am for a time up in the stirrups." But you come down again just as readily. Why is this? Surely, you are in a very changeful frame, and live by feeling rather than by principle. Are not the grounds of comfort always the same? If a promise is true this morning, it will be true this afternoon; and if it is a real source of comfort to you this afternoon, it ought to be a comfort to you on Monday and all the other days of the week. If the feast does not alter, and yet it does not satisfy you as it once did, you must be ill, some fever or other disease is upon you. Haste away to the Great Physician of souls, and say to him, "Lord, search me and try me, and see what evil thing there is in me, and make me right, that I may again be satisfied with heavenly food." It is childish to be so changeful. Grow in grace, and be rooted in faith.

Whoes the cause of your greater grief lie in a trial to which you do not fully submit? I think I hear you admit that you faint under your load. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." But he giveth more grace. Get it. Are you impatient? Do you kick against the pricks? Do you

feel that you can endure no longer? Since you are impatient, do you wonder that you are unhappy? Since you walk contrary to God, do you wonder that he walks contrary to you? Do not find fault with his consolations; find fault with your own rebellious heart. When a child rebels against his father, it is not likely that his father's love will be a source of much comfort to him. Dear friend, the Lord help you to get rid of impatience, and you will be rid of anguish. Take the cup, and drink it, and say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt"; and an angel will appear unto you strengthening you. As it was with your Lord in a similar case, so shall it be with you. Are you alarmed at what may yet come? Do you dread the future? Well, if you will import trouble from the future, blame not the consolations of God; for he has told you that "the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." He has never taught you to pray, "Give me to-morrow my daily bread": he has limited you and pegged you down to this, "Give us this day our daily bread." Will you not be content to live by the day? Walking with him who is the God of Eternity, you may leave days and years to him; and let one day at a time be enough for you.

It may be that while you are thus without the enjoyment of divine consolation, Satan is tempting you to look to other things for comfort. I pray you, touch not the wine-cup, if this be placed before you as a means of consolation. A dark hour is often the crisis in the history of a man of God: if he can weather this storm he will have fair sailing Satan will now be very busy to get you to act hastily, or wickedly. It will be whispered to you, "Put your pen to that accommodation bill. Borrow, though you cannot pay. It may be wrong, but you can put it right afterwards." I pray you, do not dream of any means of help which you cannot lay before God. How often have men in offices of trust been tempted to handle money, for just a little while, and then to put it back again! I beseech you, shake this viper off your hand. into the fire, for it is a viper. Better suffer anything than do wrong. Keep in the furnace till God bids you come out of it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when they found themselves walking safely in the midst of the flames, and saw Nebuchadnezzar standing at the mouth of the furnace, did not leap out to assail the tyrant. Not they: they stayed till they came out with honor. Brother, seek not consolation in policy, in trickery, in falsehood. Do not even seek it in overhaste. Many a man who has run before the cloud has had to slink back again. Many a man who has taken a knife to carve for himself, has cut his fingers. Do not be

tempted to think that you can find better comforts than God can give you. Look not to man, but let your expectation be in God alone. If you have despised the consolations of God by setting them below your own efforts, you cannot expect that they should be sweet to your taste. Amend this and you will be happy. Your lack of comfort lies not in the consolations themselves, but in your own heart. Pray God the Holy Spirit to revive the work of grace in your soul, and that being done, either the trouble will grow lighter, or your back will be stronger to bear the burden.

III. Our third question is this—Since the consolations of God appear so small to you, HAVE YOU ANYTHING BETTER TO PUT IN THEIR PLACE? Perhaps this is what Eliphaz meant when he said, “Is there any secret thing with thee?” He seemed to say to Job, “We cannot tell you anything. You will not hear us. Have you some wonderful discovery of your own? Have you some secret cordial, some mystic support, some unknown joy? Have you discovered a balm of greater efficacy than ours, a cure-all for your sorrow?” Let me ask you a similar question. If God’s gospel fails you, what will you do?

Have you found out a new religion with brighter hopes? I do not think you have, for the prognostications of modern thought are dreary enough! Moreover, I have been informed by those who know most about it, that the theology of the future has not yet crystallized itself sufficiently to be defined. As far as I can see, it will take a century or two before its lovers have licked it into shape; for they have not yet settled what its shape is to be. While the grass is growing, the steed is starving. The new bread is baking: the arsenic is well mixed within it; but the oven is not very hot, and the dough is not turned into loaf yet. I should advise you to keep to that bread of which your fathers ate, the bread which came down from heaven. Personally I am not willing to make any change, even if the new bread were ready on the table; for new bread is not very digestible, and the arsenic of doubt is not according to my desire. I shall keep to the old manna till I cross the Jordan, and eat the old corn of the land of Canaan. Are you hopeful of finding comfort in new speculations? Is that the “secret thing”? Then you feed upon the wind.

Are you hoping to find comfort in the world? Will you be happy if you manage to get that position? if you pass that examination? if you save so much money? I beseech you, do not play the fool: there is no consolation in all this. Did you ever read a little book called “The Mirage of Life,”

published by the Tract Society? It ought to convince anybody that there is no satisfaction to be found in the greatest worldly success; for it shows us millionaires, statesmen, and princes all dissatisfied. But I need not refer to any book; observe for yourselves. The richest men have often been the most miserable, and those who have succeeded best in rising to places of honor have been worn out in the pursuit, and disgusted with the prize. Wealth brings care, honor earns envy, position entails toil, and rank has its annoyances. One of our richest men once said, "I suppose you fancy I am happy, because I am rich. Why, a dozen times in a year, and oftener, some fellow threatens to shoot me if I do not send him what he wants. Do you suppose that this makes me a happy man?" Believe me, the world is as barren of joy as the Sahara. Vain is the hope of finding a spring of consolation in anything beneath the moon. Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

Or, do you conclude that you are strong-minded enough to bear all the difficulties and trials of life without consolation? Well, friend, I will not discuss the point. I have found that persons who think themselves strong in mind are generally strong in the head. Yet I would remind you that the strongest are not too strong for life's battle. There never was a wise man yet who thought he was wise. This world has enough of woe in it to test all the wisdom you are likely to possess. For my own part, I feel very diffident, and would be glad of all the consolations heaven can give me. I suspect that you are as I am, and will not be able to play the man without help from God.

Who you say that what can't be cured must be endured, and you will keep as you are? This is a poor resolve for a man to come to. If there is better to be had, why not seek it? Do you mean to abide in the sad state into which you have fallen? Are you content to be discontented? Have you had a child of your own? Have you seen it go wrong, and get itself into trouble, and then resolve not to confess it, but to make itself appear a martyr and fret? You wished to put it right, and cheer it into obedience; but it would not get out of the sulks. What did you do with it? I suppose, in the long run, you had to leave it to have its sulk out, and you thought to yourself, "Silly child! How miserable you make yourself, and all for nothing. You might be as happy as your brothers and sisters; but if you must sulk, you must." Some believers are of this sort. Because they had a serious loss, they must needs rob themselves of communion with God. Because they have endured terrible bereavement, they bereave themselves of their Lord. Because they

are not well, they fret themselves into worse health. Some are only satisfied when they are in the depths of misery. I know some whose wretchedness is chronic: like polar bears, they are only at home in the ice. You smile, and well you may; but then you should also weep, if this is your case. You should cry, "O Lord, put me right with thyself! I cannot be content to be always repining and lamenting! If there are consolations to be had in thee, let me have them now. I know there is no consolation anywhere else. To whom should I go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life! There is no secret thing with me, my God, upon which I can rely. I must have thy consolation, or I shall have no comfort!"

IV. Here comes the most practical question of all, and with this I close. If it be so, that you have hitherto found heavenly consolations to have small effect with you, and yet have nothing better to put in their place, IS THERE NOT A CAUSE FOR YOUR FAILURE? Will you not endeavor to find it out?

Dear friends, you that seek to be right, you that desire to be full Christians, and yet cannot rejoice in God, at least not often, nor greatly, is there not some sin indulged? A child of God may go on with a sin unwittingly, and that for years; and all the while that sin may be causing a dreadful leakage in his joy. You cannot be wrong in life, and thought, and word, without a measure of joy oozing away. Take a good look at yourself, and examine your life by the light of Scripture, and if you find that you have been doing something wrong unawares, or for which you have made an unworthy excuse, away with the evil! Away with it at once! When this Achan is stoned, and the accursed thing is put away, you will be surprised to find what joy, what comfort will immediately flow into your soul.

Next, may there not have been some duty neglected? We are not saved by good works; but if any Christian omits a good work, he will find it injurious to his peace. Many Christian people never get into the clear light of full assurance, because they do not obey their conscience upon every point. I pray you, never quarrel with conscience, for it will have the best of it with you-if you have a conscience. If you go contrary to conscience, there will be trouble inside the little kingdom of your soul, as sure as you are alive. "Oh, but I have always been intending to do it." That makes it the greater sin that you have not done it, for evidently you knew your Lord's will. Have you considered that any wilful omission of duty is not one sin, but many? It is your duty to do it now; it is a sin that you have not done it already. It will be your duty to do it to-morrow; it will be another sin if you

omit it to-morrow. How often the omission creates a new sin I cannot tell; but as surely as you rob God of obedience, sin will rob you of comfort. If you neglect obedience to the precept, you cannot have the comfort of the promise. Get that matter seen to at once, there's a dear friend! Omitted duty is like a little stone in the sole of your shoe. It is small, and some say it is a non-essential matter; but it is just because it is so small that it can do so much mischief. If I had a great pebble in my boot, I should be sure to get it out; but a tiny stone may remain, and blister me, and lame me. Get out the little stones, or they will hinder your travelling to heaven. Again, may there not be some idol in your heart? That is a very searching suggestion. If the consolations of God are small with you, may you not have set up something in the place of God—a lover, a wife, a husband, a child, a friend, learning, honor, wealth? I need not mention the many forms taken by our idols. It is very easy to set up an image of jealousy. A thing in itself harmless and even lovely, may grievously provoke the Lord through our heart going after it. Brother, sister, is it so? Do you love anything as you love God? I suggest that you should at once cry—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.”*

If you do not remove the idol from its throne, if God loves you, he will make your Dagon fall and be broken. If you want to lose that which is the object of your comfort and delight, love it too much. This is a sort of unwillful murder which good people can perform upon their children and their friends. Idolize and destroy. Love the creature more than the Creator, and it may be necessary that they should be taken from you altogether.

But, beloved, if you do not enjoy the consolations of God, do you not think it is because you do not think enough of God? I am ashamed of myself that I do not live more with my God. How little time do we spend with him! We think about his work rather than himself. Even in the Scriptures we look more to the words than to God speaking by the words. We criticize a phrase when we should be drinking in the spirit of the revelation, and so be getting near to God. If we are cold, is it not because we do not sit in the sun? If we are faint, is it not because we do not feed on him whose flesh is meat indeed? How would a fish fare if it left the water? How can we prosper if we leave our God, who is the element of our life? Say with David, in the psalm we sang just now:

*“Like as the hart for water-brooks
In thirst doth pant and bray;
So pants my longing soul, O God,
That come to thee I may.”*

And then you will not long be disquieted, for you will go on to sing:

*“For yet I know I shall him praise,
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he.”*

If any of you have not the joy of the Lord which you once possessed, is it not possible that when you used to have it you grew proud? “Jeshurun. waxed fat and kicked.” He will have to be starved a bit to bring him to his senses. Ah! I have known a child of God so happy in the Lord, so useful and so blessed in every way, that he began to think he was something out of the common. He grew very sublime. As to the poor brethren around him, he could hardly put up with them—they were more dead than alive; they were weaklings, foolish men, mere babes, and so on. He saw a poor tried believer looking out of one of the windows of Doubting Castle, and instead of helping him out, he bullied him so much for being there at all that the poor prisoner was more shut up than ever. Look at him! He is a fine fellow! He never had sad doubts; he never felt anxious fears. Not he! You re- mind me, my dear brother, of the fat cattle mentioned in Ezekiel, of whom the prophet says that they thrust with side, and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with their horns till they had scattered them. “Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.” The Lord will not have you condemn the weak and sneer at the feeble. You may yet be such yourselves. His consolations will be small with you if his people are small with you. If you do not care for the little ones who believe in him, neither will he be quick to comfort you. Be humble. Take the lowest place. If you will lie low before the Lord, he will lift you up; but if you lift up yourself, God will throw you down.

I will close by saying that one of the worst causes of disquietude is unbelief. Have you begun to distrust? Do you really doubt your God? Then I do not wonder that the consolations of God are small with you. Here is the rule of the kingdom—“According to your faith, so be it unto you.” If you doubt God, you will get but little from him. He that wavereth may not

expect to receive anything of the Lord. Strong faith may have what it wills; but when your doubts master your faith, prayer cannot prevail. Few are the dainties from the King's table which come to the dish of mistrust. What do you doubt? Do you question the Word of God? Has the Lord said more than the truth will warrant? Do you think so? Will you dare to throw such a handful of mud upon the veracity of God? His truth is one of his crown jewels; would you take it away? Do you distrust his power? Do you think he cannot comfort you? Do you imagine that he cannot make you ride upon the high places of the earth? Do you think that he cannot put a new song into your mouth, and make you rejoice in his name from morning to night? Wherefore should you doubt his power to make you joyful in his house? Do you doubt the Lord's wisdom? Do you think the Holy Spirit cannot meet your case, and provide comfort suitable for your distress? Surely, you cannot have fallen into this base suspicion! Or, do you doubt the Lord's presence? Do you think that he is too far off to know you and help you? He is everywhere present, and he knows the way that you take.

Come and trust the Lord. Come, beloved, whether you be saint or sinner, come through the Lord Jesus, and fall down at Jehovah's feet and say, "Lord, my hope is in thee. I have no comfort elsewhere; but I know thy comforts are not small. Comfort me, I pray thee, in Christ Jesus." If you would have that prayer answered, listen to these words of the Lord Jesus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Though the tears be in your eyes, yet turn them to Christ crucified. Put your trust simply, immediately, wholly, and alone in him who died for you, and you shall go your way filled with consolation. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FAITH ESSENTIAL TO PLEASING GOD.

NO. 2100

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 18TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”-Hebrews 11:6.

MEN have lived who have pleased God: Enoch was one of them, but he was not the only one. In all ages certain persons have been well-pleasing to God, and their walk in life has been such as was his delight. It should be the aim of every one of us to please God. The thing is possible, notwithstanding all our imperfections and infirmities: let us aim at it in the power of the Holy Ghost. What has been wrought in one man may be wrought in another. We, too, may be well-pleasing unto God; therefore let us seek after it with hopefulness. If we so live as to please the Lord, we shall only be acting as we ought to act; for we ought to please him who made us and sustains us in being. He is our God and Lord, and obedience to him is the highest law of our being. Moreover, the glorious Jehovah is so perfectly good, so supremely holy, that the conduct which pleases him must be of the best and noblest sort, and therefore we should seek after it. Should we not aspire to that character upon which God himself can smile? The approbation of our fellow-men is pleasant in its way; but they are always imperfect, and often mistaken; and so we may be well-pleasing to them, and yet may be far removed from righteousness. It may be a calamity to be commended in error, for it may prevent our becoming really commendable. But God makes no mistake; the Infinitely Holy knows no imperfection; and if it be possible for us to be pleasing to him, it should be our one object to reach that condition. As Enoch, in a darker age, was

pleasing to him, why should not we, upon whom the gospel day has dawned? God grant us to find grace in his sight!

If we please God, we shall have realized the object of our being. It is written concerning all things, "For his pleasure they are and were created"; and we miss the end of creation if we are not pleasing to the Lord. To fulfill God's end in our creation is to obtain the highest joy. If we are pleasing to God, although we shall not escape trial, for even the highest qualities must be tested, yet we shall find great peace and special happiness. He is not an unhappy man who is pleasing to God: God hath blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed. By pleasing God we shall become the means of good to others: our example will rebuke and stimulate; our peace will convince and invite. Being himself well-pleasing to God, the godly man will teach transgressors God's way, and sinners shall be converted unto him. I therefore, without the slightest hesitancy, set it before you as a thing to be desired by us all, that we should win this testimony-that we are pleasing unto God.

Here the apostle comes in with a needful instruction. He asserts that faith is absolutely needful, if we would please God. Then, to help us still further, he mentions two essential points of faith: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." When I have spoken on these two points, I shall close, as God shall help me, by showing that he then teaches us many valuable lessons.

I. First, then, THE APOSTLE ASSERTS THAT FAITH IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THE PLEASING OF GOD. Take, as a key-word, the strong word "impossible." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." He does not say it is difficult, or so needful that without it success is barely possible; but, point-blank, he declares it to be "impossible." When the Holy Spirit says that a thing is impossible, it is so in a very absolute sense. Let us not attempt the impossible. To attempt a difficulty may be laudable, but to rush upon an impossibility is madness. We must not, therefore, hope to please God by any invention of our own, however clever, nor by any labor of our own, however ardent; since infallible inspiration declares that, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

We are bound to believe this statement, because we have it in the sacred volume, stated upon divine authority; but, for your help, I would invite you to think of some few matters which may show you how impossible it is to please God without faith in him.

For, first, without faith there is no capacity for communion with God at all. The things of God are spiritual and invisible: without faith we cannot recognize such things, but must be dead to them. Faith is the eye which sees; but without that eye we are blind, and can have no fellowship with God in those sacred truths which only faith can perceive. Faith is the hand of the soul, and without it we have no grasp of eternal things. If I were to mention all the images by which faith is set forth, each one would help you to see that you must have faith in order to know God and enter into converse with him. It is only by faith that we can recognize God, approach him, speak to him, hear him, feel his presence, and be delighted with his perfections. He that has not faith is toward God as one dead; and Jehovah is not the God of the dead, but of the living. The communion of the living God goes not forth toward death and corruption; his fellowship is with those who have spiritual life, a life akin to his own. Where there is no faith, there has been no quickening of the Holy Spirit, for faith is of the very essence of spiritual life; and so the man who has no faith can no more commune with the living God, and give him pleasure, than can a stock or a stone, a horse or an ox, hold converse with the human mind.

Again, without faith the man himself is not pleasing to God. We read, "Without faith it is impossible to please God"; but the Revision has it better: "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God." The way of acceptance described in Scripture is, first, the man is accepted, and then what that man does is accepted. It is written: "And he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." First, God is pleased with the person, and then with the gift, or the work. The unaccepted person offers of necessity an unacceptable sacrifice. If a man be your enemy, you will not value a present which he sends you. If you know that he has no confidence in you, but counts you a liar, his praises are lost upon you; they are empty, deceptive things which cannot possibly please you. O my hearers, in your natural state you are so sinful that God cannot look upon you with complacency! Concerning our race it is written: "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Concerning many God has said, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." Is this true of us? "Ye must be born again," or ye cannot be pleasing to the Lord. Ye must believe in Jesus; for only to as many as receive him does he give power to become the sons of God. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, the Lord God accepts us for his Beloved's sake, and in him we

are made kings and priests, and permitted to bring an offering which pleases God. As the man is, such is his work. The stream is of the nature of the spring from which it flows. He who is a rebel, outlawed and proclaimed, cannot gratify his prince by any fashion of service; he must first submit himself to the law. All the actions of rebels are acts done in rebellion. We must first be reconciled to God, or it is a mockery to bring an offering to his altar. Reconciliation can only be effected through the death of the Lord Jesus, and if we have no faith in that way of reconciliation we cannot please God. Faith in Christ makes a total change in our position towards God—we who were enemies are reconciled; and from this comes towards God a distinct change in the nature of all our actions: imperfect though they be, they spring from a loyal heart, and they are pleasing to God.

Remember, that, in human associations, want of confidence would prevent a man's being well-pleasing to another. If a man has no confidence in you, you can have no pleasure in him. If you had a child, and he had no trust in his father, no belief in his father's kindness, no reliance on his father's word—it would be most painful, and it would be quite impossible that you should take any pleasure in such a child. If you had a servant in your house who always suspected your every action, and believed in nothing that you said or did, but put a wrong construction upon everything, it would make the house very miserable, and you would be well rid of such an inmate. How can I take pleasure in a man who associates with me, and pretends to serve me, but all the while thinks me a sheer impostor, and gives me no credit for truthfulness? Such a person would be an eye-sore to me. It is clear that want of confidence would destroy any pleasure which one man might have in another. When the creature dares to doubt his Creator, how can the Creator be pleased? When the word which wrought creation is not enough for a man to rest upon, he may pretend what he will of righteousness and obedience, but the whole affair is rotten at the core, and God can take no pleasure in it.

Note again: unbelief takes away the common ground upon which God and man can meet. Two persons who are pleasant to one another, must have certain common views and objects. God's great object is the glorification of his Son; and how can we be pleasing to him if we dishonor that Son? The Father delights in Jesus: the very thought of him is a pleasure to God. He said, as if to himself only, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This he said, afterwards, to others, that they might regard it-

"This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." He delights in what his Son has done: he smells a sweet savor of rest in his glorious sacrifice. If you and I believe in God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, we have a common ground of sympathy with God; but if not, we are not in harmony. How can two walk together except they be agreed? If we have thoughts of Jesus such as the Father has, we can live together and work together; but if we are opposed to him on a point which is as the apple of his eye, we cannot be well-pleasing to him. If Jesus be despised, rejected, distrusted, or even neglected, it is not possible for us to be pleasing to God. According to the well-worn fable, two persons who are totally different in their pursuits cannot well live together: the fuller and the charcoal-burner were obliged to part; for whatever the fuller had made white, the collier blackened with his finger. If differing pursuits divide, much more will differing feelings upon a vital point. It is Jesus whom Jehovah delights to honor; and if you will not even trust Jesus with your soul's salvation, you grieve the heart of God, and he can have no pleasure in you. Unbelief deprives the soul of the divinely-appointed meeting-place at the mercy-seat, which is the person of the Lord Jesus, where God and man unite in one Mediator, and the Lord shines forth on the suppliant.

Assuredly, again, want of faith destroys all prospect of love. Although we may not perhaps see it, there lies at the bottom of all love a belief in the object loved, as to its loveliness, its merit, or its capacity to make us happy. If I do not believe in a person, I cannot love him. If I cannot trust God, I cannot love him. If I do not believe that he loves me, I shall feel but slight emotions of love to him. If I refuse to see anything in the greatest display of his love, if I do not value the gift of his dear Son, then I cannot love him. We love him because he first loved us; but if we will not believe in his love, the motive power is gone. If we reject the word which saith, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," then we have put from out of the heart the grand incentive to love. But love on our part is essential to our pleasing God: how can he be pleased with an unloving heart? Is not the Lord's chief demand of men that we love him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength? Without faith love is impossible, and God's pleasure in us must be impossible.

Again, dear friends, want of faith will create positive variance on many points. Note a few. If I trust God, and believe in him, I shall submit myself

to his will; even when it becomes very painful to me I shall say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." But if I do not believe that he is God, and that he is aiming at my good, then I shall resent his chastisements, and shall kick against his will. What he wills me to suffer, I shall not be willing to suffer; but I shall rebel, and murmur, and proudly accuse my Maker of injustice, or want of love. I shall be in a rebellious state towards him, and then he cannot have pleasure in me. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy"; but he will walk contrary to us, if we walk contrary to him by refusing to bow ourselves before his hand.

Without faith, moreover, I get to be at variance with God in another way; for inasmuch as I desire to be saved, I shall seek salvation in my own way, and go about to establish a righteousness of my own. Whatever it may be, whether it be by ceremonies, or by good works, or by feelings, or what not, I shall, in some way or other, set up a way of salvation other than that which God has appointed through Christ Jesus. God's love to Christ is supreme, and he will not endure that a rival should be set up in opposition to him. Another way of salvation is Antichrist, and this provokes the Lord to jealousy. If you are laboring to be saved in one way, while God declares that through his Son is the only way of salvation, you are acting in distinct opposition to the Lord in a matter which does not admit of any compromise. Rejectors of Christ are enemies to God. If you pretend that you are God's servants, you are convicted of falsehood if you refuse to honor his Son by trusting in him. If you believe in Christ, whom he has sent, you work the work of God; and not else. Self-righteousness is an insult to Christ, and a distinct revolt from God. He who has no faith seeks salvation by a way that is derogatory to the Lord Jesus, and it is impossible for him to please God.

We must be at variance with God if we are without faith; for it is a solemn truth that "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." This is the crime of the unbeliever: so is it stated by the Holy Spirit speaking by the beloved John. Could you take any pleasure in a man who made you out to be a liar? Perhaps with great patience you could bear with him, but you could not be pleased with him: that would be out of the question. Does a man daily, by the mode of his life, and by the evident drift of his actions, give you the lie?-how can he talk of giving you pleasure? Nothing he could do would please you while he calls you a liar. He that makes God to be a liar, makes

him to be no God; to the best of his ability he undefiles the Deity; he uncrowns the Lord of all, and even stabs at the heart of the Eternal. To talk of being well-pleasing to God in such a case is absurd.

Let me conclude this point by asking, by what means can we hope to please God, apart from faith in him? By keeping all the commandments? Alas! you have not done so. You have already broken those commands; and what is more, you still break them, and are in a chronic state of disobedience. If you do not believe in him you are not obedient to him; for true obedience commands the understanding as well as every other power and faculty. We are bound to obey with the mind by believing, as well as with the hand by acting. The spiritual part of our being is in revolt against God until we believe; and, while the very life and glory of our being is in revolt, how can we please God?

But what will you bring to the Lord wherewith to please him? Do you propose to bribe him with your money? Surely you are not so foolish! Is the Lord to be bought with a row of almshouses, or a chapel, or a cathedral? To most of you it would be impossible to try the plan for lack of means; but if you were wealthy enough to lavish gold out of the bag, would this please him? The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle on a thousand hills. If he were hungry, he would not tell you. What can you give to him to whom all things belong? Truly, you can assist in an ornate worship, or build a gorgeous church, or embroider the furniture of an altar, or emblazon the windows of a church. But are you so weak as to believe that such trifles as these can cause any delight to the mind of the Infinite? Solomon built him a house, but "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." To what shall I liken the most glorious erections of human genius but to the ant-hills of the tropics, which are wonderful as the fabrication of ants, even as our cathedrals are marvellous as the handicraft of men. But what are ant-hills or cathedrals when measured with the Infinite? What are all our works to the Lord? He who with a single arch has spanned the world, cares little for our carved capitals and groined arches. The prettinesses of architecture are as much beneath the glory of Jehovah as the dolls and boxes of bricks of our children would be beneath the dignity of a Solomon, God is not a man that he should take delight in these things. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" It is not this that he asks of you, but to walk humbly with him, never daring arrogantly to doubt his

truth and mistrust his faithfulness. Go not about by a thousand inventions to aim at what you will never compass, but believe your God, and be established. So much upon that painful point. Remember the impossibility of pleasing the Lord without faith, and do not dash your ship upon this iron-bound coast.

II. Now, secondly, THE APOSTLE MENTIONS TWO ESSENTIAL POINTS OF FAITH.

He begins by saying, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is.” Note the key-word “must”: it is an immovable, insatiable necessity. Before we can walk with God, it is clear that we must come to God. Naturally, we are at a distance from him, and we must end that distance by coming to him, or else we cannot walk with him, nor be pleasing to him. That we may come to him, we must first believe that there is a God to come to. More; we must not only believe that there is a God—for only a fool doubts that: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”—but we must believe that Jehovah is God, and God alone. This was Enoch’s faith: he believed that Jehovah was the living and true God. You are to believe, and must believe in order to be pleasing with God, that he is God, that he is the only God, and that there can be none other than he. You must also accept Jehovah as he reveals himself. You are not to have a God of your own making, nor a God reasoned out, but a God such as he has been pleased to reveal himself to you. Believe that Jehovah is, whoever else may be or may not be.

But the devils believe and tremble, and yet they are not pleasing to God, for more is wanted. Believe that God is in reference to yourself; that he has to do with your life, and your ways. Many believe that there is a hazy, imaginary power which they call God; but they never think of him as a person, nor do they suspect that he thinks of them, or that his existence is of any consequence to them one way or another. Believe that God is as truly as you are; and let him be real to you. Let the consideration of him enter into everything that concerns you. Believe that he is approachable by yourself, and is to be pleased or displeased by you. Believe in him as you believe in your wife or your child whom you try to please. Believe in God beyond everything, that “he is” in a sense more sure than that in which anyone else exists. Believe that he is to be approached, to be realized, to be, in fact, the great practical factor of your life.

Hold this as the primary truth, that God is most influential upon you; and then believe that it is your business to come to him. But there is only one

way of coming to him, and you must have faith to use that way. He that died and lives for ever saith, "I am the way. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He that cometh to God must believe in God as he is revealed, and must come to God as God reveals the way of approach; and this is an exertion of faith. Faith as to this point is essential. You cannot come to him in whom you do not believe. Are not many hearers of the Word really as far from God as infidels? Let me ask you, how many atheists are now in this house? Perhaps not a single one of you would accept the title, and yet, if you live from Monday morning to Saturday night in the same way as you would live if there were no God, you are practical atheists; and as actions speak more loudly than words, you are more atheists than those doctrinal unbelievers who disavow God with their mouths, and, after all, are secretly afraid of him. A life without God is as bad as a creed without God. You cannot come to God unless you believe in him as the All-in-all, the Lord God beside whom there is none else.

Yet all this would be nothing without the second point of belief. We must believe that "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How do we seek him, then? Well, we seek him, first, when we begin by prayer, by trusting to Jesus, and by calling upon the sacred name, to seek salvation. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." That is a grand promise, and it teaches how we come to God; namely, by calling upon his name. Afterwards we seek God by aiming at his glory, by making him the great object for which we live. One man seeks money, another seeks reputation, another seeks pleasure; but he that is pleasing to God seeks God as his object and end. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The man with whom God is pleased, is pleased with God; he sets the Lord always before him, and seeks to live for him. This he would not do, unless he believed that God would reward him in so doing. Take this as a certainty, that we must believe that "God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him," or we shall not seek him. We are sure that, somehow or other, it will be to our highest benefit to honor the Lord and trust on him. Albeit we deserve nothing at his hands but wrath, yet we perceive from the gospel that if we seek him through his Son, we shall be so well-pleasing to him as to get a reward from his hands. This must be of grace-free, sovereign grace! And what a reward it is! Free pardon, graciously bestowed; a change of heart, graciously wrought; perseverance graciously maintained, comfort graciously poured in, and privilege graciously awarded. The

reward of godliness, even in this world, is immeasurable, and in the world to come it is infinite. We may have respect unto the recompence of the reward; indeed, we should have respect to it, and therefore boldly seek God, and seek nothing else.

The Lord is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” That is not quite an exact translation: the Greek word means not only seek him, but “sock him out”; that is, seek him till they find him, and seek him above all others. It is a very strong word; we hardly know how to transfer its meaning into English, for though it does not say “diligently,” it implies it. We must seek, and seek out; that is, seek till we really find. Those who with their hearts follow after God, shall not be losers if they believe that he will reward them. You have to believe God so as to seek his glory. Even when you do not obtain any present reward for it, you are to say, “I shall have a reward ultimately, even if I am for a while a loser through his service. If I lose money, respect, friendship, or even life from following God, yet still he will be a rewarder, and I shall be repaid ten thousand-fold, not of debt, but according to his grace.” He, then, that would please God, must first believe that he is; and then, dedicating himself to God, must be firmly assured that this is the right, the wise, the prudent thing to do. Be certain that to serve God is in itself gain: it is wealth to be holy; it is happiness to be pleasing to God. To us it is life to live to God—to know him, to adore him, to commune with him, to become like him. It is glory to us to make him glorious among the sons of men. For us to live is Christ. This, we are persuaded, is the best pursuit for us; in fact, it is the only one which can satisfy our hearts. God is our shield, and our exceeding great reward; and in the teeth of everything that happens we hold to this, that to serve God is gain. If God helps us to trust him, and therefore to live unto him and seek to be well-pleasing in his sight, we shall succeed in pleasing him. We cannot conceive that the heavenly Father sees, without pleasure, a man struggling against sin, battling against evil, enduring sorrow contentedly through a simple faith, and laboring daily to draw nearer and nearer to him. God is not displeased with those who, by faith, live to please him, and are content to take their reward from his hand. He must be pleased with the work of his own grace. The desire to come to God, the way to come to God, the power to come to God, the actual coming to God—these are all gifts of sovereign grace. Coming to God, however feebly we come, and seeking him, however much else we miss, must be well-pleasing in his sight; for it is the result of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the world

began. But all this hangs upon faith. Without faith there is no coming to God who is, and no seeking of God who is a rewarder; and therefore without faith it is impossible to please God.

III. WE WILL NOW GATHER A FEW LESSONS FROM WHAT THE APOSTLE HAS TAUGHT US. Help us, O gracious Spirit!

First, then, the apostle teaches us here by implication that God is pleased with those that have faith. The negative is often the plainest way of suggesting the positive. If we are so carefully warned that without faith it is impossible to please God, we infer that with faith it is possible to please God. If you believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; if you are willing to believe all that he teaches you because he teaches it, and are really a believer in himself and in all that he is pleased to reveal, then are you pleasing to him. He that believes in God believes in all the words that God speaks, and he surrenders himself to all that God does; and such a man must be pleasing to God. We believe in one God, and in one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; and we trust in the Lord as he thus draws near to us: thus are we in the way of pleasing God. By faith we ourselves have become pleasing to God, and our actions performed with a view to his honor are pleasing to him. What a joy is this! It is bliss to think that I, who, in my unregenerate state, grieved the Holy Spirit, and vexed him day by day, am now the object of pleasure to him. I, whose actions were contrary to the law of God, and the bent of whose mind was against the gospel of Christ, I, even I, who was once obnoxious to Divine anger, an heir of wrath, even as others, have now, through faith, become to God an object of his complacency. This is very wonderful. If the Holy Spirit leads you to feel the full sweetness of this truth, you will rejoice with joy unspeakable. I feel like singing rather than preaching. Oh, guilty one, wilt thou not now believe thy God? This is the way to come back to him. When the prodigal said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare," he believed in his father's power to supply all his needs. When he thought in his heart that his father would receive him, then he said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." You must have so much belief in God as to believe him to have the heart of a father towards you, or you will never come back to him; but when you begin to trust your God your face is already towards the heavenly home, and before long your head will be in your Father's bosom. If faith can make the vilest and guiltiest pleasing to God, will they not believe in him? What a transformation this would work

in them! Oh, that this morning all of us may stand out in the clear sunlight of Jehovah's good pleasure, and know ourselves to be well-pleasing to him through Jesus Christ!

Learn, next, that those who have faith make it the great object of their life to please God. Am I speaking the truth? Will each one ask whether it is true about himself? Do I, as a believer, live to please God? We need personal heart-searching on this point. The believer in the invisible God delights to act as in his sight, and in secret to serve him. I take a choice pleasure in rendering to my God a service unknown to others, not done for the sake of my fellows, but distinctly that I may do something for my Lord's own self. It is sweet to give or do simply to please him, without respect to the public eye. Even such actions as must come under the gaze of others are not to be done with the view of winning their approbation, but only to please God. The doing of such actions is a singular fountain of strength to a man's mind. It is ennobling to feel that you have only one Master, and that you live to please him, even God. To please men is poor work. To live to follow everybody's whim is slavery. If you let one man pull you by the ear in his direction, another will tug at you from another direction, and you will have very long ears before long. Happy is he who, pleasing God, feels that he has risen above seeking to please men. It is grand to say, "This is what God would have me do, and I will do it in happy fellowship with others, or alone by myself, as the case may be; but do it I must." This gives a man backbone, and at the same time removes the selfishness which is greedy of popular applause. It is a grand thing to be no longer looking down for cheer, but to be distinctly looking up for it. The man who truly believes in God makes small account of men. Put them together, they are vanity; heap them up in their thousands, they are altogether lighter than vanity. Nations upon nations, what are they but as grasshoppers! The lands in which they live, what are they before God! "He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." To please God even a little is infinitely greater than to have the acclamations of all our race throughout the centuries. The true believer feels that God is, and that there is none beside him; none that needs to be thought of in comparison with him. The theology of the present aims at the deification of man, but the truth of all time magnifies God. We shall stand by the old paths, wherein we hear a voice which bids us worship Jehovah, our God, and serve him alone. He shall be all in all. Only as we see men loved of him can we live for men; we

seek their good in God, and for his glory, and regard them as capable of being made mirrors to reflect the glory of the Lord.

Note, next, the apostle teaches us here that they that have faith in God are always coming to God; for he speaks of the believer as “He that cometh to God.” If you once learn to believe God, and to please him, you are coming to him day by day. You not only come to him, and go away from him, as in acts of prayer and praise; but you are always coming; your life is a march towards him. The way of the believer is toward God; by his faith he comes ever nearer and yet nearer to the eternal throne. What is his reward? Why, he that sitteth on the throne will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Come! Come on! You have been coming, keep on coming for ever. There is a gentle, constant, perpetual progress of the believer’s heart and mind nearer and closer to God. I could not wonder at Enoch being translated after walking with God hundreds of years; for it is such a small step from close communion with God on earth to perfect communion with God in heaven. A thin partition divides us which a sigh will remove. The breaking of a blood-vessel, the snapping of a cord, the staying of the breath, and he that had God with him shall be with God. Sometimes he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body, but had to leave that question with God; he will soon be able to answer the question for himself, and know that he is absent from the body, and present with the Lord. O beloved, please God, please God; and as you please him by your simple confidence and childlike trust, you are coming nearer to him.

The next lesson is one I have already spoken of: God will see that those who practice faith in him shall have a reward. I say, God will see to it, for the text says, “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The Lord will not leave the reward of faith to the choicest angel: he himself will adjudge the recompence. Here we may get but scant reward from those whom we benefit: indeed, they usually return us base ingratitude. Joseph was a faithful servant to Potiphar; but Potiphar put him in prison on a groundless charge. Joseph helped the butler, and interpreted his dream, yet he remembered not Joseph, but forgot him. You may not reckon upon due returns from your fellow-men, or you will be disappointed. Like David, you may guard Nabal’s sheep, and when the sheep-shearing comes you may hope to be remembered, and he will insult you with a churlish answer. Expect little from men and much from God, for by nature and by office he is a rewarder. No work done for him will go unrewarded. In his service the

wages are sure. Rise into the Abrahamic life which stays itself upon the Lord's word, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield and. thy exceeding great reward." It is enough reward to have such a God to be our God. What if he gives us neither vineyards nor olive gardens, neither sheep nor oxen; he himself is ours, and this is a greater reward than if he gave us all the world. God himself is enough for the believer. If his faith be true and deep, and intelligent, he cries, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

The last lesson we gather from it is this: those who have no faith are in a fearful case. I speak not of the heathen, but of unbelievers who reject the gospel. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Some of you are always fashioning fresh nets of doubt for your own entanglement. You invent snares for your own feet, and are greedy to lay more and more of them. You are mariners who seek the rocks, soldiers who court the point of the bayonet. It is an unprofitable business. Practically, morally, mentally, spiritually, doubting is an evil trade. You are like a smith, wearing out his arm in making chains with which to bind himself. Doubt is sterile, a desert without water. Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair. Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace. "Believe! "is the word which speaks life into a man but doubt nails down his coffin. If thou canst believe, O guilty one, that Jesus Christ bore the guilt of sin upon the cross, and by his death has made atonement to the insulted government of God; if thou canst so believe in him as to cast thyself just as thou art at his dear feet, thou shalt be pleasing to God. I entreat thee to look up and see the pierced hands, and feet, and side of the dear Redeemer, and read eternal mercy there; read full forgiveness there, and then go thou away in peace, for thou art well-pleasing to God. The sinner who believes God's testimony concerning his Son has begun to please him, and is himself well-pleasing to the Lord. Oh that you would now trust him who justifieth the ungodly and passeth by the iniquities of sinful men! He will receive you graciously and love you freely. Oh, come to him, for he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. God help you to do so at once. But without faith you cannot please him. Do what you may, feel what you like, you will labor as in the very fire, and nothing will come of it but eternal despair. The Lord help you to believe and live. Amen.

LIFE AND PARDON.

NO. 2101

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 25TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”-Colossians 2:13.

THE teaching of this verse is much the same as that in preceding verses; but the apostle does not hesitate to dwell again and again upon the important matters of quickening and forgiveness. These lie in the foundation. Ministers of Christ cannot too often go over the essential points: their hearers cannot too often hear vital truths. Our frail memories and dull understandings require line upon line, precept upon precept, in reference to fundamental truths: our apprehension of them is far too feeble, and can never be too vivid.

To find instances of the work of God in quickening souls and in pardoning sins, Paul does not look far afield. In the text he says, “And you,” and, according to the Revised Version, he repeats the word further on, and the passage runs thus, “You, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he quicken together with him.” He points personally to the saints at Colosse. We are not about to consider a prophecy to be fulfilled in the millennium, neither are we speaking of matters which concern the unknown dwellers in the moon. No; the theme belongs to you; to you, I say, if indeed you be the people of God. You are specimens of the divine work: you hath he quickened, you hath he pardoned. It is profitable for us to be engaged upon matters which concern us. I shall speak to you of those things which I have tasted and handled of the good word of life, and it is my firm belief that, to the most of you, these matters are familiar in your mouths as household words. If not, I

grieve over you. Let none of us be content unless the works of the Holy Spirit are manifest in us. What boots it to me if another man receive life and pardon, if I am cast for death, and lie still under condemnation? Press forward, my beloved, to a personal enjoyment of these chief blessings of the covenant of grace- life in Jesus, forgiveness through his blood. Let every part of the sermon have a finger pointed at yourselves. Hear it speak to you, even to you.

In the text we have the conjunction of two things-quickening and forgiveness. We will consider these things in connection with each other. Their order it may be difficult to lay down: in the text they are described as if they were the same thing. Which comes first, the impartation of the new life, or the blotting out of sin? Is not pardon first? Doth God pardon a dead man? How can he give the life which is the proof of pardon to the man who is not forgiven? On the other hand, if a man has not spiritual life sufficient to make him feel his guilt, how can he cry for pardon? And if it be unsought, how shall it be received? A man may be spiritually alive so as to be groaning under the pollution and the burden of sin, and yet he may not have received by faith the remission of sins, In the order of our experience, the reception of life comes before the enjoyment of pardon. We are made to live spiritually, and so we are made to repent, to confess, to believe, and to receive forgiveness. First, the life which sighs under sin, and then the life which sings concerning pardon. Misery is first felt, and then mercy is received.

Following the line of experience, we shall notice concerning the favored ones of God, first, what they were: "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh." Secondly, we shall note what has been done in them: "Hath he quickened together with him"; and then, thirdly, what he hath done for them: "Having forgiven you all trespasses." May the Holy Ghost lead us into these truths, and give us the life of God and the rest of faith!

I. First, then, consider WHAT THEY WERE. Beloved, they were all by nature children of wrath, even as others. There is no distinction in the condition of natural men before the law. We all fell in Adam. We are all gone out of the way, and have all become unprofitable. Any difference which now exists has been made by divine grace; but by nature we are all in the same condemnation, and all tainted by the same depravity.

Where were we when the Lord first looked on us? Answer.-We were dead according to the sentence of the law. The Lord had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; and Adam did die the moment that he ate of the forbidden fruit, and his posterity died in him. What is death natural? It is the separation of the body from the soul, which is its life. What is death spiritual? It is the separation of the soul from God, who is its life. It had been the very life of Adam to be united to God; and when he lost his union of heart with God, his spirit underwent a dreadful death. This death is upon each one of us by nature. Above this comes in the dreadful fact, that "He that believeth not is condemned already." The position of every unbeliever is that of one who is dead by law. As far as the liberties, and privileges, and enjoyments of heavenly things are concerned, he is written among the dead. His name is registered among the condemned. Yet, beloved, while we are under the sentence of death, the Lord comes to us in almighty grace, and quickens us into newness of life, forgiving us all trespasses. Are you trembling because of your condemned condition under the law? Do you recognize the tremendous truth that death is the sure and righteous result of sin? Then to you, even to you, the life-giving, pardoning word is sent in the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Oh that you may believe, and so escape from condemnation!

These favored people were dead through the action of their sin. Sin stupefies and kills. Where it reigns, the man is utterly insensible to spiritual truth, feeling, and action; he is dead to everything that is holy in the sight of God. He may have keen moral perceptions, but he has no spiritual feelings. Men differ widely as to their moral qualities; all men are not alike bad, especially when measured in reference to their fellow-men; some may even be excellent and praiseworthy, viewed from that standpoint. But to spiritual things all men are alike dead. Look at the multitude of our hearers; to what purpose do we preach to them? You may declare the wrath of God against the godless, but what do they care? You may speak of Jesus' love to the lost; how little it affects them! Sin is not horrible, and salvation is not precious, to them. They may not controvert your teaching; but they have no sensible apprehension of truth: it does not come home to them as a matter of any consequence. Let eternal things drift as they may, they are perfectly content so long as they can answer those three questions-

"What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" No higher question troubles their earth-bound minds. They may entertain some liking towards theological study and Bible-teaching, as a

matter of education; but they do not view the truths revealed in Scripture as matters of overwhelming importance. They trifle; they delay; they set on one side the things which make for their peace. Their religion has no influence upon their thoughts and actions: they are dead. Sin has slain them. I see them mingled with this great congregation like corpses sitting upright among the living. I look out upon the masses of this vast city and upon the innumerable hosts of populous countries, and I see a measureless cemetery, a dread domain of death; a region without life.

One point must be noticed here, which makes this spiritual death the more terrible: they are dead, but yet responsible. If men were literally dead, then they were incapable of sin; but the kind of death of which we speak involves a responsibility none the less, but all the greater. If I say of a man that he is such a liar that he cannot speak the truth, do you therefore think him blameless? No; but you judge him to be all the more worthy of condemnation because he has lost the very sense which discerns between a truth and a lie. If we say of a certain man, as we have had to do, "He is a rogue ingrained; he is so tricky that he cannot deal honestly, but must always be cheating"; do you therefore excuse his fraud, and pity him? Far from it. His inability is not physical, but moral inability, and is the consequence of his own persistence in evil. The law is as much binding upon the morally incapable as upon the most sanctified in nature. If, through a man's own perversity, he wills to reject good and love evil, the blame is with himself. He is said to be dead in sin, not in the sense that he is irresponsible, but in the sense that he is so evil that he will not keep the law of God. If a man were brought to-morrow before the Lord Mayor, and he were accused of theft; suppose he should say, "My lord, I ought to be set free, for I am such a rascal that I cannot see an article in a shop but what my fingers itch to lay hold upon it"; would not the judge give such a worthless person all the more punishment? O sinners, dead in sin, you are not so dead as thereby to be free from the guilt of breaking God's command, and rejecting Christ; but you heap upon yourselves mountains of guilt every day that you abide in this condition.

The ungodly are so dead as to be careless as to their state. Indeed, all gracious things are despised of them. Sometimes they attend religious services; but they get angry if the preacher presses them too hard. I have known them vow that they will never hear the man again because he is so personal. Pray, sirs, what is a preacher to be but personal? If he shoots, is he to have no target, and take no aim? What is our very office and business

for, but to deal personally with you about your sins? In ungodly men there is an utter recklessness as to their condition before God. They know that they may die, they know that if they die they will be lost; but they try to forget these facts. The ostrich is said to bury its head in the sand so as not to see the hunter, and then to fancy that it is safe. Thus do men fancy that, by forgetting the danger, they escape it. Some of you have lived in carelessness until grey hairs are on your head. Will you still risk your souls? Alas, you look more anxiously after a battered sixpence, which you miss from your pocket, than after your immortal soul! If you miss a ring from your finger while sitting here, you are more concerned about it than about your eternal destiny. How foolish! How dead are you to all just judgment and prudence! It is your soul, your own soul, your only soul, your never-dying soul, to which we beg you to pay attention, and yet you can hardly have patience with us. If a prisoner in the condemned cell had no sort of care whether he should be set free or hanged, but could even joke about the scaffold and the executioner, you would feel that only by an extreme act of mercy could such a person be pardoned. Nay, if he cares nothing for the penalty, let him bear it: so man would say, and there would be justice in it. Yet God spake not so in reference to some of us; for while we were in a condition of callousness the grace of God came to us, and by quickening us, gave us to be anxious, and led us to pray.

The text adds that we were dead in the uncircumcision of our flesh. I need not dwell upon the external figure here employed; its meaning is clear enough. The uncircumcision of our flesh means that we were not in covenant with God: it shows also the abiding of our filthiness upon us; the willingness of our souls to be aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without God in the world. This is where we were in the uncircumcision of our flesh; and yet the grace of God found us out. Oh, I could paint the man! He is anxious about this world, but what cares he for the world to come? He is a master of his own trade, and he prospers in it; but for his God, and his service, he spares not an hour's consideration. He cries, "The covenant of grace, what is that?" And he turns on his heel, like Pilate, when he had said, "What is truth?" As to having any sense of the constant presence of God, and his deep indebtedness to God, and of the sweetness of being pardoned, and the bliss of enjoying the love of God, and walking with God, he has no notion, or, at best, he cries, "Oh, yes, that is all very fine for those who have nothing else to do; let them find delight in it if they can!" To him God is nothing, heaven is nothing, hell less than nothing. He

passes by Calvary itself, where God in human flesh is bleeding out redemption, and it is nothing to him. The wail from the cross he never hears, though it asks him this question—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!" What cares he for the wounds of his soul's best lover? He has no concern about any purchase made by the Redeemer, or of any death especially on his behalf, or any resurrection with Christ which he may hope to enjoy. The man is dead to faith, and glory, and immortality. The low and the grovelling charm him, but the pure and the noble find him dead to their claims. Yet to such, even to such, does sovereign grace approach. Unbought, unsought, it cometh according to that word of Scripture, "I am found of them that sought me not."

Again, spiritually the ungodly are dead, and utterly incapable of obtaining life for themselves. Could any of you, with the utmost diligence, create life, even the lowest form of it? To a man who is dead, could you impart life? You might galvanize his limbs into a kind of motion; but real life, the pulsing of the heart, the heaving of the lungs, could you create it? You know you cannot! Much less can the dead man himself create life within himself. The man without Christ is utterly unable to quicken himself. We are "without strength," unable to do anything as of ourselves, and while we are in this condition grace comes to us.

Alas, there remains one more point! Man may be described as dead and becoming corrupt. After a while the dead body shows symptoms of decay: this is vice in its beginning. Leave the corpse where it is, and it will become putrid, polluting the air, and disgusting every sense of the living. "Bury my dead out of my sight," is the cry of the most affectionate mother or wife. And so it is with many ungodly men. Some of them are restrained from the grosser vices, just as Egyptian bodies were, by spices, preserved from rottenness. By example, by instruction, by fear, by surroundings, many are kept from the more putrid sins, and therefore are not so obnoxious to society. Towards God they are dead as ever; but towards man they are no more objectionable than the mummies in yonder cases in the British Museum. But this embalming of the dead with spices of morality, has not been carried out with hosts of those around us. They rot above ground: their blasphemies pollute the air, their lewdness infects our streets, their revelry makes night hideous. The tendency of dead flesh is towards the corruption which shows itself in loathesome actions. The mercy is, that where even this has taken place, where the foul worm of vice has begun its

awful work, in drunkenness, in blasphemy, in dishonesty, or in uncleanness of life—even there the quickening Spirit can come. As life came to Lazarus, who had been dead four days, so can spiritual life come to those who have fallen into the noisomeness of open transgression. Leaving this painful matter, let us be filled with deep humility; for such were we in days not long since: but let us also be filled with hope for others; for he who quickened us can do the same for them.

II. And now, secondly, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN US? What hath God wrought?

We have been quickened. To tell you, exactly, how quickening is worked in us, is quite beyond my power. The Holy Spirit comes to a man when he is dead in sin, and he breathes into him a new and mysterious life. We do not know how we receive our natural life: how the soul comes into the body we know not. Do you suppose that spiritual life in its beginning will be less mysterious? Did not our Lord say, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”? Thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, nor how he breathes eternal life. We know, however, that as soon as life comes, our first feeling is one of pain and uneasiness. In the case of persons who have been nearly drowned, when they begin to revive they experience very unpleasant sensations. Certainly the parallel holds good in spiritual things. Now, the man sees sin to be an exceeding great evil. He is startled by the discovery of its foulness. He was told all about it, and yet he knew nothing to purpose; but now sin becomes a load, a pain, a horror. As dead, he felt no weight; but as quickened, he groans beneath a load. Now he begins to cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” Now the angels see him on his knees in private. Behold, he prayeth! “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is his hourly sigh. Now, also, he begins to struggle against his evil habits: he addicts himself to Bible reading, to praying, and to hearing the Word of God. He is for a while desperately earnest. Alas, he goes back to his old sin! Yet he cannot rest: again he seeks the Lord. With some men a large part of their early spiritual life has been taken up with agonizing strivings and painful endeavors to free themselves from the chains of sin. They have had to learn their weakness by their failures; but the grace of God has not failed. Some, even for years after their conviction by the Spirit of God, have had no comfortable sense of pardon, but very much conflict with sin: yet, still, the life of God has never been utterly quenched within them.

Their struggles have proved that the heavenly germ was alive, and was painfully resisting the forces of evil. Men themselves act as if they tried to put out the light which grace has kindled; but they cannot effect their purpose. When once they have been disturbed in their nest, the Lord has not allowed them to settle down in it again. Their once sweet sin has become bitter as wormwood to them. We have known men under conviction go further into sin to drown their convictions; just as a whale, when harpooned, will dive into the depths. But they come up again, and again are wounded: they cannot escape. In the biography of a man of God, who in his early days was a terrible drunkard, we find that, in struggling against intoxication, he was frequently beaten; and there appears in his diary a long blank of which he says, "Four years and a half elapsed, and no account rendered! What can have been the cause of this chasm? Sin! Yes, sin of the blackest dye, of the deepest ingratitude to the Father of mercies!" The wanderer was restless and unhappy in sin. The life within was, like Jonah, thrown into the depths of the sea; but it hated its condition, and struggled to rise out of it. God will not leave the life he has given, even under the worst conditions.

But quickening leads to far more than this. By-and-by the new life exercises its holy senses, and is more clearly seen to be life. The man begins to see that his only hope is in Christ, and he tries humbly to hide himself beneath the merit of the Lord Jesus. He does not dare to say, "I am saved," but he deeply feels that if ever he is saved it must be through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Now also he begins to pray, pleading the precious blood; now he hopes, and his hope looks only through the windows of his Lord's wounds. He looks for mercy only through the atoning sacrifice. By-and-by he comes to trust that this mercy has really come to him, and that Jesus had him on his heart when he suffered on the tree. By a desperate effort he throws himself on Christ, and determines to lie at his feet, and, if he must perish, to perish looking unto Jesus. This is a glorious resolve. See him after a while as he rises up into peace, and joy, and consecration! His life now being joined to that of his Lord, he rejoices that he is never to be separated from him. I think I hear him say, "I see it all now. The Lord Jesus bore my sin and carried it away. I died because he died. I live because he lives. The Lord accepts me, because he accepts his Son, and thus I am 'accepted in the Beloved.'" "

Henceforth the quickened man tries to live for Christ, out of gratitude; this is the nature of the life he has received. He strives to grow up into Christ,

and to become like his Lord in all things. Henceforth he and his Lord are linked together in an everlasting union, and the cause of Jesus is the one thing for which he lives, and for which he would be content to die. Blessed be God, I am not talking any new things to you: you know what I mean. For these forty years have I felt these things, and many of you have felt them longer still. At first the struggling light within you revealed to you nothing but your darkness; but now you see Jesus, and see yourselves alive in him with a life eternal and heavenly. Blessed be the Lord who hath raised Jesus from the dead, and hath quickened us in him and with him!

III. Now we come to the third point, upon which I pray for a renewed unction from the Holy One. Let us consider, in the last place, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE FOR US: "Having forgiven you all trespasses." Believing in Christ Jesus, I am absolved. I am clear, I am clear before the Lord. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the most joyful theme that I can bring before you. And I want you to notice, first, that pardon is a divine act. "Having forgiven all trespasses." Who does that? Why, he that quickened you. I showed just now that none could quicken a dead man but God only; for the giving of life is an act which is exclusively the Lord's own: and the same God who gives us spiritual life also grants us pardon from his throne. He sovereignly dispenses pardons. We need not go to any human priest to seek absolution, for we may go at once to God who alone hath sovereign right to execute the death-sentence or to pardon the offender. He alone can grant it with sure effect. If any man should say, absolvo te (I absolve thee), I would take it for what it was worth, and its worth would not be much. But if HE saith it, who is the Law-giver, and the supreme King; if HE saith it, against whom I have offended, then am I happy indeed. Glory be to his name, who is a God ready to pardon! What bliss I have received in receiving forgiveness from God! Oh, my hearer, if you have done wrong to your fellow-man, ask his forgiveness, as you are bound to do; and if you get it, be thankful, and feel as if a weight were removed from your conscience. But, after all, what is this compared with being forgiven all trespasses by God himself? This can calm the ruffled sea of the soul; yea, still its fiercest tempest. This can make you sleep at nights, instead of tossing to and fro upon a pillow, which conscience turns to stone beneath your aching head. This gives the gleaming eye, the beaming face, the bounding heart. This brings heaven down to earth, and lifts us near to heaven. The Lord hath

blotted out our sins, and thus he has removed the bitterest fountain of our sorrows. Pardon from God is a charter of liberty, a testament of felicity.

God's pardon is a gift most free. Look at the text, and note that this pardon comes to persons who are dead in sin. They were utterly unworthy, and did not even seek mercy. The Lord who comes to men when they are dead in sin, comes to quicken them and to pardon them; not because they are ready, but because HE is ready. Hearken, O man! If in thy bosom there is at this moment a great stone instead of a heart of flesh; if thou art paralyzed as to all good things; if there is only enough life in thee to make thee feel thy terrible incapacity for holiness and fellowship with God, yet God can pardon thee, even as thou art, and where thou art. We were in that condition, my brethren, when the Lord came to us in love. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We saw that Jesus died, we believed in him as able to save, and we received the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is free. The Lord looks for no good thing in the sinner; but he gives him every good thing. O my hearer, if the Lord looked for good in thee, he could not find it. He looks for nothing thou canst do, and nothing thou canst feel, and nothing thou canst resolve to do or feel; but he shows mercy because he delighteth in mercy. He passes by iniquity, transgression, and sin, because it is his nature to be gracious. The cause of divine pardon is in God himself, and in his dear Son. It is not in thee, O sinner! Being dead in the uncircumcision of thy flesh, what canst thou do? He quickens thee and he pardons thee; yea, he is all in all to thee. Wonders of grace! When I get upon this subject I do not need to give you illustrations, nor to find out choice phrases; the glorious fact stands forth in its own native beauty: infinite pardon from an infinite God, given because of his own mercifulness and the merit of his beloved Son, and not because of anything whatsoever in the man whom he pardons. "But the man repents," says one. Yes, I know; but God gives him repentance. "But he confesses sin." Yes, I know it; for the Lord leads him to acknowledge his trespasses. All and everything which looks like a condition of pardon, is also given by the free and sovereign grace of God, and given freely, without money and without price.

I want you to notice how universal is this pardon in reference to all sin: "Having forgiven you all trespasses." Consult your memory, and think of all your trespasses, if you dare. That one black night! Has it left a crimson spot, indelible, never to be concealed? In many instances one special sin breeds more distress than a thousand others. That crime has left a deeper

scar than any other. In vain you cry, "Out, hideous spot!" Should you wash that hand, it would incarnadine ten thousand Atlantics, and yet it would remain a scarlet spot, never to be erased for ever. No process known to men can wash out the stain. But God's infinite mercy can put away that hideous, unmentionable crime, and it shall be as though it had never been. Possibly, however, you do not so much remember any one transgression as the whole heap of them. Certainly, a multiplicity of minor sins heaped together tower upward like a great Alp, although no one offense may seem so notable as to demand mention. We have sinned every day, and every hour, and almost every moment of every hour: how numberless our transgressions! Our sins of omission are beyond all compute. But all these, too many for you to remember, too many for me to number, are forgiven to the man in Christ: "Having forgiven you all trespasses"—all, not one excepted. Thou hast sins not yet known and confessed—but they are forgiven; for the blood cleanseth from all sin.

I should like to help your memory by reminding you of your sins before conversion. Blessed is he whose sin is covered. One does not wish to uncover it. "Lord, remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." The child of God, who has long been rejoicing in faith, has need still to pray that; for our sins may vex our bones long after they have been removed from our consciences: the consequences of a sin may fret us after the sin itself is forgiven.

Then think of your sins after conviction. You were struck down on a certain day with a great sense of sin, and you hurried home and cried upon your knees, "O God, forgive me!" Then you vowed you would never do the like again; but you did. The dog returned to his vomit. You began to attend a place of worship, you were very diligent in religious duties; but on a sudden you went back to your old companions, and your old ways. If your sin was drink, you thought you had mastered it, and could be very moderate; but a fierce thirst came upon you, which you could not resist, and you were soon as drunken as ever. Remember this with shame. Or it may have been a more deliberate backsliding; and deliberation greatly adds to the sin of sins. Without being particularly tempted, you began to hanker after your old pleasures, and almost to despise yourself for having denied yourself their indulgence. I know a man who was present at a prayer-meeting and was so wrought upon that he prayed; but afterwards he said that he would never go into such a place again, for fear he should again be overcome. Think of being afraid to be led aright: ashamed to go to heaven!

Ah friends, we have been bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, dogs that have slipped their collars, horses that have kicked over the traces. Sins after conviction, as doing despite to divine love, are very grievous trespasses. Like the moth, you had your wings singed in the candle, and yet you flew back to the flame: if you had perished in it, who could have pitied you? Yet, after such folly, the Lord had mercy on you: "Having forgiven you all trespasses."

A still worse set of sins must be remembered, sins after conversion, sins after you have found peace with God, after you have enjoyed high fellowship with Jesus. O brothers and sisters, these are cruel wounds for our Lord! These are evils which should melt us to tears even to hear of them. What! pardoned and then sin again! Beloved of the Lord, and still rebelling! You sang so sweetly,

"Thy will be done; thy will be done;"

and then went home and murmured! You talked to others about evil temper, and yet grew angry. You are old and experienced, and yet no boy could have been more imprudent! O God, we bless thee for the morning and the evening lamb; for thy people need the sacrifice perpetually! We need a morning sacrifice, lest the night have gathered aught of evil; and we require an evening sacrifice for the sins of the day.

Dwell for a while upon the large blessing of the text. Whatever your sins may have been, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has quickened you together with him, and has forgiven you all trespasses. He pardons most effectually. Ask God about your sins, and he says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more!" If God himself does not remember them, they are most effectually removed. Ask Holy Scripture where they are, and Hezekiah tells you, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Where is that? God sees everything and everywhere, and therefore everywhere is before his face; if, therefore, he casts our sins behind his back, he throws our sins into "the nowhere": they cease to exist. "In those days, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." Surely this is enough to set all the bells of your heart a-ringing.

Remember, also, dear friends, that this pardon is most perfect. He does not commute the punishment, but he pardons the crime. He does not pardon and then confine for life, nor pardon to-day and punish to-morrow: this

were not worthy of a God. The pardon is given, and never revoked: the deed of grace is done, and it can never be undone. God will not remember the sin which he has blotted out, nor condemn the offender whom he has absolved. O believer, the Lord so fully absolves thee, that all thy sin, which might have shut thee out of heaven, shall not even hinder thy way thither! All that sin of thine, which might have filled thee with despair, shall not even fill thee with dismay. The Lord shall wipe the tear from thine eyes, as he has washed the sin from thy person. Even the very stain of sin shall be removed. Remember what he says of scarlet and crimson sins. Does he say, "I will wash them so that nothing shall remain beyond a pale red"? Does he say, "I will wash them till nothing shall remain but a slight rosy tint"? No; he says, "They shall be as wool: I will make them white as snow." The Almighty Lord will do his work of remission in an absolutely perfect style, and not a shadow of a spot shall remain.

Here is a point that I must dwell upon for a moment, namely, that this pardon shall be seen to be perfectly consistent with justice. If I were pardoned, and felt that God had weakened the foundations of his moral government by winking at evil, I should feel insecure in my pardoned state, and should have no rest. If the justice of God were in the least infringed by my forgiveness, I should feel like a felon towards the universe, and a robber of God. But I bless God that he pardons sin in strict connection with justice. Behold the costly system by which this was effected. He himself came hither in the person of his dear Son; he himself became man, and dwelt among us; he himself took the load of his people's sin; he bare the sin of many, and was made a curse for us. He put away both sin and the curse by his wondrous sacrifice. The marvel of heaven and earth, of time and eternity, is the atoning death of Jesus Christ. This is the mystery that brings more glory to God than all creation, and all providence. How could it be that he should be slain for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God? To finish transgression, and make an end of sin, was a labor worthy of his Godhead, and Christ has perfectly achieved it by his sufferings and death. You had no fiction before you when, just now, you sang concerning him,

*“Jesus was punish’d in my stead,
 Without the gate my Surety bled
 To expiate my stain:
 On earth the Godhead deign’d to dwell,
 And made of infinite avail
 The sufferings of the man.”*

Now are we justly forgiven; and the throne of God is established. By his death as our Substitute our Lord Jesus has set forth the righteous severity of God as well as his boundless mercy. To us justice and mercy seemed opposed, but in Jesus we see them blended. We bless the Lord for his atoning sacrifice, and feel an infinite satisfaction in the fact that none can dispute the validity of a pardon which comes to us signed by the hand of the eternal King, and counter-signed by the pierced hand of him who bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and gave for those sins a complete vindication of the law which we had broken.

Note well the last consideration upon this point of the forgiveness of all trespasses. It ought to make you feel unutterably happy. Henceforth, your pardon is bound up with the glory of Christ. If your pardon does not save you, then Christ is no Savior. If, resting in him, your sin is not forgiven, then he undertook a fruitless errand when he came to save his people from their sins. Every drop of Christ’s blood demands the eternal salvation of every soul that is washed in it. The Godhead and manhood of Christ, and all the glory of his mediatorship, stand up and claim for every believer that he shall be delivered. from sin. What! did he bear sin, and shall we bear it? Nay: if the Lord hath found in him a ransom, his redeemed are free. Since to save me, who was once dead in sin and in the uncircumcision of my flesh, has become the glory of Christ, I am sure I shall be saved, for he will not tarnish his own name. O believer, to bring you home without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, has become the ambition of your Savior, and he will not fail, or be discouraged. He will neither lose his life-work, nor his death throes. God forbid! And yet this must be, unless you who are quickened together with him, shall be found at the last without fault before the throne of God.

New, let us just think of this: we are forgiven. I do not mean all of you; for if you are out of Christ, you have no part in this grand absolution. May the Lord have mercy upon you, quicken you to-day and bring you to Christ! But as many as are trusting in Christ, and so are living in union with him, you are forgiven. A person who has been condemned by the law, and then

has received a free pardon, walks out of the prison, and goes where he pleases. There is a policeman. Does he fear him? No, he has a free pardon, and the policeman cannot touch him. But there are a great many persons who know him, and know him to be guilty. That does not matter; he has a free pardon, and nobody can touch him. He cannot be tried again, however guilty he may have been; the free pardon has wiped the past right out. Now, to-day, child of God, thou beginnest anew; thou art clean, for he has washed thee, and has done the work right well. We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore shall we be before the throne of God and praise him. What could we do less than praise him day and night? When shall we ever stop? When we are in his temple, free from all danger of future sin and trial, we will for ever praise him who hath forgiven us all trespasses. I charge you, let us meet in heaven, all of us. Some have dropped in here this morning from all parts of the country, and from America, and we may never meet again on earth. Let us meet around the throne in heaven, and sing “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” God grant that we may. Who wants to be left out? Is there one person here who would like to be shut out in that day? I pray you, enter in at once

*“Come guilty sods, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds.”*

“PRICKED IN THEIR HEART.”

NO. 2102

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 1ST, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”-Acts 2:36, 37.

THIS was the first public preaching of the gospel after our Lord was taken up into glory. It was thus a very memorable sermon, a kind of first-fruits of the great harvest of gospel testimony. It is very encouraging to those who are engaged in preaching that the first sermon should have been so successful. Three thousand made up a grand take of fish at that first cast of the net. We are serving a great and growing cause in the way chosen of God, and we hope in the future to see still larger results produced by that same undying and unchanging power which helped Peter to preach such a heart-piercing sermon.

Peter’s discourse was not distinguished by any special rhetorical display: he used not the words of man’s wisdom or eloquence. It was not an oration, but it was a heart-moving argument, entreaty, and exhortation. He gave his hearers a simple, well-reasoned, Scriptural discourse, sustained by the facts of experience; and every passage of it pointed to the Lord Jesus. It was in these respects a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its contents. His plea was personally addressed to the people who stood before him, and it had a practical and pressing relation to them and to their conduct. It was aimed, not at the head, but at the heart. Every word of it was directed to the conscience and the affections. It was plain, practical, personal, and

persuasive; and in this it was a model of what a sermon ought to be as to its aim and style. Yet Peter could not have spoken otherwise under the impression of the divine Spirit: his speech was, as the oracles of God, a true product of a divine inspiration. Under the circumstances, any other kind of address would have been sadly out of place. A flashy, dazzling oration would have been a piece of horrible irreverence to the Holy Ghost; and Peter would have been guilty of the blood of souls if he had attempted it. In sober earnestness he kept to the plain facts of the case, setting them in the light of God's Word; and then with all his might he pressed home the truth upon those for whose salvation he was laboring. May it ever be the preacher's one desire to win men to repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! May no minister wish to be admired, but may he long that his Lord and Master may be sought after! May none bewilder their people with the clouds of theoretic philosophy, but refresh them with the rain of revealed truth? Oh, that we could so preach that our hearers should be at once pricked in their hearts, and so be led at once to believe in our Lord Jesus, and immediately to come forward and confess their faith in his name!

We must not forget, however, to trace the special success of the sermon on the day of Pentecost to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, in which Peter had shared. This it is which is the making of the preacher. Immersed into the Holy Spirit, the preacher will think rightly, and speak wisely; his word will be with power to those who hear. We must not forget, also, that there had been a long season of earnest, united, believing prayer on the part of the whole church. Peter was not alone: he was the voice of a praying company, and the believers had been with one accord in one place crying for a blessing; and thus not only was the Spirit resting upon the preacher, but on all who were with him. What a difference this makes to a preacher of the gospel, when all his comrades are as much anointed of the Spirit as himself! His power is enhanced a hundred-fold. We shall seldom see the very greatest wonders wrought when the preacher stands by himself; but when Peter is described as standing up "with the eleven," then is there a twelve-man ministry concentrated in one; and when the inner circle is further sustained by a company of men and women who have entered into the same truth, and are of one heart and one soul, then is the power increased beyond measure. A lonely ministry may sometimes effect great things, as Jonah did in Nineveh; but if we look for the greatest and most desirable result of all, it must come from one who is not alone, but is the

mouthpiece of many. Peter had the one hundred and twenty registered brethren for a loving bodyguard, and this tended to make him strong for his Lord. How greatly I value the loving co-operation of the friends around me! I have no words to express my gratitude to God for the army of true men and women who surround me with their love, and support me with their faith. I pray you, never cease to sustain me by your prayers, your sympathy, and your co-operation, until some other preacher shall take my place when increasing years shall warn me to stand aside.

Yet much responsibility must rest with the preacher himself; and there was much about Peter's own self that is well worthy of imitation. The sermon was born of the occasion, and it used the event of the hour as God intended it to be used. It was earnest without a trace of passion, and prudent without a suspicion of fear. The preacher himself was self-collected, calm, courteous, and gentle. He aired no theories, but went on firm ground, stepping from fact to fact, from Scripture to Scripture, from plain truth to plain truth. He was patient at the beginning, argumentative all along, and conclusive at the end. He fought his way through the doubts and prejudices of his hearers; and when he came to the end, he stated the inevitable conclusion with clearness and certainty. All along he spake very boldly, without mincing the truth—Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain him whom God has highly exalted. He boldly accused them of the murder of the Lord of glory, doing his duty in the sight of God, and for the good of their souls, with great firmness. and fearlessness. Yet there is great tenderness in his discourse. Impulsive and hot-headed Peter, who, a little while before, had drawn his sword to fight for his Lord, does not, in this instance, use a harsh word; but speaks with great gentleness and meekness of spirit, using words and terms all through the address which indicate a desire to conciliate, and then to convince. Though he was as faithful as an Elijah, yet he used terms so courteous and kindly that, if men took offense, it would not be because of any offensiveness of tone on the speaker's part. Peter was gentle in his manner, but forceful in his. matter. This art he had learned from his Lord; and we shall never have master-preachers among us till we see men who have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. Oh, that we could become partakers of our Lord's spirit, and echoes of his tone! Then may we hope to attain to Pentecostal results, when we have preachers like Peter, surrounded by a band of earnest witnesses, and all baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

When we follow the run of Peter's argument, we do not wonder that his hearers were pricked in their hearts. We ascribe that deep compunction to the Spirit of God; and yet it was a very reasonable thing that it should be so. When it was clearly shown to them that they had really crucified the Messiah, the great hope of their nation, it was not wonderful that they should be smitten with horror. Looking as they were for Israel's King, and finding that he had been among them, and they had despitefully used him, and crucified him, they might well be smitten at the heart. Though for the result of our ministry we depend wholly upon the Spirit of God, yet we must adapt our discourse to the end we aim at; or, say rather, we must leave ourselves in the Spirit's hand as to the sermon itself as well as in reference to the result of the sermon. The Holy Ghost uses means. which are adapted to the end designed. Because, beloved, I do desire beyond all things that many in this congregation may be pricked in the heart, I have taken this concluding part of Peter's discourse to be the text of my sermon this morning. Yet my trust is not in the Word itself, but in the quickening Spirit who works by it. May the Spirit of God use the rapier of his Word to pierce the hearts of my hearers!

First, note that Peter speaks to his hearers upon their evil conduct to the Lord Jesus; and, secondly, he declares to them the exaltation that God had bestowed upon him. When we have dwelt on these two things, we will notice, in the third place, the result of knowing this grand fact- "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I. First, then, Peter dwelt tenderly, but very plainly, upon THEIR EVIL CONDUCT TOWARDS THE LORD JESUS. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." As a nation, Israel had rejected him whom God had sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone further, and had consented unto his death; nay, had even clamoured for it, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him." Solemnly had the Jews exclaimed, "His blood be on us, and on our children." None of them had protested against the murder of the innocent One; but many of them had been eager to make an end of him. This Peter, in plain words, charged upon them, and they could not deny it; nor did they pretend to do so. It is well when a sense of guilt compels a man to stand silent under the rebuke of God. We then have hope of him that he will seek for pardon.

Men and brethren, we are not in Jerusalem, and the death of our Lord happened more than eighteen hundred years ago; therefore we need not dwell upon the sin of those long since dead. It will be more profitable for us practically to consider how far we have been guilty of similar sins against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at home. Let each one consider his own case. I may be addressing some to-day who have blasphemed the name of the Lord Jesus. I do not suppose that you have been guilty of the vulgar language of blasphemy, which is coarse and revolting, as well as profane; but there are politer methods of committing the self-same crime. Some, with their elaborate criticisms of Christianity, wound it far more seriously than atheists with their profanities. In these days, wiseacres, with their philosophy, derogate from the glory of our Lord's nature, and, with their novel doctrines, undermine his gospel. Denying the atonement, or teaching it as something other than a substitutionary sacrifice, they try to make away with that which is the very heart and soul of the Redeemer's work. Men nowadays drink in opinions which lessen the guilt of sin, and, of course, lower the value of the atoning blood. The cross is still a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. Men do not now accept the words of the Bible as authoritative, nor the teaching of the apostles as final; they set themselves up to be teachers of the great Teacher, reformers of the divine gospel. They do not accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus one hail so much as they criticize it. If any here present have been thus guilty, may the Holy Spirit convince them of their sin! Since the Lord God hath made this atoning Jesus both Lord and Christ, and set him on his right hand, any teaching which does despite to him, however learned, however advanced, however cultured it may seem to be, is a grievous sin against the Lord God himself. By such conduct we are, as far as in us lies, again putting the Lord Jesus to death; we are attempting to make away with that which is the very life and glory of Christ. O my hearer, if you have denied his Deity, rejected his atoning blood, ridiculed his imputed righteousness, or scoffed at salvation by faith in him, may you be pricked in the heart as you see that God hath made that same Jesus to be Lord of all!

Much more common, however, is another sin against our Lord Jesus—namely, neglecting him, ignoring his claims, and postponing the day of faith in him. I trust that none here are willing to die unconverted, or would even dare to think of passing away without being washed in the precious blood; yet, my hearers, you have lived to manhood; to ripe years; perhaps even to old age, without yielding your hearts to the Lord Jesus, and accepting him

as your Savior. To say the least of it, this is a very sad piece of neglect. To ignore a man altogether is, in a certain sense, as far as you are concerned, to kill that man. If you put him out of your reckoning, if you treat him as if he were nothing, if your estimate of life is made as if he were a cipher, you have put your Lord out of existence in reference to yourself. You treat him with empty compliment by observing his day, and hearing his Word; but you have no real regard for him. Is not this a cruel fault? From morning till night your Lord is not in all your thoughts; he never affects your dealings with your fellow-men; you never endeavor to catch his spirit of love, and considerateness, and meekness; and thus, as a Leader and Exemplar, he is dead to you. You have never confessed your sin before him, nor sought for pardon at his hands, nor have you looked to see whether he hath borne your sins in his own body on the tree. O soul, this is base neglect—ungrateful contempt! God thinks so much of his Son that he cannot set him too high; he has placed him at his own right hand, and yet you will not spare him a thought! The great God thinks heaven and earth too little for him, and magnifies him exceedingly above all, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and yet you treat him as if he were of no account, and might be safely made to wait your time and leisure. Is this right? Will you treat your Savior thus? May this prick you in the heart, and may you cease from this base ingratitude!

There are others who have done more than this, for they have rejected Christ. I now allude to those of you who have not been able to resist the appeals made to you by the Lord's ministers. You have felt a good deal—felt more than you would like to confess. You have been so inclined to seek the Savior that you have almost done so; sin has flashed in your face like the flames of Tophet, and in alarm you have resolved to seek salvation; you have gone home to bend the knee in prayer, you have read the Scriptures to learn the way of eternal life; but, alas! an evil companion crossed your path, and the question came, "Shall it be this man or Christ?" You chose the man: I had almost said, you chose Barabbas, and rejected Jesus. A sinful pleasure came before you when you had begun to be serious, and the question arose, "Shall I give up this pleasure, or shall I renounce all hope of Christ?" You snatched at the pleasure, and you let your Savior go. Do you not remember when you did violence to your conscience? There was an effort about it, as you stifled conviction. You had to put forth a decided act of the will to quench the Spirit of God, and to escape from the strivings of your awakened conscience. I know not to whom this may apply; but I

am certain, as certain as Peter was when he spoke to the crucifiers of Christ, that I am speaking to some who have been rejecters of the Lord Jesus Christ, not once nor twice. Some of you have distinctly rejected him almost every Sabbath-day; but especially when the Word of the Lord has been with extraordinary power, and you have felt it shake you, as a lion shakes his prey. Thank God, you are not past feeling yet! I pray you, do not presume upon the continuance of your tenderness. You will not always feel as you have felt: the day may come when even the thunders of God may not be heard by your deafened ear, and the love of Christ will not affect the heart which you have made callous by wilful obstinacy. Woe to the man when his heart is turned to stone! When flesh turns to stone, it is a conversion unto eternal death; just as the turning of stone to flesh is conversion to eternal life. God have mercy upon you, and prick you in the heart this morning, while you yet have tenderness enough to feel that you have rejected him whom you ought to embrace with all your heart!

I must come a little closer to certain of you, who have forsaken the Lord Jesus Christ. There are a few unhappy persons here this morning, over whom I greatly grieve, because of their wanderings; and yet I am glad that they have not quite forsaken the courts of the Lord's house. These once professed to be disciples of Christ; but they have gone back, and walk no more with him. They were once numbered with us, and went in and out of our solemn assemblies for prayer and breaking of bread; but now we know them not. They were not backward to confess themselves Christians, but now they deny their Lord. In former days they were zealous, and apparently devout; they were quick in the service of God, and sound in their creed. But there came a day-I need not describe the circumstances, for they differ in different cases-when two roads were before them, and they must go either to the right or to the left; and they took the road by which they turned their back upon Christ, and upon the vitality of godliness. They went off into sin, and apostatized from the faith. We fear "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone aside unto crooked ways, and we fear that the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. O my backsliding hearer, I hope you are not a Judas: my trust is that you may be a Peter! You have denied your Master, but I hope you will yet weep bitterly, and be restored to your Lord's service. For your good I must bring home your wanderings to you; may the Lord prick you in the heart about them! Why have you left your Lord? Wherein has he

wearied you? There may be present persons from the country, or friends from America, who were once glad to be numbered with the children of God, but now they care nothing for God, or his people. Alas! they take part with the adversaries of Christ, and the despisers of his precious blood! Friend, you are here this morning that I may bring your sin to remembrance, and ask you why you have done this thing! Were you a hypocrite? If not, why have you turned aside? God has exalted to his throne the Savior, on whom you have turned your back; have you not acted madly in what you have done? The Most High God is on the side of Jesus, and you are avowedly on the other side; is this right, or wise? It is painful to me to speak of these things. I hope it is far more painful for you to hear of them. I want you to feel as David did, when his heart smote him. What have you been doing? Has the Lord Jesus deserved this at your hands? Turn, I pray you, from your evil way, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

II. After Peter had dwelt upon the sin of his hearers in treating the Lord so ill, he declared to them **THE EXALTATION BESTOWED ON HIM BY GOD.** The great God loved, and honored, and exalted that same Jesus whom they had crucified. O my hearers, whatever you may think of the Lord Jesus, God thinks everything of him! To you he may be dead and buried, but God hath raised him from the dead. To God he is the ever-living, the ever well-beloved Christ. You cannot destroy the Lord. Jesus, or his cause. If you could do all that the most malicious heart could suggest, you could not really defeat him. Men wreaked their vengeance on him once: they put him to a felon's death, they laid him in the grave, and sealed the stone; but he rose again, for God was on his side. My hearer, whatever you do, you cannot shake the truth of the gospel, nor rob the Lord Jesus of a single beam of his glory. He lives and reigns, and he will live and reign, whatever becomes of you. You may refuse his salvation, but he is still a Savior, and a great one. His gospel chariot rolls on, and every stone which is placed to hinder it is crushed into the earth, and compelled to make a road for him. If you resist the Lord, you do it at your peril; but you do it in vain. You might as well hope to reverse the laws of nature, quench the sun, and snatch the moon from her orbit, as hope to overthrow the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus; for God is on his side, and his throne is established for ever, God hath raised his Son from the dead, and taken him up to sit at his right hand, and there he will remain while his enemies shall be made his footstool. By this you may see what evil you have done

through rejecting Christ, and may know who he is whom you have neglected, refused, and forsaken.

Let me remind you that, when we read of our Lord as being at the right hand of God, we perceive that he enjoys infinite felicity. At the right hand of God there are pleasures for evermore; and David said, as the representative of our Lord, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He who was the Man of sorrows now overflows with gladness. All his work and warfare done, he rests in boundless blessedness. His priestly work being finished, he sits down. No more does he feel the cross and nails, no more does he endure the mockery of cruel eyes and ribald lips. He is full of joy, that joy which he bids his people share when he says, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His portion is measureless, infinite, inconceivable delight. Can it be that you are opposed to him, and neglect him, while God lavishes upon him more than all the bliss of heaven, and makes him to be the fountain of unspeakable delight to all his redeemed ones? Grieve that you should grieve him whom God thus loads with blessedness.

Moreover, remember that at the right hand of God our Lord sits in infinite majesty. Jesus, whom you think little of, Jesus, from whom you turn aside, is to-day adored of angels, obeyed by seraphs, worshipped by just men made perfect. He is the highest in the highest heavens. Do you not hear the blast of heaven's trumpets, which proclaims him head over principalities and powers? Do you not hear the song which ascribes to him honor, and glory, and power, and dominion, and might? My faith anticipates the happy day when I shall stand a courtier in his unrivalled, courts, and behold him, the Lamb upon the throne, reigning high over all, with every knee in heaven and in earth gladly bowing before him. Can it be that you have neglected him whom God hath exalted? Can it be that you have refused him, that you have done despite to him, that you have, as far as you could, put him to death whom Jehovah has made Lord of all?

Nor is this all: for the place at the right hand of God, to which he is now exalted, is the place of power. There sits the Mediator, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, while his enemies are being subdued under him. Do not believe it, O proudest of doubters, that thou canst take away from Christ any measure of his power! He overrules all mortal things; he directs the movements of the stars; he rules the armies of heaven. He restrains the rage of his adversaries, and what he suffers to be let loose he turns to his glory.

All power is given to him in heaven and earth; he reigns in the three realms of nature, providence, and grace. His kingdom ruleth over all, and of his dominion there shall be no end. O sirs, what do our hearts suggest but that we bow at his feet? that we worship him with loving reverence? that we yield to that supreme power which is used for purposes of love? Yet it is this Christ, this mighty Christ, who is set at nought by some of you, so that you run the risk of perishing because you have no heart for him and his great salvation.

Learn, next, that he is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, seated as our Judge. If we refuse him as a Savior, we shall not be able to escape from him as Judge in the last great day. All the acts of men are being recorded, and in that day, when the great white throne shall be set in the heavens, all things shall be made manifest, and we must stand unveiled in his presence. You have often heard and sung of him whose face was more marred than that of any man, when he was here as a sacrifice for guilty men. If you refuse him, you will have to stand before his bar to answer for it. The most awful sight for the impenitent in the day of judgment will be the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not find that they cry, "Hide us from the tempest," nor "Hide us from the angel-guards," nor "Hide us from their swords of fire," but, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Love, when once it turns to wrath, is terrible beyond compare. As oil when set on fire blazes with great force, so the meek and loving Jesus, when finally rejected, will exhibit a wrath more terrible than death.

*"Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."*

Perhaps through ignorance you have rebelled; repent, and take another course. You supposed that when you kicked against a sermon, you had only put down the minister's words; but in reality you resisted the Savior's love. You thought that when you turned away from Christ and his people, it was only leaving a church, and having your name crossed out of a book. Ah, sirs! take heed, for I fear you have left the Lamb of God, and renounced your part in his Book of Life! At the last it may turn out to have been an awful thing to have been put forth from the Church of Christ on earth; for when we, as a church, do our Lord's bidding, that which we bind on earth is bound in heaven. In refusing the Lord's Word, you refuse him

who speaks from heaven: you refuse not only his words, but himself, and he shall be your Judge-your Judge most just, most holy. Oh, how will you bear it? How will you bear to stand at the bar of the despised Savior?

Peter also showed his hearers that the Lord was greatly exalted in heaven as the Head over all things to his church, for he had that day shed abroad the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes from Christ, and as the witness of his power. He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and he bears witness with both. Christ's power was marvelously proved when, after he had been but a little while in heaven, he was able to bestow such gifts upon men, and specially to send the tongues of fire, and the rushing mighty wind, which betoken the energy of the Holy Ghost. He is such a Lord that he can save or destroy. The Christ that died upon the cross hath all things committed into his hands. He can this morning send forth salvation to the ends of the earth, so that multitudes shall believe and live; for him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Or, he can turn the key the other way, and shut the door against this untoward generation; for he openeth, and no man shutteth; and he shutteth, and no man openeth. In any case, be ye sure of this, ye Gentiles, even as Peter would have the house of Israel be sure of it, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

I notice that, at this time, few writers or preachers use the expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have lives of Christ, and lives of Jesus; but, brethren, he IS THE LORD. Jesus is both Lord and Christ: we need to acknowledge his Deity, his dominion, and his divine anointing. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and we can never praise him too much. A great and grievous error of the times is a want of reverence for our Lord and his sacrifice. To sit in judgment on his sacred teaching, is to spit in his face; to deny his miracles, is to strip him of his own clothes; to make him out to be a mere teacher of ethics, is to mock him with a purple robe; and to deny his atonement, in philosophical phraseology, is to crown him with thorns, and crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Be not guilty of this, my hearers, for God hath made this same Jesus "both Lord and Christ"; let us worship him as Lord, and trust him as Christ.

III. Now I come to my closing point, which is, THE RESULT OF KNOWING THIS ASSUREDLY. May I here pause to ask-do you know this assuredly? I hope all of you believe that God hath made Jesus Christ, the Mediator, in

his complex person, as God-and-man, to be “both Lord and Christ.” He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ. Manhood and Godhead are in him united in one wondrous Person, and this Person is “both Lord and Christ.” You believe it. But do you so believe it that it is a fact of the utmost importance to you? Will you assuredly believe it, that the man of Nazareth, who died on Calvary, is to-day both Lord and Christ? If you do now believe this, what are your feelings as you review your past misconduct towards him? Does not your past neglect prick you in the heart? If you do not so believe, it is of little use for me to describe what the result of such belief would be, for that result will not take place in you; but if you have so believed, and Jesus is to you Lord and Christ, you will look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn for him. As you recollect your negligence of him, your rejection of him, your backsliding from him, and all your ungrateful acts which show contempt of him, your heart will be ready to break, and you will be seized with a great sorrow, and a hearty repentance. The Lord work it in you, for his Son’s sake!

Observe, that as the result of Peter’s sermon, his hearers felt a mortal sting: “They were pricked in their heart.” The truth had pierced their souls. When a man finds out that he has done a fearful wrong to one who loved him, he grows sick at heart, and views his own conduct with abhorrence. We all remember the story of Llewellyn and his faithful dog. The prince came back from the hunt, and missed his infant child, but saw marks of blood everywhere. Suspecting his dog Gelert of having killed the child, he drove his vengeful sword into the faithful hound, which had been bravely defending his child against a huge wolf, which lay there, all torn and dead, “tremendous still in death.” Yes, he had slain the faithful creature which had preserved his child. Poor Gelert’s dying yell pierced the prince to the heart; and well it might. If such emotions fitly arise when we discover that we have, in error, been ungenerous and cruel to a dog, how ought we to feel towards the Lord Jesus, who laid down his life that we, who were his enemies, might live?

I recall an awfully tragic story of an evil couple, who kept an inn of base repute. A young man called one night to lodge. They noticed that he had gold in his purse, and they murdered him in the night. It was their own son, who had come back to gladden their old age, and wished to see whether his parents would remember him. Oh, the bitterness of their lamentation

when they found that through the lust of gold they had murdered their own son!

Take out of such amazing grief its better portion, and then add to it a spiritual conviction of the sin of evil-entreating the Son of God, the perfect One, the Lover of our souls, and you come near the meaning of being “pricked in the heart.” Oh, to think that we should despise him who loved us, and gave himself for us, and should rebel against him that bought us with his own blood while we were his enemies! I would to God everyone here, that has not come to Christ, would feel a sting in his conscience now; and would mourn that he has done this exceeding evil thing against the ever-blessed Son of God, who became man, and died for love of guilty men.

When we read “they were pricked in their heart,” we may see in it the meaning, that they felt a movement of love to him—a relenting of heart, a stirring of emotion towards him. They said to themselves, “Have we treated him thus? What can we do to show our horror of our own conduct?” They were not merely convinced of their fault so as to be grieved, but their desires and affections went out towards the offended One, and they cried, “What shall we do? In what way can we acknowledge our wrong? Is there any way of undoing this ill towards him whom we now love?” To this point I would have you all come. I would have you know the meaning of Newton’s hymn:-

*“I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix’d his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.*

*Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem’d to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.*

*My conscience felt and own’d the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help’d to nail him there.*

*Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain."*

Let us tearfully enquire how we can end our opposition, and prove ourselves to be his friends and humble servants.

As a consequence of Peter's sermon, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, these people exhibited obedient faith. They were roused to action, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They believed that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was now Lord of all, and they hastened to be obedient unto him. When Peter said, "Repent!" they did indeed repent. If repentance be grief, they grieved at their hearts. If repentance be a change of mind and life, they were indeed altered men. Then Peter said, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Take the open and decisive step: stand forth as believers in Jesus, and confess him by that outward and visible sign which he has ordained. Be buried with him in whom your sin is buried. You slew him in error; be buried with him in truth. They did it gladly, they repented of the sin; they were baptized into the sacred name. And then Peter could tell them—"You have remission of sins: the wrong you have done to your Lord is cancelled: the Lord hath put away your sin for ever. Remission of sins comes to you through Jesus, whom you slew, whom the Father has raised up. You shall not be summoned before the bar of God to account even for the hideous crime of murdering the Lord, for by his death you are forgiven. In proof of forgiveness you shall now be made partakers of the great gift which marks his ascending power. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, even upon you his murderers, and you shall go forth, and be witnesses for him."

O my hearers, to what a place have I brought you now! If indeed the Holy Spirit has helped you to follow me in my discourse, see where we have climbed! However black your crime, however vile your character, if you have seen the wrong that you have done, if you have repented of having done it because you see that you have sinned against your loving Lord, and if you will now come to him repenting and believing, and will confess him as he bids you confess him in baptism; then you have full remission, and you shall be partakers of the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, and henceforth you shall be chosen witnesses for the Christ whom God hath raised from the dead. Beloved, you need no choice speech from me: pure

gold needs no gilding, and as I have told you the most wonderful of all facts in heaven or in earth, I let it remain in all its simple grandeur.

May God write out this old, old story on your hearts! Oh, that he would issue a new edition of his gospel of love, printed on your hearts! Every man's conversion is a freshly-printed copy of the poem of salvation. May the Lord issue you hot from the press this morning, a living epistle to be known and read of all men; and specially to be read by your children at home, and your neighbors in the same street! The Lord grant that hearts may be pricked by this sermon, for his name's sake! Amen.

THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED.

NO. 2103

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.”-Matthew 5:6.*

BECAUSE man had perfect righteousness before the fall, he enjoyed perfect blessedness. If you and I shall, by divine grace, attain to blessedness hereafter, it will be because God has restored us to righteousness. As it was in the first paradise, so must it be in the second-righteousness is essential to the blessedness of man. We cannot be truly happy and live in sin. Holiness is the natural element of blessedness; and it can no more live out of that element than a fish could live in the fire. The happiness of man must come through his righteousness: his being right with God, with man, with himself-indeed, his being right all round. Since, then, the first blessedness of our unfallen state is gone, and the blessedness of perfection hereafter is not yet come, how can we be blessed in the interval which lies between? The answer is, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Though they have not yet attained the righteousness they desire, yet even the longing for it makes them a blessed people. The massive blessedness of the past, and the priceless blessedness of the eternal future, are joined together by a band of present blessedness. The band is not so massive as those two things which it unites; but it is of the same metal, has been fashioned by the same hand, and is as indestructible as the treasures which it binds together.

Of this hunger and thirst I am going to speak this morning. I feel so unfit for the effort that I must correct myself, and say that I hunger and thirst to preach to you, but that is all the power I have, Oh, that I, too, may be filled for your sakes! May the Spirit of the Lord fulfill my intense desire to minister to you from this beatitude of our Lord Jesus, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

First, then, in our text we have mention of singular appetites- "hunger and thirst," not for bread and water, but, "after righteousness"; secondly, we have a remarkable declaration about these hungering people-Jesus says that they are "blessed," or happy; and beyond a doubt his judgment is true. Thirdly, in our text is mentioned a special satisfaction meeting their necessity, and in its foresight making them blessed: our Savior says, "they shall be filled."

I. To begin, then, we shall speak of SINGULAR APPETITES.

In this case, one insatiable desire takes different forms. They hunger and they thirst: the two most urgent needs of the body are used to set forth the cravings of the soul for righteousness. Hunger and thirst are different, but they are both the language of keen desire. He that has ever felt either of these two knows how sharp are the pangs they bring; and if the two are combined in one craving, they make up a restless, terrible, unconquerable passion. Who shall resist a man hungering and thirsting? His whole being fights to satisfy his awful needs. Blessed are they that have a longing for righteousness, which no one word can fully describe, and no one craving can set forth. Hunger must be joined with thirst, to set forth the strength and eagerness of the desire after righteousness.

This desire is like hunger and thirst in constancy; not that it is always equally raging, for the hungry man is not always equally in pain; but, still, he can never quite forget the gnawing within, the burning at the heart. Blessed is the man who is always desiring righteousness with an insatiable longing that nothing can turn aside. Hunger and thirst are irrepressible. Until you feed the man, his wants will continue to devour him. You may give a hungry man the best music that was ever drawn from strings, or breathed from pipes; but his cravings are not soothed: you do but mock him. You may set before him the fairest prospect; but unless in that prospect there stand conspicuous a loaf of bread and a cup of water, he has no heart for flood or field, mountain or forest. They are blessed, says Christ, who, with regard to righteousness, are always seeking it, and

cannot be satisfied until they find it. The desire toward righteousness, which a man must have in order to be blessed, is not a faint one, in which he feebly says, "I wish I could be righteous"; neither is it a passing outburst of good desires; but it is a longing which, like hunger and thirst, abides with a man, and masters him. He carries it to his work, carries it to his house, carries it to his bed, carries it wherever he himself goes, for it rules him with its imperative demands. As the horse-leech crieth, "Give, give," so doth the heart cry after purity, integrity, and holiness when once it has learned to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

These appetites are concentrated upon one object: the man hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and nothing else. Theological works mostly say either that this is imputed righteousness, or implanted righteousness. No doubt these things are meant, but I do not care to insert an adjective where there is none: the text does not say either "imputed" or "implanted"-why need we mend it? It is righteousness which the man pants after: righteousness in all its meanings. First, he feels that he is not right with God, and the discovery causes him great distress. The Spirit of God shows him that he is all wrong with God, for he has broken the law which he ought to have kept, and he has not paid the homage and love which were justly due. The same Spirit makes him long to get right with God; and, his conscience being aroused, he cannot rest till this is done. This, of course, includes the pardon of his offenses, and the giving to him of a righteousness which will make him acceptable to God: he eagerly cries to God for this boon. One of the bitterest pangs of his soulhunger is the dread that this need can never be met. How can man be just with God? It is the peculiar glory of the gospel that it reveals the righteousness of God-the method by which sinners can be put right with God; and this comes with peculiar sweetness to one who is striving and praying, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. When he hears of righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he leaps at it, and lays hold upon it, for it exactly meets his case.

The hunger now takes another form. The pardoned and justified man now desires to be right in his conduct, and language, and thought: he pines to be righteous in his whole life. He would be marked by integrity, kindness, mercifulness, love, and everything else which goes to make up a right condition of things towards his fellow-creatures. He ardently desires to be correct in his feelings and conduct towards God: he craves rightly to know, obey, pray, praise, and love his God. He cannot rest till he stands towards

God and man as he ought to stand. His longing is not only to be treated as righteous by God, which comes through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; but that he may be actually righteous before the heart-searching God. Nor will this suffice him: not only must his conduct be right, but he pants to be himself right. He finds within himself irregular desires, and he would have these utterly destroyed. He finds tendencies towards unrighteousness; and although he resists these, and overcomes them, yet the tendencies themselves are abhorrent to him. He finds longings after pleasures that are forbidden; and though he rejects those pleasures with loathing, his trouble is that he should have any inclination towards them. He wants to be so renewed that sin shall have no power over him. He has learned that a lustful look is adultery, that a covetous desire is theft, and that wrongful anger is murder; and therefore he craves not only to be free from the look, and the desire, and the passion, but even from the tendency in that direction. He longs to have the fountain of his being cleansed. He hungers to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” He thirsts to be “renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” He cannot be content till he is himself like Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God, the mirror of righteousness and peace. But, mark you, if the man should even attain to this, his hunger and thirst would only take another direction. The godly man hungers and thirsts to see righteousness in others. At times, when he sees the conduct of those around him, he cries, “My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire.” The more holy he becomes, the more sin vexes his righteous soul, and he cries, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” He often wishes that he had “wings like a dove,” that he might “fly away, and be at rest.” Like Cowper, he cries-

*“Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more!”*

He hungers for godly company: he thirsts to see the unholy made holy; and therefore he cries in his daily prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” With hunger and thirst he cries, “Lord, end the reign of sin! Lord, cast down idols! Lord, chase error from the earth! Lord, turn men from lust, and avarice, and cruelty, and drunkenness.” He would

live for righteousness, and die for righteousness; the zeal of it consumes him.

Brethren, I hope you have been able to follow, by your own knowledge, the various movements of this absorbing passion for righteousness, which I have thus feebly sketched for you.

Note well that these concentrated appetites are very discriminating. The man does not long for twenty things, but only for one thing, and for that one thing by itself. The hunger and the thirst are “after righteousness.” The man does not hunger for wealth: he would rather be poor and be righteous, than be rich through evil. He does not hunger after health: though he would wish to have that great blessing, yet he would rather be sick and have righteousness, than enjoy good health and be unrighteous. He does not even set before himself, as his great object, the rewards of righteousness. These are very desirable: the respect of one’s fellows, peace of mind, and communion with God, are by no means little things; but he does not make these the chief objects of his desire, for he knows that they will be added to him if in the first place he seeks after righteousness itself. If there were no heaven, the godly man would wish to be righteous; if there were no hell, he would dread unrighteousness. His hunger and thirst are after honesty, purity, rectitude, and holiness: he hungers and he thirsts to be what God would have him to be. Always distinguish between seeking heaven and seeking God, between shunning hell and shunning sin; for any hypocrite will desire heaven, and dread hell; but only the sincere hunger after righteousness. The thief would shun the prison, but he would like to be once more at his theft; the murderer would escape the gallows, but he would readily enough have his hand on his dagger again. The desire to be happy, the wish to be at ease in conscience: these are poor things. The true and noble hunger of the soul is the desire to be right for righteousness’ sake. Oh, to be holy, whether that should mean joy or sorrow Oh, to be pure in heart, whether that would bring me honor or contempt! This-this ‘is the blessed thirst.

Now, where there is this hunger and thirst, these will work in their own way. Hunger and thirst are not the bed-makers of the house of manhood. No, they ring the alarm-bells, and even shake the foundations of the house. The starving man cannot bear himself. Ultimately, his terrible needs may reduce him to a passive condition by the way of faintness and insensibility; but while sense remains in the man, hunger and thirst are fierce forces,

which nerve him to the most intense endeavors. When a prisoner was set at the prison-gate to plead for the poor debtors, in the old time, he did plead. Himself reduced to a skeleton, he rattled the box in the ears of persons passing by, and cried most piteously that they would give something to the poor debtors who were starving inside. How a hungry man looks at you! His very look is a piercing prayer. A man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, pleads with God with his whole soul. There is no sham prayer about him. The man that is hungry and thirsty after righteousness is the wrestling man. This makes him also the active man; for hunger will break through stone walls; he will do anything for food. The worst of it is, that he often attempts foolish things: he tries to stay his hunger with that which is not bread, and spends his labor upon that which satisfieth not. Still, this only proves how energetic are these appetites, and how they call out every power of manhood when they are set upon righteousness.

Beloved, these are by no means common. Multitudes of people in the world never hunger and thirst after righteousness. Some of you would like to be saved; but you can do very well if you are not. A man that is hungry and thirsty will never say, "I should like a meal, but I can do very well without it"; and you do not hunger and thirst, if you can rest without the blessing you profess to value. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you want it at once: these cravings will not brook delay: they clamor for immediate supplies. The hungry man's tense is the present. Oh, how many there are who, by their delay, and by their carelessness, prove that they never hunger and thirst after righteousness! I see also others who are righteous already. They are as good as they want to be. Hear the man talk—"I do not make any profession of religion, but I am a deal better than many that do." Oh, yes, I know you, sir; and the Virgin Mary knew you, for she said in her song, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." You will one day be emptied, but you will never be filled. Why should you be? You are so blown up with wind that there is no room for the heavenly substance within your heart.

Many refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the bread of heaven. No man can be said to be hungry if he refuses wholesome food. When your child sits down to table, and says that he does not want any dinner, he is evidently not hungry. 'They that put Christ away, and will not have his atonement, and his sanctification, are not hungry after righteousness. Many criticize the little things of the gospel, the insignificant matters about the minister's voice, and tone, and appearance. When a man sits down to

dinner, and begins to notice that one of the dishes is chipped, and one of the roses in the center has an insect on it, and the salt-cellar is not in the right position to half an inch, and the parsley is not nicely arranged around the cold meat, that fellow is not hungry. Try a poor dockyard laborer, or, better still, his wife and children, and they will eat meat without mustard, and bread without butter. The hungry man will eat fat as well as lean, I warrant. Preaching would not so often be submitted to silly remarks if men were really hungry after the truth. "Give me a knife, and a chance," says the man who is hungry. "Give me the gospel," says the anxious enquirer, "and I care nothing for the eloquence." Beloved, I wish you may so hunger and thirst after righteousness, that trifles may be trifles to you, and the essential truth be your only care.

Alas! there are some that we are sure do not hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they do not care even to hear about it. When your boy stays out in the road at dinner-time, you may be sure that he is not very hungry. The dinner-bell is a very prevailing reasoner when it finds its arguments within the listener. As soon as there is notification that food is to be had, the hungry man hastens to the table. I would to God we had more spiritually hungry people to preach to. He would be a blessed preacher who preached to them, for he would be preaching to a blessed people. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

II. I have very feebly given you the description of the character, and now I come to notice the REMARKABLE DECLARATION of our Lord. He says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.

This is a paradox. It does not seem possible that people should be hungry and thirsty, and yet blessed. Hunger and thirst bring pain. I know you, my friend, you are here this morning; and you are saying within yourself, "Oh, that I could be right! I am a great sinner; oh, that I were forgiven! Oh, that I could become righteous before God!" Another is saying, "I trust I am forgiven and saved; but I feel a dreadful fear lest I should fall into sin. O wretched man that I am, to have sinful tendencies! Oh, that I could be perfect, and altogether delivered from this embodied death which surrounds me in the form of a sinful nature!" Or, perhaps, another friend sitting here is crying, "God has been very gracious to me; but my children, my husband, my brother are living in sin, and these are my daily burden. I have come here with a very heavy heart because they know not the Lord."

Hearken, dear friend, and be encouraged; whatever form your hunger after righteousness may take, you are a blessed person. Albeit that you endure that pain about yourself and others, you are blessed. Hunger and thirst often cause a sinking feeling, and that sinking feeling sometimes turns to a deadly faintness. It may be I am speaking to one who has reached that stage; to him I say, "You are blessed." I hear you sighing, "Oh, that I could be what I want to be! 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' These inward. corruptions, these evil imaginations, they will kill me, I cannot bear them. God has taught me to love what is good, and now 'to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not.' Even my prayers are interrupted by wandering thoughts, and my tears of repentance have sin mixed with them." Beloved, I understand that faintness and sinking, that groaning and pining; but, nevertheless, you are blessed, for the text says, and it is a very remarkable saying, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Why are they blessed? Well, first, because Jesus says they are; and if he says it, we do not need any further proof. If, looking round on the crowd, our Lord passes by those who are self-satisfied; and if his eyes light on the men that sigh, and cry, and hunger, and thirst after righteousness, and if, with smiling face, he says, "These are the blessed ones," then depend upon it they are so; for I wot that those whom he declares to be blessed must be blessed indeed. I would rather be one whom Christ counted blessed than one who was so esteemed by all the world, for the Lord Jesus knows better than men do.

The man hungering after righteousness ought to consider himself a happy man, because he has been made to know the right value of thin gs. Before, he set a high value upon worthless pleasure, and he reckoned the dross of the praise of men to be as pure gold; but now, he values righteousness, and is not as the child who prizes glass beads more than pearls. He has already obtained some measure of righteousness, for his judgment reckons rightly. He ought to be thankful for being so far enlightened. Once he put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness; but now the Lord has brought him to know what is good, and what it is that the Lord doth require of him: in gaining this right judgment he is a blessed man, and on the way to still greater blessedness.

Observe, further, that not only does he estimate things correctly, but he has a heart towards that which is good and desirable. Once he only cared for earthly comforts; now he hungers and thirsts after righteousness. "Give me a bit of meat in the pot," cries the worldling, "and I will leave your precious righteousness to those who want it"; but this man prizes the spiritual above the natural: righteousness is happiness to him. His one cry is, "Give me righteousness." His whole heart is set on it, and this is no mean privilege. He that is filled with the desire of that which God approves, is himself approved. To such a man is given a magnanimity which is of more than royal nature, and for it he should be grateful to God.

He is blessed because, in the presence of this hunger, many meaner hungers die out. One master-passion, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the rest. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and, therefore, he has done with the craving of lust, the greed of avarice, the passion of hate, the pining of ambition. We have known sickly men to be overtaken by a disease which has driven out their old complaints: a fresh fire has put out the former ones. So men, under the influence of a craving for righteousness, have found land-hunger, and gold-hunger, and pride-thirst, and lust-thirst come to an end. The new affections have expelled the old; even as the Israelites drove the Canaanites into the mountains, or slew them. God alone can give this hungering and thirsting after righteousness; and it is one of its grand qualities that it drives out the grovelling and sinful lustings which else would consume our hearts.

These men are blessed by being delivered from many foolish delusions. The delusion is most common, that man can get everything that he needs in religion out of himself. Most men are deluded in this way- they think they have a springing well of power within, from which they can cleanse, and revive, and satisfy themselves. Try a hungry man, or a thirsty man with this doctrine, "My dear fellow, you need not be hungry-you can satisfy yourself from yourself." What is his answer? "I have tied a hunger-belt around myself to keep down the hunger; but even that I did not find within myself. I am hungry, and must have food from outside, or I shall die." He cannot eat his own heart, nor feed upon his own liver: it is not possible for him to satisfy his hunger from himself. The common spiritual delusion of men is of like kind. They imagine that they can, by an effort of their own, satisfy conscience, make themselves pure, and produce righteousness of character. Still do they dream of bringing a clean thing out of an unclean. Let spiritual hunger and thirst come upon them, and they escape from this snare. The

man cries, "Self-trust is a refuge of lies, I must be helped from above. I must be saved by grace, or I shall remain unrighteous to the end." Spiritual hunger and thirst are wonderful teachers of the doctrines of grace, and very speedy dispellers of the illusions of pride.

Once again: these men are blessed because they are already worked upon by the Holy Ghost. Hunger and thirst after righteousness are always the production of the Holy Spirit. It is not natural to man to love the good and the holy; he loves that which is wrong and evil; he loves the trespass or the omission, but strict rectitude before God he does not seek after. But when a man is hungry to be true, hungry to be sober, hungry to be pure, hungry to be holy-his hunger is a boon from heaven, and a pledge of the heaven from which it came.

Once more: this man is blessed, for in his hunger and thirst he is in accord with the Lord Jesus Christ. When our Lord was here, he hungered after righteousness, longing to do and suffer his Father's will. His disciples, on one occasion, went away to the city to buy meat; and he, being left alone, thirsted to bless the poor sinful woman of Samaria, who came to the well to draw water. To her he said, "Give me to drink," not only to commence the conversation, but because he thirsted to make that woman righteous. He thirsted to convince her of her sin, and lead her to saving faith; and when he had done so, his desire was gratified. When his disciples came back, though he had not touched a morsel of bread, or a drop of water, he said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Our Lord, on the cross, said, "I thirst," and that thirst of his lip and of his mouth was but the index of the deeper thirst of his heart and soul that righteousness might reign by his death. He died that the righteousness of God might be vindicated; he lives that the righteousness of God may be proclaimed; he pleads that the righteousness of God may be brought home to sinners; he reigns that this righteousness may chase out of this world the iniquity which now destroys it. When you hunger and thirst after righteousness in any one of the shapes I have described, you are in a measure partakers with Christ, and have fellowship with him in his heart's desire. As he is blessed, so are you, for "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

I think I must have astonished some who have been mourning and crying, "Oh, that the Lord would give me to live upon his righteousness, and I would thank him for ever and ever!" Why, you are one of the blessed.

“Alas!” cries one, “I am pining to be delivered from sin-I do not mean from the punishment of it, sir, but from the taint of it; I want to be perfectly pure and holy.” Do you? My dear friend, you are numbered among the blessed at this very moment. A great professor at your side in the pew is saying, “Blessed be God, I am perfect already” Well, I am not sure about that party’s blessedness. That fine bird is not mentioned in my text; but I am sure about yonder soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for the Word is clear and plain- “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

III. And now I close with the best of all, SPECIAL SATISFACTION. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” This is a singular statement. They are to be blessed while they hunger and thirst; if they become filled, will they still be blessed? Yes, and what is more, they will still hunger and thirst. You say that is strange. Yes, it is; but everything is wonderful in the kingdom of God. Paradoxes, in spiritual things, are as plentiful as blackberries; in fact, if you cannot believe a paradox, you cannot believe in Christ himself, for he is God and man in one person, and that is a paradoxical mystery. How can one person be infinite, and yet finite? How can he be immortal, and yet die? Ours is a gospel wherein lieth many an orthodox paradox. He that is filled by Christ hungers more than he did before, only the hunger is of another kind, and has no bitterness in it. He that hungers most is the man who is full in the highest sense.

*“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.”*

Lord, when I get what thou givest me of thy grace, then I feel a new craving, which seeketh after higher things! My soul enlarges by what it feeds upon, and then it cries, “Give me still more.” When a man leaves off crying for more, he may doubt whether he has ever received anything at all. Grace fills, and then enlarges. Increase of grace is increase of capacity for grace. Cry still, “Lord, increase my faith, my love, my hope, my every grace! Enlarge my soul, that I may take in more and more of thee!”

Now I am going to show you how it is that we can be filled even now, although still hungry and thirsty. For first, although we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are more than filled with the righteousness of God.

I do believe my God to be perfectly righteous, not only in his nature and essence, in his law and judgment, but also in all his decrees, acts, words, and teachings. I sit me down, and anxiously peer into the dreadful truth of the eternal perdition of the wicked; but my heart is full of rest when I remember that God is righteous: the Judge of all the earth must do right. I cannot untie the knots of difficulty over which some men stand perplexed, but I know that God is righteous, and there I leave my bewilderments. God will see to it that the right thing is done in every case, and for evermore. Moreover, as I see how iniquity abounds in the world, I am right glad that there is no iniquity in the Lord, my God. As I see error in the church, I rest in the fact that no error finds countenance with him. Wrongdoing seems to be everywhere: certain men would rend away every man's property from him, and the opposite order would grind down the poor in their wages; but this is our sheet-anchor—there is a power which makes for righteousness, and that power is God. I am filled with joy as I see righteousness enthroned in God. Do you not know this gladness? Next, we are also filled with the righteousness of Christ. What if I be sinful, what if I have no righteousness that I dare bring before God; yet—

*“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”*

True, I have to cry with the leper, “Unclean, unclean”; and yet, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, I am justified in him, accepted in him, and in him complete. God looks on me, not as I am, but as Christ is. He sees me through the perfect obedience of the Well-beloved, and I stand before him without condemnation, nay, with full acceptance and favor. The more you think of the righteousness of Christ, the more it will fill you with grateful satisfaction, for his righteousness is far greater than your unrighteousness. Yet you will be crying all the same, “O Lord, perfect me in thine image, and give me righteousness!” A fullness of divine content, even to running over, will be yours, while you sing, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You will be satisfied, first, with the righteous character of God, and next, with the plan of divine righteousness revealed in Christ Jesus. Look at the sin of this world, and groan over it. What a wicked world it is! Read of wars and oppressions, falsehoods and superstitions; or, if you prefer it, see with your own eyes the slums of East London, or the iniquity of our great

folks in West London; and then you will hunger and thirst. But even concerning all this you will be filled as you think of the atonement of Christ, and remember that it is more sweet to God than all the sin of man is nauseous. The sweet savor of his sacrifice has removed from the thrice-holy God the reek of this dunghill world, and he no longer says that it repents him that he has made man upon the earth. Because of Christ's righteousness the Lord God bears with guilty man, and still waits that he may be gracious to the earth, and make it anew in Christ Jesus.

Again, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness are filled with the righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in them. I do not say that they are satisfied to remain as they are, but they are very grateful for what they are. I am a sinner, but yet I do not love sin: is not this delightful? Though I have to fight daily against corruption, yet I have received an inner life which will fight, and must fight, and will not be conquered. If I have not yet vanquished sin, it is something to be struggling against it. Even now, by faith we claim the victory. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Have you never felt as if you were full to the brim, when you knew that you were "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"? Have you not been filled with delight to know that you were no longer what you used to be, but that you were now made a partaker of the divine nature, and elevated into the spiritual sphere, wherein you have fellowship with just men made perfect? Never despise what the Holy Ghost has done for you, never undervalue grace already received; but, on the contrary, feel a divine delight, a filling-up of your heart, with what the Lord has already done. Within your soul perfection lies in embryo: all that you are yet to be is there in the seed. Heaven slumbers in repentance, like an oak within an acorn. Glory be to God for a new heart: glory be to God for life from the dead! Here we are filled with thankfulness; and yet we go on hungering and thirsting that the blessing which God has given may be more fully enjoyed in our experience, and displayed in our life.

Brethren, I can tell you when again we get filled with righteousness, and that is when we see righteousness increasing among our fellowmen. The sight of one poor child converted has filled my heart for a week with joy unspeakable. I have talked frequently-I did last week-with poor people who have been great sinners, and the Lord has made them great saints, and I have been as filled with happiness as a man could be. A dozen conversions have set all the bells of my heart ringing marriage-peals, and

kept them at it by the month together. It is true that I might have remembered with sadness the multitudes of sinners who are still perishing, and this would have made me go on hungering and thirsting as I do; but still a score or two of conversions have seemed so rich a blessing that I have been filled with joy even to overflowing. Then have I felt like good old Simeon, when he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Do you not know what this means? Perhaps not, if you are a big man, and must do everything on a big scale; but for a poor soul like me, it has been heaven enough to save a single soul from death. I reckon it a great reward to save a little child. It is bliss to me to bring a humble working-man to the Lord's feet, and see him learning the way of righteousness. Oh, try it, beloved! Try and see if hunger after the souls of men will not be followed by a fullness of delight, which will again lead on to further hunger to bring back lost sheep to Christ's fold. You will never say, "I have had many conversions, and therefore I am satisfied to have no more." No, the more you succeed, the more you will hunger and thirst that Christ's kingdom may come in the hearts of the sons of Adam.

By-and-by we shall quit this mortal body, and we shall find ourselves in the disembodied state, "for ever with the Lord." We shall have no ears and eyes, but our spirit will discern and understand without these dull organs. Set free from this material substance, we shall know no sin. Soon will sound the resurrection trump, and the spirit will enter the refined and spiritualized body, and perfected manhood will be ours. Then the man will have his eyes, but they will never cast a lustful glance; he will have his ears, but they will never long for unclean talk; he will have his lips, but they will never lie; he will have a heart that will always beat truly and obediently: there will be nothing amiss within his perfect manhood. Oh, what a heaven that will be to us! I protest that I want no other heaven than to be with Christ, and to be like him. Harps for music, and crowns for honor, are little as compared with the "kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Then shall we be filled with righteous society. You will not have to watch your tongue, for fear somebody should make you an offender for a word. You will not be plagued with idle chit-chat and silly gossip when you get to heaven; you will hear no lying there, you will hear nothing that derogates from the infinite majesty of the Most High. Everybody will be perfect. Oh, will you not delight yourself in the abundance of righteousness? And then your Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ

shall rise, and he shall reign with them upon the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then will come a thousand years of perfect peace, and rest, and joy, and glory; and you will be there. What a swimming in a sea of righteousness will be yours! You will then be like Christ in all things, and all your surroundings will agree therewith. Heaven and earth shall link hands in righteousness. Eternity will follow with its unbroken blessedness. There shall be no impurity in the kingdom of the blessed God. No devil to tempt, no flesh to corrupt, no want to worry, nothing to disturb; but you will be-

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”*

Oh, this will be to be filled with righteousness!

My hearers, you will never be filled unless you hunger first. You must hunger and thirst here that you may be filled hereafter. If you are hungering and thirsting, what should you do? Look to Jesus, for he alone can satisfy you. Believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. Believe on him now, for he is made of God unto us righteousness; and if you want righteousness you will find it in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God. I am sure those dear friends who called out so loudly just now will join with me in crying out from the heart, “AMEN! AMEN!” May everybody here begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness at once. Let us all say, “AMEN.”

THE INNER SIDE OF CONVERSION.

NO. 2104

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”-Jeremiah 31:18-20.

THERE are turning-points in most lives. We go on in a straight line for a certain distance, but suddenly we come to a place where we must make a choice of roads. All the rest of our journey may depend upon what we do at those particular points. Character often hinges on a day's resolve. Every now and then we meet with a man who has seemed hopeful enough till he has taken a wrong turn; and ever since then we have heard it said of him that “he has gone to the bad.” That is a common and expressive phrase for going in the wrong direction openly and boldly. The man was not right before, but now he is wrong in conduct: heart and life rush together down a steep place into the sea of ruin. On the other hand, the world may not often notice it, but the lovers of the souls of men observe, with great gladness, that men and women are suddenly pulled up, and caused to turn in the right direction. I meet with many who were once gay and frivolous,

who are now “much tumbled up and down in their thoughts,” as Master Bunyan would have said; and I mark their regret, their hope, their trust, their brave resolve, their deliverance by the help of God, and their firm choice of that right road which they henceforth follow earnestly. Their way is now upward, ever upward—a toilsome and rugged way it may be, but a safe and a right way, which leads them to “glory, and honor, and immortality.”

There are many turning-points and places of deliberation in the pilgrimage of life. To some, those turning-points come very early in youth: while they are yet boys and girls they are visited in conscience, and impressed in spirit; and blessed are they if they there and then seek the Lord; for they shall find him, to the joy of their whole lives. To young men and maidens there are stations on the line of life where they are called upon to decide as to their future road. Again and again the warning voice is heard, “Change here for holiness and eternal life.” The lad is to be bound apprentice, or he is to take his first situation, or for some other reason he is, for the first time, to leave his father’s roof: let him look upon this occasion as one of the most important seasons of his life. The night before he goes away will be, to that youth, if he be wisely led, a time for specially committing himself to God. When, for the first time, facing public life, the youth may well hear a voice saying to him, “Choose thou this day whom thou wilt serve.” The whole of his future may depend upon how he begins in the house of business: the first step may influence every other.

When men and women are about to be married, how much of life then trembles in the balances! Upon the choice of a partner in life the fashion of that life may depend. Whether self or Christ, the world or God, shall be the master-motive of the household, may be decided by the finger which wears the plain gold ring. Too often is marriage entered on frivolously; and yet, if one could see all the bearings of it, for good or for evil, one would judge the fullest consideration and the most prayerful thought to be nothing more than the demand of common-sense on such a subject. Changes in business, removals of residence, promotion to higher positions, or serious losses, all make new starting-points. Birthdays, new years, graves wet with tears, or strange events in personal history, have all become turning-points in life’s ways. Fierce temptations have also brought the lives of men to pauses, and then to onrushes, which have continued to give force to all the rest of their existence. To yield at a certain moment has meant life-slavery; to overcome has meant eternal triumph. Joseph’s career was determined by that grave

moment in which he fled from the allurements of sin, and left his garment in the tempter's hand. By that flight he prepared his way to become the saviour of Egypt, and the benefactor of his father's house. Take heed, my brother, when thou art tempted; for the next minute may be the pivot of thy life. An interesting book has been written upon "Turningpoints in life," and it is capable of indefinite extension. According to a man's station and disposition, those turning-points take place at different periods; but whenever they are before us, they call for special prayer, and trust in God.

There is, however, one turning-point, and one only, which will secure salvation and eternal life; and that is what we call conversion, which is the first apparent result of regeneration, or the new birth. The man being renewed, the current of his life is turned: he is converted. Of this turning-point I desire to speak this morning, so far as pain and weakness will permit. The text tells us a great deal about this turning: it is wonderful how clearly it describes it. The Bible must have been written by our Creator, for nobody but the Lord who created men could know so much about them. This volume reveals the secrets of all hearts; it unveils our private thoughts. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"; and that conversion which it works it describes, as none else can. Every touch is true to nature, and marks the hand of One who is within us as well as round about us. As you listen, may the Holy Spirit teach many of you what salvation means; may he turn you, and you will be turned.

In our text we have man at the turning-points as God observes him. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself"; then we have man just after the turning-point, when he says, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh"; and then, thirdly, we have God viewing man at that turningpoint, crying with holy joy, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

I pray that I may be enabled, in plain and simple language, to describe that inner and vital experience with which many of you are well acquainted, but which may, to others, still seem a strange thing.

I. First, here is MAN AT THE TURNING-POINT AS GOD OBSERVES HIM. Is not that a wonderful word of the Lord—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself"? Of a certainty the Lord hears all the sorrowful voices of men. It may be, that nobody else has heard you: you would be very sorry that they should. But the Lord says, "I have surely heard Ephraim

bemoaning himself.” You did not speak, you could not put your feelings into words: your utterance was a moan, a piteous noise, such as an animal might give forth—a moaning like that of a cow in pain. The word here used, if you pronounce it deliberately, conveys its own meaning by its sound. The Lord hears “surely”: that is to say, he hears the sense and meaning of our wordless moans: he puts into language that which no words of ours could express. The Lord understands us better than we understand ourselves.

Concerning the man here described, we note that he is in a state of great sorrow about himself. He is not bemoaning the dead, but he is bemoaning himself. His moans are not about his lost money or estate: he may be poor, but this is not his present grief. His moans are not about his bodily pains: he may be sickly, but his distress is in his spirit rather than in his flesh. His moans are not now about the bitterness of his lot, the weariness of his daily toil, or the oppression of the proud. No, he bemoans himself, himself only. This is sorrow indeed. The grief is within. All the water outside the ship is of small account; it is when the leak admits the water to the hold that there is danger. “Let not your heart be troubled”: it matters something if your country or your house be troubled; but to you the trying matter is if your heart be troubled. We read that David’s heart smote him—that is an ugly blow, against which there is no shield. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” This is what the Lord tenderly notes about the sinner at the turning-point, that he bemoans himself. His first and deepest grief is that he himself is in an evil case. He moans his own sad plight. Ah me! nothing is such a bitter fountain to myself as myself! My soul, thou art in some respects my sole misery! Thou art my very self; and if thou be wrong, all is wrong. My soul, how is it with thee? What am I? Where am I? and whither am I going? Lost! Lost! What hast thou lost? Alas, I have lost myself! Thus the Lord “heard Ephraim bemoaning himself.”

This bemoaning was addressed to his God. This is a very hopeful point about it: he cried to Jehovah, “Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised.” His deep trouble is poured out unto his God. It is a blessed thing when a man in his distress turns to his God, and not from him. It is well when the troubled heart cries, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.” Is it so with any of you here present? Have you given up running to your neighbor? Is yours a grief with which no neighbor could intermeddle? Does it afford you some relief to

look God-ward? Does even your despair turn its almost stone-blind eyes in the direction of the sun? When you cry and moan, are those cries and moanings unto God? Do you sit alone, and keep silence to all else? and do you speak to God in secret? Then let me assure you that there is hope. I am glad, dear friend, because I perceive that, whatever bitterness may be in your heart, there will come a sweet ending to it. If the vessel's head is toward the Lord, no storm will ever sink it. You have come to a blessed turning-point in your life when you are driven to address your sore complaints unto the Lord God. It is no work of mere nature when the heart talks with God. Look at the multitudes of prayers which unconverted men daily repeat. What dead formalities they are! They do not speak to God! They repeat a certain set of fine words to the air, or to the skies; but God is not there. A mouthful of words every morning and night, uttered without thought of the living God: to what end are these? True prayer sees God present, and speaks to him as to a living, listening Personage. Hear how Ephraim spreads his case before God! Come, heart, be of good cheer, some great good is coming to thee, now that thou art coming to God! If thou art speaking to the Lord, though it be only in sighs and moans, he hears thee, and he will answer thee, and speak comfortably unto thee.

Notice how Ephraim in the text has spied out his God as having long ago dealt with him. He tells the Lord that he has chastised him: "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised." The man had not before observed the hand of God in his suffering: but he does now. He lost his wife: he did not see God in this stroke chastening him. His children were taken from him: he did not see the hand of God even in that affliction. I see the suffering man before me: he has been brought low by sickness; but he has not considered who it is that has weakened his strength in the way, and shortened his days. His spirits sink, his mind is wretched; he has not yet felt that it is the hand of the Lord which is heavy upon him. It is a mark that the careless heart has come to a change, when the man who had not God in all his thoughts now sees him in his life, and cries, "Thou hast chastised me." I have hope of that man who sees God's hand, even though he sees only a rod in it.

In this case, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised," would seem to mean that it was a very sore punishment: he was indeed chastised, there was no mistaking the smart. Our heavenly Father does not play with the rod. When he deals the blow, he means that it shall be felt. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised-I felt it, and I bemoan myself because of

it." I may be speaking to some here who are smarting even now under the afflicting hand of God; let them acknowledge that hand, turn to him that smiteth them, and kiss the hand which inflicts the blow; so shall the rod of the Lord be turned away from them, and they shall know that in very faithfulness he hath afflicted them.

But the mourner in our text means more than this by his bemoanings: he owns that the chastening had not set him right. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised"; and that was all. He had smarted, but he had not submitted. He had not obeyed, but had still further rebelled. He was "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." He was like the unbroken calf, which cannot bear the yoke, and will not work in the furrow; which, being goaded, kicks back at the driver, and thus hurts itself all the more with the goad. Human nature is restive under the yoke of the law; its shoulder will not endure the pressure of the command. When sin brings sorrow as its wage, the proud spirit of man is angered, and he resents that which God justly lays on him. In the time of his affliction many a man sins more and more. Now it may happen that I am speaking to a person here whose portrait is photographed in this verse, God hath chastised you, but all that has come of it is that you have been chastised: you have not yielded, you have not repented, you have not made confession of sin, you have not asked for mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very sad and dangerous state of things. Every chastisement which ends in chastisement, and produces no salutary fruit, not only involves solemn responsibility, but it casts a sevenfold blackness over future guilt. He that goes astray over the thorn-hedge of affliction is not likely to return. May God save us from unsanctified chastisements, for they are full often the outriders of destruction! "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Ephraim feels this, and fears the result of having been thus obstinate towards God. Was there not grave reason for fear? If the fire will not separate the dross from the lump of ore, what is to be done with it but to cast it away as reprobate? What is the Lord to say to those whom he has chastised in vain, but this- "Ephraim is joined unto his idols: let him alone"? If the rampant young bullock will not bear the yoke, bring forth the axe. That which will not bend shall break; that which cannot be mended must be thrown away.

Yet there is something better than this; the mourner in our text despairs of all but God. He cannot turn himself, and chastisement will not turn him; he has no hope left but for God himself to interpose. "Turn thou me, and I

shall be turned." Lord, thou didst send a fever: it has burnt me, but it has not melted me! Let thy love do what thy furnace could not! Lord Jesus, come thyself, and melt this iron heart! Lord, thou hast sent death, and he has frightened me, but he has not changed me! Come thyself, and do by thy life what the fear of death could not! Lord, I have been subjected to pains and plagues that might have broken the pride of a Pharaoh, but I have been exceedingly obstinate, and have wickedly stood out against thee. Come thyself, with thine own almighty grace, and conquer even me! Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; but I despair of any other power ever working conversion in me.

Surely, it does not need that I speak with any powerful language to my dear hearers this morning when I beseech you to make your personal appeal to the Lord himself. If you have not yet yielded to the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and if outward means have hitherto failed, if even the sadness of your life has not been the means of bringing thought into your heart, and repentance into your soul, then cry to the Lord God, and entreat him by his Holy Spirit to deal with you. You are driven into a corner: nothing can save you now but the Lord God himself. Cry to him, for you have no other hope. Pray, "Turn thou me, O Lord, for thou only canst turn me. o Lord, place thy hand upon the helm of my ship, and turn it as thou wilt! Come into my vessel, O Lord Jesus, for my ship is driven with winds, and tossed with waves! Come thou, and take supreme command, and be both Captain and Pilot to me! Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." Holy Scripture plainly teacheth us that, although man is a free agent, yet the Lord can control his will without destroying it. He can turn the will and heart by forces which act in perfect harmony with the laws of the human mind. He can make us as freely turn as if there were no constraint; and yet the glory of every holy movement and turn shall be due unto the Lord alone. My hearer, you may rightly and wisely pray at this hour—"Lord, if thy judgments fail, let thy grace prevail. If afflictions are too feeble, set thine omnipotent grace to work. Turn me, and I shall be turned."

To all this confession poor bemoaning Ephraim adds another word, whereby he submits to the supreme sway of Jehovah his God—"For thou art the Lord my God." Happy is that heart which, in its despair, throws itself at the feet of its covenant God, crying, "Thou art the Lord my God"! He does as good as say: Man cannot help me. I cannot help myself. Even thy chastenings have not availed to turn me. Lord, I appeal to thee, thyself! Thou art Jehovah: thou canst do all things. Thou art my God, for thou hast

made me; and therefore thou canst new-make me. I pray thee, therefore, exercise thine own power, and renew thy poor broken and deified creature. Fashion me according to thy mind, that I may answer to thy purposes. Beloved friends, I do not feel that I can preach, but I wish my heart could get at your hearts. I cannot do this: but may the mystic finger of the Holy Ghost now touch the hearts of any who are awakened and aroused, but not decided; and may they be led to take the blessed step of casting themselves upon God as he is revealed in Christ Jesus, humbly saying, "Thou art the Lord my God"!

Thus I have dimly described the man at the turning-point; and it only remains to note that all this was done and felt, not in pretense, but indeed and of a truth. The Lord says, "I have surely heard Ephraim." What was said was truly said, so that God surely heard it. That experience which is feigned, and not really wrought in the soul, will prove to be nothing better than the painted pageantry of a dead soul - a disguise to go to hell in. Pretend to no feeling which is not real. Profess no emotion which is not deeply and truly felt. In all things be sincere, and most of all be accurate when describing your inner condition before the heart-searching Jehovah.

II. Secondly, let us hear MAN AFTER THE TURNING-POINT. Here you have the description in the nineteenth verse. It begins with "Surely." Is it not very remarkable that each of these verses should be stamped with the hall-mark, and each one bear the word "surely"? The Lord said he had "surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself"; and here Ephraim says, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented."

See, before us, prayer mixed with faith soon answered. Not many moments after Ephraim had said, "Thou art the Lord my God," he felt that he was turned. He treats it as a matter of fact, and speaks of "after that I was turned." There is a sacred moment in the life of the chosen of God in which he is turned. I do not think that every man can tell when that turning took place; but it did take place in the case of every saved one. Looking back, he has to look for the fruit of the turning; and that may be very perceptible, though the secret mystic work may in itself be hidden. In quickening the soul from its death in sin, there must be a moment in which the sinner is dead, and another in which he lives. The actual transition from death to life must be instantaneous, though the signs of it may be gradual. "A point of time, a moment's space" works the inner transformation. Quick as a lightning-flash is the implantation of the divine life. The dead man lives at

once: the condemned is in an instant pardoned. A man must be either condemned or forgiven, and this is a great change. The divine life itself must either be there or not be there; and so there must be a true line over which the man passes, once for all, when he proceeds from darkness into light, from death into life. "I was turned," saith he. Many others of us can say, "I was turned." My friend, do you remember when you were turned? Do you know your spiritual birthday, and the spot of ground where Jesus unveiled his face to you? Some of us do, although others do not.

The main point is to be turned; to know the place and time is a secondary matter. Yet I say some of us know when we were turned; and here is one reason why we remember it, for repentance came with turning. "After that I was turned, I repented." The man, when awakened, cried, "Break! Break! Break, O heart!" But it would not break. He said to himself, "I long to feel," but he could not feel; his heart seemed to be as an adamant stone. If he did for a moment experience a melting emotion, it passed away, and his goodness was as the morning cloud, or as the early dew. But now, after that he was turned, repentance came easily. No effort was required; the heart of stone had turned to flesh, and the rock smitten by the divine rod gushed with floods of penitential grief. "I repented," says he, meaning, I changed my mind about a thousand things: I loved what I had hated, I hated what I had loved; I loathed what had been called my pleasure; I longed for what I had despised as being dull and dreary. "I repented": I felt deep sorrow for sin, and I quitted it to follow after obedience and holiness. Repentance is a sweet and sure evidence of a divine conversion. He that is truly turned turns his face to the wall to weep and pray, Thou canst not make thyself repent; but when God hath changed thy heart, thou wilt repent as naturally as the brook flows adown the valley when once its bands of ice are thawed. "After that I was turned, I repented."

Deep sorrow followed upon farther instruction, The Holy Spirit does not leave the convert, but gives him further instruction; and out of that comes a sorer regret, a more complete self-abasement. "I smote upon my thigh," says Ephraim, even as the publican smote upon his breast. Do you not hear him cry, "Ah me! what have I done? What have I done?" His conviction was deeper after he was instructed than it had been before. God takes us into his school, and he begins to show us the evil of sin—the great iniquity of rebelling against a God so good, so kind; against a law so just, so righteous; and then we begin to abhor ourselves. Especially does the Holy Ghost instruct us as to the Person, and work, and love, and grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ; and this makes us loathe ourselves still more. We begin to see that there is salvation in none other but only in the Lord, and that his salvation by Christ Jesus is to be had for nothing, as a free gift of sovereign grace, and that it is given at once to all who seek the Lord, believing in Christ Jesus, however great their guilt may be. Nothing makes a man smite upon his breast with a deep sorrow for sin like knowing the grace of God as it is revealed in the suffering and death of the incarnate God. As a man knows more of himself, more of Christ, more of God, and more of the hereafter, he becomes indignant with himself, and deals heavy blows at himself. "After that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh." Want of knowledge tends to make men hardened, unfeeling, self-complacent, and proud; but when they are instructed by the divine Spirit, then they are ready to inflict wounds upon themselves as worthy of buffetings and blows. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a fit prayer for the instructed, and the lowliest posture well becomes such a one.

To this deep sorrow there followed shame. Ephraim says, "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded." This man knew everything before; now he knows nothing, but is confounded. Once he could dispute, and dispute, and dispute; but now he stands silent before his Judge. He formerly felt himself quite able to defend his own cause, but now he stands ashamed. Before he was turned, he might have raised objections to the gospel; yes, raised them by the mile; and if you had answered a legion of them, he would have summoned another legion to his help; but now he proposes no defense, the blush mantles his cheek, and he pleads guilty. It is very difficult to bring the sinner where he has nothing to say; but in this case the man is muddled, confused, ashamed, silenced, and has neither excuse nor extenuation to offer. He stands like a convicted felon, who, when he is asked by the judge if he has anything to say in stay of sentence, lays his hand on his mouth, and, blushing scarlet, confesses by his silence that he deserves to die. This is the man with whom mercy can work her will.

"Well," saith one, "you are not painting a very pretty picture." No, I am not; but I am painting a truthful one. When God the Holy Ghost brings a man to the great turning-point, he empties him, strips him, and lays him low. One of the very first feelings of the new-born life is amazement, dismay, self-abhorrence, self-despair. Truth requires that such as we are by nature should be ashamed. It is no mock modesty. We ought to be ashamed, for we have acted shamefully. The Holy Spirit makes a man see this. What the man could once boast of, he could not now mention without

disgust. He could formerly come forth, wearing a brazen forehead, but now he seeks holes and corners where he may hide his guilty face. He hangs his head, and judges himself worse than the worst. He even wishes that he had never been born, or that he had been made a dog or a toad, rather than have been a man. God often brings men down to this condition, in order that they may be on ground whereon he can meet them in the way of grace.

Lastly on this point, memory now comes in, and revives the reproach of youth. Memory is a very terrible torture to a guilty heart. "Son, remember!" is one of the voices heard in hell. "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." The formerly forgetful man now recollects what he used to be in years gone by. How convenient it is to forget; but how damnable! Forgotten sin steels the heart, and blinds the conscience, and so destroys the soul. Ephraim had forgotten his green and foolish years when he was in the first fury of his sinful madness. Do you say to me, "I was sowing my wild oats then"? I answer, "You were sowing, and soon will come the time for reaping." Go down now to the field, and see what has come of your random life! Wild oats are seldom barren. I have known them grow up into a harvest of unquenchable flames! God has not forgotten your youthful provocation. Ah! when memory is awake it piles huge fagots upon the fires of remorse, and the flame rises to the heavens. It is a great reproach to a man to have been a rebel in his youth: it shows how ingrained a traitor he is. I can only compare the sinner with a quickened memory to one who is travelling across the plains of Russia dreaming in his carriage, and on a sudden he is aroused by the sharp bark of a wolf behind him; and this is followed up by a thousand cruel voices of brutes, hungry, and gaunt, and grim, all eager for his blood. Harken to the patter of those eager feet! the howls of those hungry demons! Whence came they? You thought that your sins were dead long ago, and quite forgotten. See, they have left their tombs! They are on your track. Like wolves, your old sins are pursuing you. They rest not day nor night. They prepare their teeth to tear you. Whither will you flee? How can you escape the consequences of the past? They are upon you, these monsters, their hot breath is in your face; who can now save you? Only a miracle can rescue you from the reproach of your youth; will that miracle be wrought? May we dare to look for it? We have something better than a mere hope to set before you. Jesus meets these packs of wolfish sins. He interposes between us and them He drives them back! He scatters them! There is not one of them left! For our sakes he has borne reproach. He

gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he hid not his face from shame and spitting; and by this substitution of himself he has set his people free. But till this is seen and known by faith, the man is in a hopeless state, neither is any in a more horrible condition. He is ashamed, confounded, and crushed with reproach. All this is working a true and deep work in his soul. Better things are coming.

III. Now we will turn, and BEAR GOD AT THIS TURNING-POINT. Picture the poor guilty creature, confounded, covered with reproach, unable to defend himself in the least degree; and then the God whom he has so greatly offended comes in, and cries, “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?” Does this look like a question? The answer has been already given in the ninth verse of this same chapter: “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.”

The gracious Lord sees Ephraim sore with chastisement, spent with weeping, pale with shame, and moaning with agony, and then his sonship is acknowledged. He bends over the crushed one, and cries, “This is my son. This is my dear child.” How gracious on God’s part to acknowledge the guilty rebel as a son! What did the father do in the parable, when he saw his son a great way off? He knew him to be his son, and he had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him. God is eager to receive returning prodigals. The Lord as good as says, “He is my dear son; he is a “pleasant child”! The sinner that despairs of self-salvation is “my dear son”! The sinner who bemoans himself for his transgressions is “a pleasant child”! How can it be? The heart of the Father in heaven has great depths in it, unfathomable by our poor limited natures. We are told sometimes that there is joy in the hearts of angels over sinners that repent. I do not doubt the fact; but that is not the truth which the Bible tries to tell us. Holy Scripture says: “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” In whose presence do the angels dwell? Why, in the presence of God. The joy described in the parable of the finding of the lost sheep is the joy of God himself over a repenting sinner. When a sinner is smiting upon his thigh, the Lord God is smiling on him. When he is ashamed and confounded, God is ready to own him as his dear son, Oh, the heights and depths of sin-forgiving, sin-forgetting grace!

See, beloved, here is love acknowledging the object of its choice, love confessing its near relationship to one most unworthy and most sorrowful. Then behold the same love well pleased. The Lord does not merely say,

“Ephraim is my son; yea, he is my child”; but he calls him “my dear son, a pleasant child.” A pleasant child! Why, he has been full of rebellion from his birth! Yes; but he confesses it, and mourns it; and he is a pleasant child when so much holy sorrow is seen in him. He is polluted with sin; his sins have ruined his beauty, and diseased his soul! Yes, but he cried, “Turn me,” and he has been turned, and now he is a pleasant child. What a marvel that the thrice holy Lord should ever take pleasure in a sinner! Yet a sinner on his knees is a delight to the heart of the All-merciful. A sinner with his eye on the cross, believing in the Lord Jesus, is very dear to the Father. I do believe that the great Lord would rather turn his eyes away from angels than fail to look upon a weeping pleader, crying, “God be merciful to me.” “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” O ye kings and. princes, with all your pomp and glory, you may knock at the door of heaven and wait for notice! o ye peers of the realm, ye may go your ways, and seek great things of God, but he will no more regard you than the servants at your doors! But if there is a poor, foul castaway, weeping, and bemoaning himself, let him know that the Lord waiteth to be gracious unto him. When a son, a pleasant child, is before the Father, in sorrow and reproach, the Father’s heart and eye are both with him to bless him. He is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. He takes him to his bosom, not because of his desert, but because of his relationship. Let me imagine a scene, such as our London homes have often seen. One of you has a little girl, and she has behaved very badly during the day; mother has threatened her with punishment for her continued ill-conduct. The child, in her bad temper, has run away. The evening conies on, and where is Jane? Her brothers and sisters do not know. It is getting late; where can she be? Has anybody seen her? No, she is not hidden away at home; every room has been searched. In alarm, some one is sent to the police-station. Have you seen a little girl? No, they have not seen a little girl. It gets to be ten o’clock at night, and the matter is very serious. Eleven strikes, like a knell. “Why don’t you go to bed, dear mother?” “Go to bed! Why, I am her mother!” and she breaks out with, “My child! My dear child!” Surely a little while ago she might have been called a good-for-nothing little chit: one might have been glad to miss the worrying little troubler. But now mother cries, “My child! My dear child!” The clock strikes twelve; the small hours grow into great ages of grief. Father is troubled: he has been up and down the streets, and searched everywhere. You meet him, and you say, “Well, she was, after all, a very commonplace child, and most obnoxious in disposition.” “Ah! you do not

know her. Oh, she was such a pretty girl! She had her peculiarities; but it makes me angry to hear a word against the dear child." Mother felt that she never knew before how much she loved that child! What is that? What! is the wanderer found? What joy beams from every face! Could you have imagined that one naughty child could have made such a stir, and caused such delight? Sinner, this is just what happens about you! Thus doth the great God think of his wanderers, and rejoice when he sees them returning home. When you cry, "Father!" he answers with, "Is he not my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?" Love takes delight in repenting sinners.

Notice, in this case, love in earnest. The Lord says, "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." Think of that, "I do earnestly remember him still"! God in earnest-that is a great conception! God in earnest over one moaning sinner! God earnest in thoughts of love, even when he bids the preacher tell the offender of the wrath to come. He says, Go and thunder at him, and let loose the lightnings of the law upon him; and yet I earnestly remember him with thoughts of love! Tell him he will be driven into everlasting fire if he repent not; and yet, in thus threatening him, I do earnestly remember him still. Go, providence, and frustrate his designs! Go, death, and take away his child! Yet in all this there are earnest thoughts of love towards him. "Since I spake against him," saith God, "I do earnestly remember him still." These are charming words to me. They thrill my soul. I fear to handle them lest I brush off their bloom, God is never more in earnest to save a soul than when he is dealing roughly with it. How I wish I could put my thoughts into your hearts at once instead of having to dilute them by my own words, and then see their strength watered down as they pass through your ears and your understanding, and at last filter in drops into your hearts! May the Lord put his own thoughts into your souls by his holy Spirit, that you may know, in some measure, what his earnest remembrance means!

Notice, next, love in sympathy. Ephraim is bemoaning himself, and what is the Lord doing? He says, "My bowels are troubled for him." God's heart is wounded when our hearts are broken. The tenderness of God is at work, his very life is stirred when a soul is crying to him, "Turn me, and I shall be turned": Jehovah is in sympathy with Ephraim. When the rebel is moved with repentance, the forgiving Lord is moved with pity. God himself repenteth of the evil with which he chastised the sinner when the sinner repents of the evil with which he grieved his God. Those are words which will bear much thinking on: "My bowels are troubled for him."

Then comes love in action: "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." I am so glad to think that the "Surely" is found again in this place. "Surely" God heard Ephraim bemoaning; "Surely" he said that he was turned, and now God says, "Surely I will have mercy upon him." The Lord God puts his hand and seal to it. Sinner, he assuredly forgives you. As surely as you have been ashamed, so surely does he put away your reproach. Come to him by Christ, and he forgives you now. The bill of your debts is receipted: the handwriting which was against you is blotted out. The weight of your iniquity was laid on Christ Jesus of old, and he himself carried it away, and hurled it into the abyss, so that it shall never be mentioned against you any more for ever. "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." What great mercy, what full mercy, what eternal mercy is this! Yield, then, your stubborn hearts to this immeasurable love; be captives in the embrace of compassion. Can you resist the charms of goodness? When God comes forth with nothing in his heart but love and kindness, mercy and pardon, flee no longer from him! Turn you at his reproof; and may this day, even this very moment, be the day of salvation, the beginning of days to you! Then will we bid them ring the bells of heaven, for there is joy to-day. May the Lord himself have joy of you! May he, concerning you, rest in his love, and rejoice over you with singing! O Lord, grant me the joy of leading many to thyself by this sermon, through thy Son, Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost! Amen.

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD.

NO. 2105

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 22ND, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”-1 John 2:28.

OUR first anxious desire is that our hearers would come to Christ. We lay ourselves out to lift him up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and to bid men look to him and live. There is no salvation except by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

When men have looked to Jesus, our next anxiety is that they may be in Christ, the City of Refuge. We long to speak of them as “men in Christ Jesus.” My beloved hearers, you must be in living, loving, lasting union with the Son of God, or else you are not in a state of salvation. That which begins with coming to Christ, as the engrafted branch is bound to the vine, continues in your growing into him and receiving of his life. You must be in Christ as the stone is in the building, as the member is in the body.

When we have good hope that our hearers have come to Christ, and are “in Christ,” a further anxiety springs up in our hearts that they may “abide” in Christ. Our longing is that, despite temptations to go away from him, they may always remain at his feet; that, notwithstanding the evil of their nature, they may never betray their Master, but may faithfully hold to him. We would have them mindful of that precept-” As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Oh, that they may be rooted in him,

and built up in him, and may always be in union with him! Then shall we present them to our Lord in the day of his appearing with exceeding great joy.

To this third anxiety of the minister of Christ I would give my mind this morning. John says, "Little children, abide in him." How sweetly those words must have flowed from the lips and the pen of such a venerable saint! Methinks he is in this the echo of the Lord Jesus; for in the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of John, the Lord Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." That word, "abide," was a very favourite one with the Lord Jesus, and it became equally dear to that disciple whom Jesus loved. In our Authorized Version, the translators have interpreted it sometimes "remain," and sometimes "continue"; but it is not very wise of them to have so changed the rendering. It is one of the virtues of the Revised Version that it generally translates the same Greek word by the same English word. This may not be absolutely requisite, for a little variety may be tolerated; but it is eminently instructive, since it allows us to see in our own mother tongue where the Holy Spirit used the same word; and if the translation be correct in one case, we may naturally conclude it will not be incorrect in another. "Abide" is one of John's special words.

May the Lord help us to consider these blessed words! Better still, may he write them on our hearts, and may we fulfill their teaching!

First, notice to what he urges them—"abide in him"; secondly, under what character he addresses them—"little children"; and thirdly, by what motive he exhorts them—"that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

I. First, then, OBSERVE TO WHAT HE URGES THEM: "Abide in him." By this he meant one thing; but that thing is so comprehensive that we may better understand it by viewing it from many sides.

He meant fidelity to the truth taught by our Lord. We are sure he meant this, because, a little previously, in the twenty-fourth verse, he had said, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Beloved, you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the salvation of your souls. You have trusted in

him as the Son of God, the appointed Mediator, and the effectual sacrifice for your sin. Your hope has come from a belief in Christ as God has borne witness to him. Abide in the truth which you received from the beginning; for in your earliest days it wrought salvation in you. The foundation of your faith is not a changeable doctrine: you rest on a sure word of testimony. Truth is, in its very nature, fixed and unalterable. You know more about it than you did; but the thing itself is still the same, and must be the same. Take care that you abide in it. You will find it difficult to do so, for there is an element of changeableness about yourself: this you must overcome by grace. You will find many elements of seduction in the outside world. There are men whose business it is to shake the faith of others, and thereby to gain a repute for cleverness and depth of thought. Some seem to think it an ambition worthy of a Christian to be always questioning, or, as the apostle puts it, to be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” To throw doubt into minds which, by a gracious certainty, have been made blessed, is their chosen lifework. Therefore, you will be often led to try your foundation, and at times you will tremble as you cling to it. Hearken, then, to this word from the mouth of your Lord: “Abide in him.” Keep you where you were as to the truth which you believe. That which has justified you, will sanctify you. That which has, in a measure, sanctified you, will yet perfect you. Make no change as to the eternal verities upon which you ground your hope. As a stone, you are built on the foundation; abide there. As a branch, you have been grafted into the steni; abide there. As a member, you are in the body; abide there; it is all over with you if you do not. Abide in that holy mould of doctrine into which you were at first delivered. Let no man deceive you with vain words, though there are many abroad in these days who “would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.” Abide in Jesus, by letting his words abide in you. Believe what you have found to be the means of your quickening. Believe it with a greater intensity and a greater practicalness; but “cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”

Next, he means “abide in him” as to the uniformity of your trust. When you first enjoyed a hope, you rested upon Christ alone. I think I heard the first infant prattle of your faith when it said,

*“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”*

At the first, you had no experience upon which you could rely, you had no inward graces upon which you could depend: you rested wholly upon Christ and his finished work. You rested in no degree upon the works of the law, nor upon your own feelings, nor upon your own knowledge, nor upon your own resolves. Christ was all. Do you not remember how you used to tell others that the gospel precept was “Only believe?” You cried to them, “Trust in Jesus; get out of yourselves; find all your wants provided for in him.” Now, beloved, you have experience; thank God for it. Now you have the graces of the Spirit; thank God for them. Now you know the things of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; be grateful for that knowledge. But do not now fly in the face of your Savior by putting your experience, or your graces, or your knowledge, where he and he alone must be. Depend to-day as simply as you depended then. If you have some idea that you are hastening towards perfection, take care that you do not indulge a vain conceit of yourself; but even if it be true, still mix not your perfection with his perfection, nor your advance in grace with the foundation which he has laid for you in his blood and righteousness. “Abide in him.” He is that good ship into which you have entered that he may bear you safe to the desired haven. Abide in the vessel: neither venture to walk on the water, like Peter, nor think to swim by your own strength; but “abide in him,” and you shall weather every storm. Only as you keep to your first simple confidence in the perfect work of the Lord Jesus can you have peace and salvation; as it is written, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.” Moreover, abide in the Lord Jesus Christ in making him the constant object of your lift. As you live by Christ, so live for Christ. Ever since you trusted in Christ as dying for you, you have felt that if he died for you, then you died in him, that henceforth your life might be consecrated to him. You are not your own, but you are Christ’s, and Christ’s only. The first object of your being is to honor and serve him who loved you and gave himself for you. You have not followed after wealth, or honor, or self-pleasing, but you have followed Jesus: take heed that you “abide in him” by continuing to serve him. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” You may wisely continue where you are, for you have chosen the right pursuit, and you have entered upon the right road. That crown which

glitters in your eye at the end of the race is worthy of all your running. You could not have a nobler motive power than the constraining love of Christ. To live for Christ is the highest style of living: continue in it more and more. If the Lord changes your circumstances, still live for Christ. If you go up, take Christ up with you: if you go down, Christ will go down with you. If you are in health, live for Christ earnestly; if you are bound to a sick bed, live for Christ patiently. Go about your business, and sing for Jesus; or if he bids you stay at home, and cough away your life, then sicken for Jesus; but let everything be for him. For you, “Excelsior” means higher consecration, more heavenly living.

Surely, we should also understand by “Abide in him,” that we are to persevere in our obedience to our Lord. The next verse is, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.” What your Lord bids you, continue to do. Call no man Master, but in all things submit your thoughts, your words, and your acts to the rule of the Lord Jesus. Obey him by whose obedience you are justified. Be precise and prompt in your execution of his commands. If others reckon you morbidly conscientious, heed not their opinion, but “Abide in him.” The rule of the Master is always binding on all his disciples, and they depart from him in heart when they err from his rule. Reverence for the precept is as much included in our homage of Christ as credence of the doctrine. If you have been upright in your dealings, be upright; be accurate to the penny in every payment. If you have been loving and generous, continue loving and generous; for your Lord’s law is love. If you have closely imitated the Lord Jesus, go on to copy him still more minutely. Seek no new model; pray the Holy Spirit to work you to the selfsame thing. To you, as a soldier, your Captain’s word is law:

*“Yours not to reason why,
Yours but to dare and die.”*

“Abide in him.” I know you might be rich by doing that un-Christly act; scorn to win wealth in such a way. I know you may involve yourself in persecution if you follow your Lord closely. Accept such persecution gladly, and rejoice in it, for his name’s sake. I know that a great many would say that for charity’s sake you had better make compromises, and keep in union with evil doctrine and worldly practice; but you know better. Be it yours to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; for this is what his beloved apostle means when he says, “Abide in him.”

But I have not completed the full description yet; I fear I am not able to do so, by reason of my shallow knowledge and forgetfulness. Continue in spiritual union with your Lord. All the life you have is life derived from him; seek no other. You are not a Christian except as Jesus is the Christ of God to you; you are not alive unto God, except as you are one with the risen Lord. You are not saved, except as he is your Savior; nor righteous, save as he is your Righteousness. You have not a single pulse of heavenly desire, nor a breath of divine life in you, but what was first given you from him, and is daily given to you by him. Abide in this vital union. Do not try to lead an independent life. "Abide in him," in complete dependence from day to day upon the life which is treasured up in him on your behalf.

Let your life "abide in him" in the sense of being directed by him. The head directs all the members. The order which lifts my hand, or spreads my palm, or closes my fist, or lowers my arm, comes from the brain, which is the head-quarters of the soul. Abide in your Lord by implicitly owning his headship. Let every regulation of your life come from him who is the head, and let it be obeyed as naturally as the desires of the mind coming from the brain are obeyed by every part of the body. There is no war between the hand and the foot, for they abide in the head, and so are ruled without force, and guided without violence. If the leg were to set up an independent authority over itself, instead of obeying the head, w a strange walking we should see! Have you never met with afflicted people in whom the nerves have lost vigor, and the muscles seem to jerk at random, and throw out a leg or an arm without reason? Such movements are painful to see, and we know that such a man is diseased. Do not desire to be without law to Christ. Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: in that respect "abide in him."

"Abide in him" as the element of your life. Let him encompass you as the air surrounds you on all sides. As a fish, whether it be the tiniest sprat or the hugest whale, abides in the sea, so do you abide in Christ. The fish does not seek the sky or the shore, it could not live out of the element of water; and even so, I beseech you, do not seek to live in the world and in its sins; for as a Christian you cannot live there: Christ is your life. There is room enough for you in the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the infinite God. Go not out of him for anything. Seek not pleasure outside of Christ, nor treasure outside of Christ; for such pleasure or treasure would be ruinous. Have neither want, nor will, nor wish, beyond your Lord. Let him draw a line around you, and do you abide within that circle.

“Abide in him” in the sense of being at home in him. What a world of meaning I intend by that word “being at home in Christ”! and yet this is the sense of the word, “Abide in him.” I was speaking yesterday to a friend who had bought a pleasant house, with a large garden; and he said to me, “I now feel as if I had a home. I have lived in London for years, and I have changed from one house to another with as little regret as a man feels in changing an omnibus; but I have always longed for the home feeling which hung about my father’s house in the country. Why, there we loved the cosy rooms, and the look-outs from the little windows, and the corner cupboards in the kitchen. As for the garden and the field, they yielded us constant delight, for there was that bush in the garden where the robin had built, and the tree with the blackbird’s nest. We knew where the pike lay in the pool, and where the tortoise had buried itself for the winter, and where the first primroses would be found in the spring. There is a vast difference between a house and a home.” That is what John means with regard to Christ: we are not merely to call on him, but to abide in him. Do not go to Jesus one day and to the world another day: do not be a lodger with him, but abide in him. My friend spoke of changing from one omnibus to another, and I fear that some change from Christ to the world when the day changes from Sunday to Monday; but it should not be so. Say with Moses, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” Thy cross is the roof-tree of the family of love; within the thorn-hedge of thy suffering love our whole estate is shut in; thy name is named on our abiding-place. We are not to thee as tenants with a lease, but we have a freehold in thee. We can truly say and sing-

*“Here would I make a settled rest
While others go and come:
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.”*

Lord Jesus, I am at home nowhere but in thee; but in thee I abide. Wherever else I lodge, I have in due time to shift my quarters. Whatever else I have, I lose it, or leave it; but thou art the same, and thou changest not. What a comfort to have our Lord himself to be our chosen dwelling place in time and in eternity!

Now I think I have come nearer to the full sense of my text. “Abide in him” means, hold fast to him, live in him, let all your noblest powers be drawn forth in connection with him, as a man at home is all there. Feel at ease in

fellowship with him. Say, "Return unto thy rest, o my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Why does the apostle urge us to abide in Christ? Is there any likelihood of our going away? Yes; for in this very chapter he mentions apostates, who from disciples had degenerated into antichrists, of whom he says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would, no doubt, have continued with us." "Abide in him," then, and do not turn aside unto crooked ways, as many professors have done. The Savior once said to his apostles, "Will ye also go away?" and they answered him with that other question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" I hope your heart is so conscious that he has the words of eternal life that you could not dream of going elsewhere.

"But surely it is implied in these warnings that saints do leave their Lord and perish?" I answer, "No." Carefully observe the provision which is made against that fatality-provision to enable us to carry out the precept of the text. Will you open your Testaments, and just look at the verse which immediately precedes my text. What do you see? "Ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him." There is a promise made to those who are in Christ that they shall "abide in him"; but that promise does not render the precept unnecessary; for the Lord dealeth with us as with reasonable beings, not as with stocks and stones; and he secures the fulfillment of his own promise that we shall abide in him, by impressing upon our hearts his sacred precept, whereby he bids us "abide in him." The force he uses to effect his purpose is instruction, heart-winning, and persuading. We abide in him, not by a physical law, as a mass of iron abides on the earth; but by a mental and spiritual law, by which the greatness of divine love and goodness holds us fast to the Lord Jesus. You have the guarantee that you shall abide in Christ in the covenant engagement, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." What a blessed promise that is! You are to take care that you abide in Christ as much as if all depended upon yourself; and yet you can look to the promise of the covenant, and see that the real reason for your abiding in Christ lies in the operation of his unchanging love and grace.

Moreover, brethren, if you are in Christ Jesus, you have the Holy Ghost given you to enable you to abide in him. Read the twenty-seventh verse: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of

all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

The Holy Ghost brings the truth home to your heart with savor and unction, endearing it to your inmost soul. The truth has so saturated you through the anointing, that you cannot give it up. Has not your Lord said, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life”? Thus, you see that what is commanded in one Scripture is promised and provided for in another. To his people, God’s commandings are enablings. As he bids you abide in him, so by that very bidding he causes you to abide in him to his praise and glory.

II. Secondly, notice UNDER WHAT CHARACTER JOHN ADDRESSES THESE BELIEVERS. He says, “And now, little children.” This indicates the apostle’s love to them. John lived to a great age; and the tradition is, that they used to carry him into the assembly, and, when he could do nothing else, he would lift his hand, and simply say, “Little children, love one another.” Here, to show his tender concern for those to whom he wrote, he called them “Little children.” He could not wish them a greater blessing out of the depth of his heart’s affection, than that they should faithfully abide in Christ.

Next, by this he suggests their near and dear relation to their Father in heaven. You are the children of God; but as yet you are little ones, therefore do not leave your Father’s house, nor run away from your elder brother’s Love. Because you are little children, you are not of travelling years, therefore stay at home and abide in your Lord.

Does he not hint at their feebleness? Even if you were grown and strong, you would not be wise to gather all together and wander away into the far country; but as you are so young, so dependent, so feeble, it is essential that you abide in him. Shall a babe forsake its mother? What can you do apart from God? Is he not your life, your all?

Does not the apostle also gently hint at their fickleness? You are very changeable, like little babes. You are apt to be hot and cold in half an hour. You are this and that, and fifty other things, in the course of one revolving moon. But, little children as you are, be faithful to one point—abide in your Savior. Change not towards your Redeemer. Stretch out your hands and clasp him and cry,

*“My Jesus, I love thee, I knew thou art mine,
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.”*

Surrender yourself to him by an everlasting covenant never to be cancelled. Be his for ever and ever.

Did not this remind them of their daily dependence upon the Lord's care, as little children depend on their parents? Why, beloved, the Lord has to nurse you. He feeds you with the unadulterated milk of the Word; he comforts you as a mother doth her child; he carries you in his bosom, he bears you all your days. Your new life is as yet weak and struggling; do not carry it into the cold atmosphere of distance from Jesus. Little children, since you derive all from Jesus, abide in him. To go elsewhere will be to wander into a howling wilderness. The world is empty; only Christ has fullness. Away from Jesus you will be as a child deserted by its mother, left to pine, and starve, and die; or as a little lamb on the hillside without a shepherd, tracked by the wolf, whose teeth will soon extract its heart's blood. Abide, O child, with thy mother! Abide, O lamb, with thy shepherd!

We may all come under John's description at this time. The beloved John speaketh unto us as unto little children, for we are none of us much more. We are not such wonderfully knowing people as certain of our neighbors; we are not such learned scientists and acute critics as they are; neither have we their marvellous moral consciousness, which is superior to inspiration itself; therefore we are bound by our very feebleness to venture less than they do. Let the men of the world choose what paths they will, we feel bound to abide in Christ because we know no other place of safety. They may push off into the sea of speculation; our smaller boats must hug the shore of certainty. To us, however, it is no small comfort that the Lord has revealed to babes the things which are hidden from the wise and prudent. Those who become as little children enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Cling to the Lord Jesus in your feebleness, in your fickleness, in your nothingness; and abidingly take him to be everything to you. “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks”; be you like them. Abide in the rifts of the Rock of Ages, and let nothing tempt you to quit your stronghold. You are no lion, able to fight your foes, and deliver yourself by main strength; you are only a little cony, and you will be wise to hide rather than fight. “Little children, abide in him.”

III. I now come to my last point, which is most important, for it finds steam wherewith to drive the engine. Thirdly, we shall consider BY WHAT MOTIVE JOHN EXHORTS US TO THIS PLEASANT AND NECESSARY DUTY OF ABIDING IN CHRIST.

Kindly look at the text, for there is in it a little word to be noticed. The apostle exhorts us by a motive in which he takes his share. Let me read it: "Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, you may have confidence." No, no. Look at that little word: it runs thus, "that we may have confidence." The beloved John needed to have confidence at the appearing of the Lord, and confidence fetched from the same source as that to which he directed his little children. They must abide in Christ, that they might have confidence, and the dearest of the apostles must practice the same abiding. How wisely, and yet how sweetly, he puts himself upon our level in this matter!

Notice, further, that the motive is one drawn from Jesus. John does not drive believers with the lash of the law, but he draws them with the cords of love. I never like to see God's children whipped with rods gathered from the thorny sides of Sinai. We have not come to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion. When a man tries to pommel me to my duty by the law, I kick at the goad like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; and rightly so, "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." The motive which sways a free-born heir of heaven is fetched from grace, and not from law; from Jesus, and not from Moses. Christ is our example, and our motive also, blessed be his name!

The motive is drawn from our Lord's expected advent. Notice how John puts it. He uses two words for the same thing: "When he shall appear," and, "at his coming." The second advent may be viewed in two lights. First, as the appearing of one who is here already, but is hidden; and next, as the coming of one who is absent. In the first sense, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ abides in his church; according to his word, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yet, though spiritually present, he is unseen. Our Lord will, on a sudden, be "manifested," as the Revised Version has it. The spiritual and secret presence of Christ will become a visible and manifest presence in the day of his appearing.

The apostle also uses the term, "at his coming," or, "his presence." This is the same thing from another point of view. In a certain evident sense our Lord is absent: "He is not here, for he is risen." He has gone his way unto

the Father, In that respect he will come a second time, “without a sin-offering, unto salvation.” He who has gone from us will so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. There is thus a difference of aspect between the second advent when it is described as “his appearing” and “his coming.” John pleads the glorious manifestation of our Lord under both of these views as a reason for abiding in him.

As to our Lord’s “appearing,” he would have us abide in Christ, that we may have confidence when he appears. Confidence at his appearing is the high reward of constant abiding in Christ. The apostle keeps most prominent “the appearing” as an argument. A. thousand things are to happen at our Lord’s appearing; but John does not mention one of them. He does not hold it up as a thing to be desired that we may have confidence amid the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds, when the stars shall fall like autumn leaves, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; when the graves shall be opened, and the dead shall rise, or when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Those will be direful times, days of terror and dismay; but it is not of these that he speaks particularly; for he regards all these events as swallowed up in the one great fact of the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

His desire is that we may have confidence if he appear on a sudden. What does he mean by having confidence when he shall appear? Why, this: that if you abide in him when you do not see him, you will be very bold should he suddenly reveal himself. Before he appears, you have dwelt in him, and he has dwelt in you; what fear could his appearing cause you? Faith has so realized him, that if suddenly he were to appear to the senses, it would be no surprise to you; and, assuredly, it would cause you joy rather than dismay. You would feel that you at last enjoyed what you had long expected, and saw somewhat more closely a friend with whom you had long been familiar. I trust, beloved, that some of us live in such a style that if, on a sudden, our Lord were to appear, it would cause no alarm to us. We have believed him to be present, though unseen, and it will not affect our conduct when he steps from behind the curtain, and stands in the open light. O Lord Jesus, if thou wert now to stand in our midst, we should remember that we had thy presence before, and lived in it, and now we should only be the more assured of that which we before knew by faith. We shall behold our Lord with confidence, freedom, assurance, and

delight, feeling perfectly at home with him. The believer who abides in his Lord would be but little startled by his sudden appearing; he is serving his Lord now, and he would go on serving him; he loves him now, and he would go on loving him, only as he would have a clearer view of him, he would feel a more intense consecration to him.

The word translated “confidence” means freedom of speech. If our divine Lord were to appear in a moment, we should not lose our tongue through fear, but should welcome him with glad acclaim. To desert our Lord would rob us of that ease of mind which is betokened by free speech; but to cleave to him will secure us confidence. We now speak to him in secret, and he speaks again to us; we shall not cease to speak in tones of reverent love when he appears. I have preached concerning my Lord, while he is not seen, those truths which I shall not blush to own before his face. If my Lord and Master were, at this instant, to appear in his glory in this Tabernacle, I dare with confidence hand in to him the volumes of my sermons, in proof that I have not departed from his truth, but have heartily continued in him. I ought to improve in many things, but I could not improve upon the gospel which I have preached among you. I am prepared to live by it, to die by it, or to meet my Lord upon it if he should this day appear. O my hearers, if you are in Christ, see to it that you so abide in him that, should he suddenly appear, you would behold him with confidence. If we abide in him, if he were to unveil his majestic face, we might be overcome with rapture, but our confidence in him would grow stronger, our freedom with him would be even more enlarged, and our joy in him would be made perfect. Has he not prayed for us that we may be with him, and behold his glory; and can we be afraid of the answer to his loving prayer? If you abide in Christ, the manifestation of Christ will be your manifestation, and that will be a matter of delight, and not of fear.

Beloved, if you do not abide in him, you will have no confidence. If I were to compromise the truth, and then my Lord were to appear, could I meet him with confidence? If, to preserve my reputation, or be thought liberal-minded, I played fast and loose with the gospel, how could I see my Lord’s face with confidence? If any of you have failed to serve your Master; if you have preferred gain to godliness, and pleasure to holiness; if he were suddenly to shine forth in his glory, what confidence could you have in meeting him? A good man was asked, one day, “If the Lord were now to appear, how would you feel?” He replied. “My brother, I should not be afraid; but I think I should be ashamed.” He meant that he was not afraid

of condemnation, but he blushed to think how little he had served his Lord. In this case it was genuine humility. I pray you, get not only beyond being afraid, but may the Lord make you so to abide in him that you would not even be ashamed at his appearing!

The other point is, that you should “not be ashamed before him at his coming.” That means, that having regarded him as being absent, you have not so lived that, if he should suddenly be present in person, you would be ashamed of your past life. What must it be to be driven with shame away from his presence into everlasting contempt! The text may have such a meaning. What have you been doing while he has been absent? This is a question for a servant to answer at his Lord’s arrival. You are left in his house to take care of it while he is in the far-off country; and if you have been beating his servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken, you will be greatly ashamed when he returns. His coming will be in itself a judgment. “Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” Blessed is that man who, with all his faults, has been so sanctified by grace that he will not be ashamed at his Lord’s coming. Who is that man? It is the man who has learned to abide in Christ. What is the way to prepare for Christ’s coming? By the study of the prophecies? Yes, if you are sufficiently instructed to be able to understand them. “To be prepared for the Lord’s coming,” some enthusiasts might say, “had I not better spend a month in retirement, and get out of this wicked world?” You may, if you like; and especially you will do so if you are lazy. But the one Scriptural prescription for preparing for his coming is this, “Abide in him.” If you abide in the faith of him, holding his truth, following his example, and making him your dwelling-place, your Lord may come at any hour, and you will welcome him. The cloud, the great white throne, the blast of trumpets, the angelic attendants of the last assize, the trembling of creation, and the rolling up of the universe as a worn-out vesture, will have no alarms for you; for you will not be ashamed at his coming.

The date of that coming is concealed. When he shall come, no man can tell. Watch for him, and be always ready, that you may not be ashamed at his advent. Should a Christian man go into worldly assemblies and amusements? Would he not be ashamed should his Lord come and find him among the enemies of the cross? I dare not go where I should be ashamed to be found should my Lord come on a sudden. Should a Christian man ever be in a passion? Suppose his Lord should there and then come; would he not be ashamed at his coming? One here says of an offender, “I will

never forgive her; she shall never darken my doors again.” Would you not be ashamed if the Lord Jesus came, and found you unforgiving? Oh, that we may abide in him, and never be in such a state that his coming would be unwelcome to us! Beloved, so live from day to day in duty and in devotion, that your Lord’s coming would be timely. Go about your daily business and abide in him, and then his coming will be a glorious delight to you. I called to see one of our friends, and she was whitening the front steps of the house. She apologized very much, and said that she felt ashamed of being caught in such a position; but I assured her that I should like my Lord to come and find me, just as I found her, doing my daily work with all my heart. We are never in better trim for seeing our Master than when we are faithfully doing his work. There is no need for a pious smartening up; he that abides in Christ always wears garments of glory and beauty; he may go in with his Lord into the wedding whenever the midnight cry is heard. Abide in him, and then none can make you ashamed. Who shall lay anything to your charge?

He will come-behold, he is coming even now. Hear ye not the sounding of his chariot wheels? He may arrive before yen sun goes down. “In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.” When the world is eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, he will bring destruction upon the ungodly. Be ye so engaged, day by day, that you will not be taken at unawares. What will it be to be caught up together with the saints in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air! What will it be to see him come in the glory of the Father, and all his holy angels with him! What will it be to see him reign upon the earth, with his ancients gloriously! Can ye imagine the millennial splendor, the age of gold, the halcyon days of peace? As for the judgment of the world, know ye not that the saints shall judge angels? They shall appear as assessors with Christ, and the Lord shall bruise Satan under their feet. Glory awaits us, and nothing but glory, if we abide in Christ. Therefore, keep your garments unspotted, your loins girt, your lamps trimmed, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves as men that look for your Lord, that, when he cometh, you may have confidence, and not shame. May the Holy Spirit, without whom this cannot be, be freely given to us this day, that we may abide in the Lord! And you who have never trusted in Christ for salvation, may you come to him, and then “abide in him” from this good hour! To his name be glory! Amen.

“IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM.”

NO. 2106

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 8TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” -John 18:26.

PETER was on dangerous ground. When his Master was being buffeted, he was trying to make himself comfortable. We read of the high priest’s servants that they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. He stood with them, and they were rough servants of ill masters. He was in bad company, and he was a man who could not afford to be in bad company: for he was so impulsive, and so easily provoked to rash actions.

The Holy Spirit having notified us once that Peter was on unsafe ground, in the words “Peter stood with them, and warmed himself,” specially observes that he remained there, which was worse still. Any man may inadvertently stumble upon a boggy piece of ground; but if he be a wise man, he will make all speed that he may soon pass it, and be on sound soil again. He does ill to linger upon a quagmire, for thus he toys with danger, and courts destruction. The Holy Ghost has recorded it further on, in the twenty-fifth verse, a second time, “Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.” Take heed of abiding in the place of danger. Thou mayest be called in providence to go through the Campagna when it reeks with miasma; but thou art not called to live there. If thou hast to cross a sea, cross it; but do not try to cast anchor in mid-ocean, and thus keep thy ship continually amid the billows. Where there is peril there should be a prudent haste. Quick! Pilgrim, be quick, and tarry not in the place of danger! The enchanted ground may lie on the road to the Celestial City, and therefore it may be thy duty to traverse it with anxious speed; but if thou sit down in it-if thou

take thy rest in any of the arbours there provided by the evil prince, thou mayest sleep thyself into no end of misery. Linger no longer in the wilderness than you are forced to do: hurry through the enemy's country, and rest not till you are in Immanuel's land.

Voluntary continuance on evil ground leads to repeated temptations. First the maid, then several men, and last of all this kinsman of the man whom he had wounded, began to try Peter in the high priest's hall. They put to him questions which led him to deny that he ever was a disciple of the prophet of Galilee. The longer you stop in an evil place, the more numerous will your temptations become. Temptations are like flies: they come one or two at the first, but by-and-by they buzz about you in swarms. When the deadly arrows from Satan's bow fly in such showers, it ill becomes you to be at ease.

While you tarry on dangerous ground your weakness increases. Peter, who might at first have owned his Master, did not do it, but denied him. Having once denied him, it was almost inevitable that he should do the same again; and so, again and again, he said, "I know not the man." And as the weakness increases, and the sin gains force, the fault deepens in blackness. Thrice he denied his Master, and in the end he added oaths and curses, as if it would be a sure proof that he had never been with Christ if he could swear. One distinguishing mark of a Christian, in those days, was that he swore not at all, by any oath of any sort, upon any subject, good, bad, or indifferent. Thus Peter, seeing that he could profanely swear, was giving good evidence, as the listeners thought, that he could never have been with Jesus of Nazareth.

And so, dear friends, you see the reason why, when you come near the place of temptation, you should hasten by it as quickly as possible. Linger not where the plague rages: stay not where temptation abounds. While Peter was getting increased velocity in sin, he was losing all his strength to get out of sin. Why, at the very first, when he had denied his Lord to the maid, he ought to have crept away into a secret place and wept, or more bravely still he should have rushed right through the crowd up to his dear Master yonder, and have said, "Forgive thy servant for his treachery and cowardice." But no he perseveres in the falsehood he has spoken. He adds lie to lie, and sinks deeper in the mire. Left to himself his course is downward, and there is no hope for the deserter.

The lesson of this is—again I say it—hasten out of the place of temptation; flee from it as speedily as possible. There are some who are in positions of life which they ought to give up: positions which are sinful, and cannot be held by persons who are honest, truthful, and chaste. It is of no use to try to fight the battle of the cross where some people are: they are harnessed to the chariot of the devil, and they must come out of it, or be driven to destruction. If they are engaged in a trade which, in the very essence of it, is bad, let them get away from it. If they are in associations which are distinctly sinful, they must break loose from those associations, and not pretend to be Christians. Talking the other evening with a young girl who has, I trust, escaped from the grosser sin into which she might soon have fallen, I said to her: There are three things you can do, and those three things I will set before you by an illustration. When you get outside the Tabernacle, there will be a tramcar. Now, go up to the car, and put one foot on the car, and keep the other foot on the ground, and if you do not come down with a smash I am very much mistaken. Yet many people try to keep in with the world and keep in with Christ, and they will never do it: but will make a terrible fall of it before long. Now, the second thing that you can do is, that you can keep standing in the road in the mud, and not get into the car at all. You can stop there, and let the tramcar go by: that is all fair and straight. If you want to live in the world, and be of the world, well, live in the world, and be of the world, and take what pleasure it can give you, and reap the fruit of it at last. But there is a third thing you can do, namely, get right off the road into the car, and let the car take you right away where it is going. Now, it is this third thing that I commend to you. Get right into Christ, and let the Lord Jesus, by the power of his Holy Spirit, carry you right away from the unclean place where you now stand, bearing you in safety along the tram-lines of holiness till he brings you to the terminus of glory at his own right hand. May the Lord deliver you from halting between two opinions, or choosing the wrong opinion; and may he now decide you to leap into the gospel chariot, and leave all sinful company and doubtful ways that you may own the Lord Jesus, and be his true disciple!

So much concerning Peter, and the mischief that he fell into.

This brings me to consider one of the questions which led Peter into his denial of his Master. It is this question, “Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” Let us try to handle that a little; and may the Lord cause it to do us as much good as once to Peter it did harm!

I. And the first thing I say about it is this: MANY of us HAVE HAD SPECIAL ASSOCIATION WITH OUR LORD. If any were to ask us, “Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” we should right gladly answer, “Yes, you have probably seen me; for I have often been there.” We are by no means ashamed to own that we have been much in the company of the despised Redeemer. Let us think how we have been, many of us, associated with our Lord Jesus Christ: it will do us good to consider our close connection with our Well-beloved Lord. The large proportion of the friends present to-night have been associated with him in church-fellowship. Our names are on the church-roll as belonging to Jesus. We, voluntarily and cheerfully, first gave ourselves to the Lord, and afterwards to his people, according to his Word. Some of us have had our names enrolled among baptized believers for many years, and we are right glad to have them there. May they never be erased by any shameful act of ours; but there may they stand until that day when the church-rolls of earth shall all be swallowed up in the muster-roll of the redeemed above! It is no small thing, to my mind, to have my name in the family register of God-

*“Recorded in some humble place
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”*

Yes, so far as the church is concerned, we have been “in the garden with him”; for the church is the garden wherein he walks, and takes delight.

In consequence of this, we have been associated with our Lord in fellowship of worship. When his name has been praised, we have praised it. When solemn prayer has been offered in his name, we have said, “Amen.” How many times have those of us who are in the period of middle life been gathered in his name in the great congregation! We have thousands of times expressed by word of mouth, and, I trust, with our inmost hearts, our solemn union with our divine Lord. This we have testified at the footstool of grace, when we have been adoring the Most High in private, at the family altar, and in the more public assemblies of believers. Several thousands of times we have been “in the garden with him” in the early morning, and in the cool of the day, and on happy Sabbaths without number.

Many of us have gone further than this. We have been baptized into his death, and thus we have solemnly declared that we are dead with him, and have also risen with him. Even more solemn still, if anything can be more solemn, we have eaten and drunk at his table, and the viands have been

nothing less than his flesh and blood, representatively set forth in broken bread and the fruit of the vine. What sweet intercourse we have had with our blessed Lord at his table! I am sure I could not tell you, and I think you could not tell me, how very near our Well-beloved has been to us. As I heard a newly-converted one say the other day, in simple accents, "There has been a mysterious mixup. He has come into me to build me up, and I have been as joined to him as if I had eaten his flesh, and had drunk his blood." This is a very, very solemn business. If it has been true, it is solemnly delightful. If it has been false, it is solemnly ruinous. I know of nothing that can minister more to our condemnation than to have falsely avowed such a union with Christ as that which is set forth in the holy supper. I pray that we may not be found mere pretenders. In a hundred acts of church-life we have been in the garden with him: in fact, we have professed to be part and parcel of his mystical body. We have received others into our fellowship, and we have sent them forth to other churches in the name of Jesus. We have prayed with them as they have gone forth as missionaries to the ends of the earth, to proclaim that same adorable name. We have been one with our Lord in acts of worship, and fellowship, and service. We count it our privilege, honor, and delight that it has been so.

But then, dear friends, we have, some of us, been associated with him in a yet higher sense still: I mean in distinct open testimony. We have preached his name: we have borne witness to the truth of his Word. We have pleaded with others; as though God did beseech them by us, we have prayed them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. We have proclaimed, in Christ's name, mercy to the chief of sinners; and we have felt his power working with us, so that what we bound on earth was bound in heaven, and what we loosed on earth was loosed in heaven. So much have we been identified with the Lord Jesus. When, in the preaching of the Word, we declared the remission of sins to those who sought the Savior, they did seek him, and their sins were remitted. The Lord made us to be girt with his own solemn power, and to stand in the place of his risen self. What an association with Christ has this been! Others of you, beloved, have been associated with him in teaching the children; and you have come very near him, for he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." You have brought the young to him, and he has smiled upon you while you have been bringing them. Oh, yes, you have been associated with Christ in visiting the sick, in instructing the ignorant, in bringing in the wandering, in cheering the faint. You have taken upon

yourself, by his grace, this holy ministry, each one according to his ability; and thus, in the most practical way, you have been “in the garden with him.” Ay, and to go further still, you have not only been associated with him in service, but also in suffering for his name’s sake. You had a battle to fight in your youth, against ungodly relatives and associates; and you fought it well for Christ’s sake. Some of you godly women have had to bear a living martyrdom, ever since you have been married, through the ungodliness and unkindness of your husbands. Certain of you have been despised, ridiculed, and rejected with Christ, and for Christ. Oh, it is a glorious thing! Some of us know what it is to have our name cast out as evil, and to have come down, in some men’s esteem, from the brightest heights to the darkest depths, solely and only because we will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and will shake ourselves clear of the infidelity of the present age, which is defiling the visible church with its filthy leprosy. It is very sweet to be accounted a fool for Jesus! It is most joyful when one can go into his chamber, and sing-

*“If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
For thou’lt remember me!”*

This is no small fellowship; and in this we have, many of us, possessed our full share. Yes, we can say that we have been in the garden with him.

Once more: not only have we been with him in church-fellowship, and in service, and in some small measure of suffering, but we have been with him in secret. O beloved, we dare not tell that which we have enjoyed behind the veil with our all-glorious Lord; but we have been with him, sometimes, in his joy, till whether in the body or out of the body, we could not tell: God alone has known! It would not have taken us any trouble to slip into heaven, we were so near the door, and the door was so open. There would scarce have needed to be a death, for we were already in the beginnings of the heavenly life. Our joy has been full when we have been in the garden with him. We have also had a measure of fellowship with him in his anguish, when we have groaned out our very soul to see the apostasy of his church; to see how those that should preach his gospel do not preach it, but preach the very reverse of it. We have felt as if it were better for us to die than to live when we have seen this exceeding great evil. When the sins and iniquities of Christians have come under our eyes, and the name of Christ has been blasphemed, and the precious gospel has been despised

because of the inconsistencies of professors and the silly amusements of church-members, we have been afflicted with our Lord. We have been with Christ almost in a bloody sweat concerning his base betrayal by his disciples. You know what I am talking of, some of you. The Lord does bring some of his people very near to him, till they are in the garden with him, in an agony of soul for sinful men. There have you been made to know what you cannot tell, and to behold in your soul what no eye can ever see, and to hear in the heart that which shall never greet the ear of mortal man. Beloved, in these senses, you would be bound to confess your association with the Lord Jesus, and to say, "Yes, I have been in the garden with him."

II. Now I go a step further in the text. The question is, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" which leads me to observe that **MANY OF US HAVE BEEN SEEN OF MEN IN OUR ASSOCIATION WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.** We did not want to be observed: we were far from courting observation. There are some of the Lord's people who would like to go to heaven without being seen with the Lord Jesus in the streets by daylight. They would be saved, and yet never be seen with their Savior. I do not think that the sin of this age, with most Christians, is obtrusiveness; far more likely it is unholy fear. Some think it modesty; but I question whether this is its real name. I will not call it cowardice, but I will take their own expression, and call it backwardness. They say they are of a "retiring" disposition, which I interpret in a way very little to their credit. I have heard of a soldier who was of a very "retiring" disposition when the battle was on, and he retired with great diligence as soon as the first shots were fired. I think I heard that he was hung up as a deserter and a coward. No good comes of a retiring disposition of that kind. We have that sort of "retiring person" with us nowadays, but such people will have to answer for it when the Lord denies those who denied him.

But, without desiring to be known, dear friends, you that have been with Christ have been found out; and, first, you have been seen in the garden with your Lord, by those associated in family life with you. They were not long before they discovered that you were a Christian. A man who carries in his hand otto of roses will soon be known to bear it by the perfume which is scattered abroad. He that has grace in his heart needs not to advertise it; it will advertise itself. Mother finds out that there is something very different in John from what there used to be. Sister Jane finds out that Mary seems quite altered from what she used to be. Father discovers that

mother is so different from what she was a little while ago. Like water in a leaking vessel, religion oozes out. Love to Jesus is sure to be found out. Believe me, Christian brother, your friends know that you follow Jesus. They have known it long, and they will yet say to you, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" You were observed at private prayer. You were noticed reading the Scriptures. At first you blushed to find it commended, or to find it blamed; you do not do so now, for you are aware that everybody knows it. If you have not been found out, I should think you have no grace to spare, for even a little true religion is spied out in these days.

And you, dear friends, have been found out by certain curious people that are always prying about. We do not admire them, but we can never get rid of them-certain persons from whom no secret can ever be hid. They seem to know things by instinct, and they tell them by compulsion, whispering them with the preface that nobody must repeat what they say, though they themselves take license to communicate the secret to everybody they meet. These tattlers soon find out that a man is a Christian, and they speedily spread the intelligence, not always with pleasure-in some instances with malicious sarcasm. They ferret out the fact of your change, and when they see you, they sneeringly ask, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?"

We have been found out, especially by those whom our holy faith opposes. Here was one that had come to take the Savior as a prisoner, and he was the man to pitch upon Peter. "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Just so. And when you come out and bear witness against an error, or when your life bears hard upon evil conduct, you will assuredly be found out. Those who are on the other side will know you. I hope that they will have good reason for knowing you. I hope that they will oppose you very much, and thus effectually drive you out of their fellowship. There are two seeds in the world-the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; and if the seed of the serpent never hisses at you, you may be afraid that you do not belong to the seed of the woman. God has put an enmity between the serpent and the woman-between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed; and so it must be till the end of time. Take any opposition that you get from worldlings as a token for good, a sign that you are of a different race from those who despise you, a testimonial to your character from those whose homage to goodness embodies itself in persecution. Oh, yes, yes, these people will say, "Did not I see you at the meeting-house? Did not I hear of your being with that canting crew? Are not you one of those vile

hypocrites?” and so on. That is the way in which they compliment us. Do you know all the pretty things they say of your leaders? We are not spared by foul tongues. Oh, you that are common soldiers in the ranks, you may very well bear your portion of abuse; for if I heard you fretting, I should remind you that your leaders have had worse things to bear. Do you think that I lie on a bed of roses? Am I never opposed and slandered? I have my full, fair share of the world’s abuse; but I am ready for twice as much, if necessary. We are willing to be so publicly in the garden with our Master, that his enemies may quote it against us, if they wish, and sneeringly ask, “Did not I see thee in the garden with him?”

Especially will this be known to those who are affected by our procedure. The gentleman whose ear had been cut off knew Peter. So did his kinsman, who, to his alarm, saw a sword come so very close to his kinsman’s skull. He recognized Peter at once; and no wonder. It was only by the flash of one of those torches that he caught a glimpse of the disciple with the sword; but, as Peter cut off that man’s cousin’s ear, the impression made was particularly vivid. So, if you begin to talk about Christ to people, if you ask them whether they are saved, some of them will thank you for your holy anxiety; but others, who choose to feel annoyed, will judge that you wantonly tread upon their corns, and they will feel that you have assaulted them. Deal faithfully with their souls, and they will photograph your portrait on the sensitive plate of a very angry nature. They do not want to see you any more. They “fight shy” of you, and so on; for they judge you to be very rude and personal. I hope that you will always have a little company of friends who will remember you by reason of their smarting ears. I do not invite you to cut their ears off; quite the reverse: rather heal their ears with a touch of Christ’s golden ointment; but at the same time, make their ears to tingle with your warnings and entreaties. Tell them about Christ crucified; and then, the next time they see you, they will say, “That is the man that spoke to me about my sin and my Savior.” Be recognized because of the earnestness of your concern for the salvation of others.

There are some of us-and a very considerable number of friends here to-night-who are known to have been in the garden with Christ by a vast number of persons. If some of you were to fall into grave sin, and desired to hide yourselves, where would you go? Especially myself-where could I go? I could not go into any doubtful or questionable place, with the hope of being unknown, for someone would point me out in a moment. I

wonder where I could get to without being perceived. I say, I wonder, but I do not want to discover. Where could a well-known preacher go without being recognized? I sat with a good brother minister one day in the midst of a pine plantation, on the top of a hill, which is quite away from the usual haunts of men,, and we were talking together about the things of God, and I was saying, if we deserted our Master where could we flee, so as not to be known? I said, "If we sat long enough even in this lone spot, I dare say some person would come along who would know us." Almost immediately I saw the head of a man moving among the pine trees, and watched him coming up the hill. I said, "I should not wonder if a friend of ours is coming now." It was a brother who sits in the right-hand gallery, come to look out a secluded spot for a pic-nic. Yes, he had found us out. We could not get anywhere without being known. You and I had better keep our regimentals on, and go through with the war, and never be ashamed, for we cannot go away incognito. The day is past in which we can be hidden. If you are a Christian, and have declared yourself out-and-out for Christ, never think of going back; for you cannot, without having the finger of shame pointed at you. In the district where you live you have become enthusiastic for the conversion of souls, you have lifted high the banner of truth, you have declared that for Christ and him crucified you desire to live and die. Well, then, my dear brother, you are bound to go forward even to the end. Else many a man and maid will point their fingers at you, and say, "Did not we see thee in the garden with him?"-and how will you answer, if, afterwards, you are seen serving self and this present evil world?

III. That leads me to the third point, to which we have climbed up insensibly, namely, this: WE ARE NOW THE SUBJECTS OF EXPECTATION. As we have been in the garden with Jesus, and we have been seen there, we are now the subjects of very high expectations; that is to say, people expect a great deal from those who are known to be associated with Jesus. They are very unreasonable sometimes, and expect far more than they are warranted in looking for, and consequently much more than they will ever get. I have known some expect young Christians, who have just come to Christ, to be perfect-to know everything, to be able to preach a sermon, pray in public, give a fivepound note, and listen patiently to all the nonsense everybody chooses to talk. Well, they may expect what they like; but they will not get unreasonable things. Should we expect from another what we cannot render ourselves? In these days they expect a man to do everything, and then to attempt more. When you have toiled from morning

to night, and laid yourself out in your Master's service-time, talents, substance, everything-somebody will snarl because you cannot do what he demands of you. The mercy is that we are not the servants of man: we are the servants of God; and if we please our Master, that is quite enough for us. One Master is enough for the best of servants. If we are popular in heaven, we may wisely be indifferent to the judgments of men.

Unreasonable expectations we are not bound to meet; but there are expectations which are just and righteous. Men are quite right in expecting that, if you have been with Jesus, your character should be affected by association with him.

For, first, you make a very high profession. You say, "I am Christ's." Well, then, they come to look at you, and see what Christ's men are. If you are in an ugly temper, they will say, "Surely, this is not the work of God." If you are awfully stingy, and never give anything away, they will conclude that it is not desirable to be a Christian. If you are sarcastic, and find fault with everybody and everything, they will say, "That is not a very beautiful spirit." They are right, are they not? Can you blame them for thus judging? Do you know how to turn a dirty penny in your business? That is no credit to the name of Christian. If you promise to send work home on Saturday night, and your customers do not get it till a fortnight after, they will set small store by your Christianity. No one will think well of your religion if you do not tell the truth. When your word is passed, be sure that you keep it, or you will discredit your Lord and Master. I am not going into all the ways in which a man can so act in common life, as to lead people to exclaim, "That is not what we should have expected of a man that talks of following Jesus." They have a right to expect a good deal from our sacred profession. What is our religion? Is it a semi-moral religion, like Mahomedanism? No, it is a holy religion, that would make you perfect if, by the grace of God, you followed it to its ultimate issue; for it sets before you this as the object of ambition—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Such a faith as ours ought to bring forth the noblest form of character; and when it does not, I do not wonder that the world is disappointed, and in its indignation speaks sharp things of us and of our faith. They have a right to expect a great deal from the disciples of such a Lord. Such a Leader! What ought not the followers to be? Such a Savior! What should the saved ones be? What manner of persons ought we to be who serve the holy, harmless, undefiled One.

Beloved, they may well expect great things on account of our comrades, With whom we are proud to be numbered. Consider who they were that went before us, those holy men and women who counted not their lives dear unto them. How faithfully they lived and served the Lord Jesus! Many of them went in a chariot of fire to heaven, burnt quickly to death for Christ's sake. We are bound by our associations, bound by our Master, bound by the truth we believe, bound by the profession we have made, to live, not as other men, but as men who are of noble lineage, lifted up by a second birth, twice born, the elect of God, redeemed from among men, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

IV. So, you see, we are brought where the world expects a good deal of us, and when the world does not get it (that is the fourth point)-IF WE DISAPPOINT SUCH EXPECTATIONS-THE QUESTION MAY BE VERY PROPERLY PUT TO US, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" It is a salutary thing for a man to know that his inconsistency is observed. Then he begins to see himself as others see him. It is very painful, very disagreeable; but, at the same time, very likely to bless the man. A man is apt to get a little angry about it; but it is a good thing for him to know how his conduct strikes other people. I have read of an old lady who gazed into a looking-glass, and remarked that they did not make good mirrors nowadays, for those which she used to look into, fifty years ago, showed her quite different from what she now was. The looking-glasses were very inferior in these times. When the world observes that your character is inconsistent, it may be that it is a truthful looking-glass, although it does not exhibit your beauties, but shows up your wrinkles and blotches. Do not quarrel with the looking-glass, but quarrel with your own self. Depend upon it, you are disfigured with spots which you need to get rid of. When convicted by your conscience of an inconsistency, even though the conviction comes to you through an unkind, ungenerous remark of a wicked man, yet still take the lesson home, and go to God for grace and forgiveness, and begin again. A very plain-spoken enemy may do us ten times more service than an indulgent friend.

Such a question as this should effectually recall us to holiness-to deep repentance of the past, and to strong resolves for the future. I will imagine that a certain Christian man has come to town for a holiday, and during the season of his holiday in London, he is asked by a friend to go to a questionable place of amusement. I will imagine that he yields to the invitation and goes; though I am sorry even to imagine such a thing. Well,

he has gone where he should not have gone; and I should like some venerable minister, some saint of God, to meet him in the street as he comes out, and say to him, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" What a rebuke! How it would cut him to the heart! I have heard that even professing Christians, when they go over to Paris, will go where they ought not to go; and they have pleaded, as an excuse, that they wanted to see the manners and customs of the Continent. To put it in plain English, they want to join in with the manners and customs of the devil. You have no more right to go into wrong places in Paris than in London. I should quite as soon be seen in a theater or a music-hall in London as in Paris; indeed I am told that our home production is by far the safer of the two. You have no right to go anywhere where you are ashamed to be seen by Christian people, or by the whole world. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses in heaven and in hell, and we should mind how we act. Take that to yourself, if you have crept into the devil's dominions on the sly. Some one will catch you there, and say, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?"

And if you are ever tempted to conceal your religion, then I hope that this question will come whistling in your ears, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" I have sometimes been obliged to a wicked world for what it has done to inconsistent professors of religion. I remember a young man, in my early pastorate, going to a certain place of doubtful fame, and in the midst of a dance, somebody cried out, "That is one of Spurgeon's people. Fling him out of the window." And out he went. I felt grateful for that act of discipline from the adversary. I wish that they would fling out of window all who dare come in among the people of God while their hearts are with the world and its evil pleasures. Those who were gathered in that assembly felt that they did not want the company of downright hypocrite, and so they put him out of their synagogue. If you should ever be found in "gay company," or even in respectable company where evangelical doctrine is at a discount, I hope you will have things made uncomfortable for you. If you hold your tongue and are quiet, and try to be one of the clan, where Jesus is dishonored, I hope this question will fall into your ear like a drop of burning lava, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Stand up for your Master in all companies and in all places, or else renounce his service.

Now, I am going to use this question very briefly in several ways.

The question may be put to a person by a friend who is very anxious to see him decided against the evil tendencies of the times. The only way of

dealing with evil, according to the Scripture, is, "Come ye out from among them: be ye separate." When expediency pleads, "Do not come out. Make friends with error, and be liberal," then may the reprover ask, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Your hope is fixed on him that died without the gate; wilt thou not take up thy cross, and go without the camp bearing his reproach? "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?"

The question may apply again, when a friend is hard at work for Christ, and under difficulty, requires your help. Laying his whole life upon the altar, he is hard put to it for want of money, or for want of personal assistance in teaching or preaching, and he appeals to you: he says, "You have something to spare, help me, for the Lord's sake, for whom I am striving with all my heart and soul! I am in a difficulty; come to my help." When you turn away and coldly say, "No, I cannot afford money or time," he might well ask, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Hast thou not had fellowship with the Lord; and wilt thou not have fellowship with his servant in his work?"

It is a good and profitable question. I should like, at this time, to speak to some here whom I have never spoken to in my life before, and introduce myself, and beg for their sympathy and aid, saying to them, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Did not I notice you at the prayer-meeting? I think I saw your face light up at a certain part of the sermon, as if you enjoyed it. Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" A kind of freemasonry exists between Christians. If we meet with any that have been with Christ, it is, "Hail, fellow! well met! Thou art my brother, whatever thy opinions may happen to be upon minor points." Oh, thou that hast been in the garden with my Lord, and followed him in the time of his shame, thou art a brother of mine, for I saw thee in the garden with him, and I rejoice to own the everlasting kinship! Give me a place in thy sympathy. Mention me in thy prayers.

We will put the question also in one other way: we will use it as an enquiry full of cheer to a faithful heart under depression. Yonder tempted believer cries, "I am half afraid that I really cannot be a living child of God. I am very dull, and drooping, and distressed." My dear brother, years ago we used to have fellowship with you in joy and peace, in hope and song. Not so very long ago you came out of the house of prayer, saying, "It is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." You are down in the valley now; but, like Jeshurun, you were wont to ride upon the high

places of the earth. Pluck up courage. You may now be in the desert with your Lord, but you have been in the garden with him, and you will be again. Those bright days will comeback; for dark nights last not for ever. You have become sleepy and dull, and, mayhap, Laodicean and lukewarm; but the Lord will revive you. Remember the old times, the days of heaven upon the earth, the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. Hope on, hope ever. He who has been with you will be with you yet again.

“Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” I should like to be welcomed with that question as I enter the skies at the last. I should not object to have that spoken to me by some bright spirit as I pass through the pearl gate: “Did not I see thee in the garden with him?” “Yes, bright seraph, you may have seen me; and now you see that he casts not off his poor friend in the day of his glory.” The angel of the Lord saw you when you repented, he spied you out in that little room where you wept alone because of sin. Upstairs in the solitary chamber, where you told the Lord how father and mother were opposed to you, and yet you meant to follow the Lamb in all the ways of service and obedience, you were “seen of angels.” Beloved, the brave adherence of the least of our Lord’s disciples is seen, known, and remembered in heavenly places. In the last great day you that have been with Christ here, and trusted him amid the clouds, and the darkness, and the derision, shall see him, and reign with him, and he shall acknowledge you as his, since you were in the garden with him in the day of his humiliation. God bless you! Amen.

THE WITHERED FIG TREE

NO. 2107

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
SEPTEMBER 29TH, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!”

— Matthew 21:17-20.

THIS is a miracle and a parable. We have books upon the miracles, we have an equal number of volumes upon the parables: into which of these volumes shall we place this story? I would answer, put it in both. It is a singular miracle, and it is a striking parable. It is an acted parable, in which our Lord gives us an object-lesson. He gets truth before men's eyes, in this instance, that the lesson may make a deeper impression upon the mind and heart. I would lay great stress upon the remark that this is a parable; for, if you do not look upon it in that light, you may misunderstand it. We are not of those who come to the Word of God with the cool impertinence of the critic, thinking ourselves wiser than the Book, and therefore able to judge it. We believe that the Holy Spirit is greater than man's spirit, and that our Lord and Master was a better judge of what is right and good than any of us can be. Our place is at his feet: we are not cavillers, but followers. Whatever Jesus does and says, we regard with deepest reverence; our chief desire is to learn as much as we can from it. We see great mysteries in his simplest actions, and profound teaching about his plainest words. When he

speaks or acts, we are like Moses at the bush, and feel that we stand on holy ground.

Flippant persons have spoken of the story before us in a very foolish manner. They have represented it as though our Lord, being hungered, thought only of his necessity, and, expecting to be refreshed by a few green figs went up to the tree in error. Finding no fruit upon the tree, it being a season when he had no right to expect that there would be any, he was vexed, and uttered a malediction against a tree, as though it had been a responsible agent. This view of the case results from the folly of the observer: it is not the truth. Our Lord desired to teach his disciples concerning the doom of Jerusalem. The reception given him in Jerusalem was full of promise, but it would come to nothing. Their loud hosannas would change to, "Crucify Him!"

When Jerusalem was to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar a former time, the prophets had not only spoken, but they had used instructive signs. If you turn to the Book of Ezekiel, you will there see the record of many signs and symbols which set forth the coming woe. These tokens excited curiosity, secured consideration, and brought home the prophetic warnings to the homes and hearts of the common people. Again, the judgments of God were at the gates of the guilty city. Words — the words of Jesus — had been wasted; and even tears — tears of the Savior — had been spilt in vain; it was time that the sign should be given — the sign of condemnation. Ezekiel had said, "All the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and have dried up the green tree"; and herein was suggested the very image which was employed by our Lord. He saw a fig tree, by a freak of nature, covered with leaves at a time when, in the ordinary course of things, it should not have been so. Our Lord saw that this was a fine object lesson for him, and therefore he took his disciples to see if there were figs as well as leaves. When he found none, he bade the fig tree remain for ever fruitless, and immediately it began to wither. Our Lord would have used the fig tree to excellent purpose had he ordered it to be used a fuel to warm cold hands, but he did better when he used it to warm cold hearts. No wrong was done to any man; it was a tree on the waste, and utterly worthless. No pain was inflicted; no anger was felt. In the object-lesson, the Lord simply said to the fig tree, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever"; and it withered away. In this our Lord taught a great lesson to all ages at a small expense. The withering of a tree has been the quickening of many a soul; and if it had not been so, it was no

loss to any that a tree should wither when it had proved itself barren. A great teacher may do far more than destroy a tree, if he can thereby give demonstrations of truth, and scatter seeds of virtue. It is the veriest idleness of criticism to find fault with our Lord Jesus for a piece of fine poetic instruction, for which, had it been spoken by any other teacher, the most lavish praise would have been awarded by these very critics.

The blighted fig tree was a singularly apt simile of the Jewish state. The nation had promised great things to God. When all the other nations were like trees without leaves, making no profession of allegiance to the true God, the Jewish nation was covered with the leafage of abundant religious profession. Scribes, pharisees, priests and elders of the people were all sticklers for the letter of the law, and boaster of being worshippers of the one God, and strict observers of all his laws. Their constant cry was, "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these." "We have Abraham to our Father" was frequently on their lips. They were a fig tree in full leaf. But there was no fruit upon them; for the people were neither holy, nor just, nor true, nor faithful towards God, nor loving to their neighbor. The Jewish church was a mass of glittering profession, unsupported by spiritual life. Our Lord had looked into the temple, and had found the house of prayer to be a den of thieves. He condemned the Jewish church to remain a lifeless, fruitless thing; and it was so. The synagogue remained open; but its teaching became a dead form. Israel had no influence upon the age. The Jewish race became, for centuries, a withered tree: it had nothing but profession when Christ came, and that profession proved powerless to save even the holy city. Christ did not destroy the religious organization of the Jews: he left them as they were; but they withered away from the root, till the Roman came, and with the axes of his legions cleared away the fruitless trunk.

What a lesson is this to nations! Nations may make a profession, a loud profession, of religion, and yet may fail to exhibit that righteousness which exalteth a nation. Nations may be adorned with all the leafage of civilization, and art, and progress, and religion; but if there be no inner life of godliness, and no fruit unto righteousness, they will stand for a while, and then wither away.

What a lesson this is to churches! There have been churches which have stood prominent in numbers and in influence; but faith, and love, and holiness have not been maintained, and the Holy Ghost has left them to the

vain show of a fruitless profession; and there stand those churches, with the trunk of organization, and widely-extended branches, but they are dead, and every year they become more and more decayed. Brethren, such churches we have even among Nonconformists at this hour. May it never be so with this church! We may have numbers of people coming to hear the Word, and a considerable body of men and women professing to be converted; but unless vital godliness is in their midst, what are congregations and churches? We might have a valued ministry, but what would this be without the Spirit of God? We might have large subscriptions, and many outward efforts; but what of these without the spirit of prayer, the spirit of faith, the spirit of grace and consecration? I dread lest we should ever come to be like a tree, precocious with a superlative profession, but yet worthless in the sight of the Lord, because the secret life of piety, and vital union to Christ, are gone. Better that the axe clear away every vestige of the tree than that it stand out against the sky an open lie, a mockery, a delusion.

This is the lesson of the text; but I do not want you to consider it only in the gross, in its relation to nations and churches; but my heart's desire is that we may learn the lesson in detail, and take it home each one to his own heart. May the Lord himself speak to each one of us this morning personally! In preparing the sermon, I have had great searchings of heart, and I pray that the hearing of it may produce the same results. May we tremble, lest, having a profession of godliness, we should wear it conspicuously, and yet should lack the fruitbearing which alone can warrant such a profession. The name of saintship, if it be not justified by sanctity, is an offense to honest men, and much more to a holy God. A pronounced and forward avowal of Christianity without a Christian life at the back of it is a lie, abhorrent to God and man, an offense against truth, a dishonor to religion, and the forerunner of a withering curse.

May the Holy Spirit help me to preach very solemnly and powerfully at this time!

Our first observation is this — There are in the world cases of forward, but fruitless, profession; our second observation will be this — These will be inspected by King Jesus; and our third remark will be — The result of that inspection will be very terrible. Help us, O Holy Spirit!

I. First, then, THERE ARE IN THE WORLD CASES OF FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSION.

The cases to which we refer are not so very rare. They far excel their fellow-men. Their promise is very loud, and their exterior very impressive. They look like fruitful trees; you expect many baskets of the best figs from them. They impress us by their talk, they overpower us by their manners. We envy them, and lash ourselves. This last might not harm us; but to envy hypocrites can never be otherwise than injurious in the long run; for, when their hypocrisy is discovered, we are apt to despise religion as well as the pretenders to it. Do you not know persons who are in appearance everything and in reality nothing? O dark thought! may we not ourselves be such persons? See the man, he is strong in faith, even to presumption; he is joyous in hope, even to levity; he is loving in spirit, even to utter indifference about truth! How very glib he is in talk! How deep he is in theological speculation! Yet he has never entered the kingdom by the new birth. He has never been taught of God. The gospel has come to him in word only. He is a stranger to the work of the Holy Ghost. Are there not such persons? Are there not persons who are defenders of orthodoxy and yet are heterodox in their own conduct? Do we not know men and women whose lives deny what their lips profess? We are sure it is so. All vineyards have had in them fig trees covered with leaves, which have been conspicuous from the foliage of their profession, and yet have brought forth no fruit unto the Lord.

Such persons seem to defy the seasons. It was not the time of figs, yet was this fig tree covered with those leaves which usually betokened ripe figs. I suppose you all know what I have often seen for myself — the fig tree puts forth its fruit before its leaves. Early in the year you see green knobs put forth at the end and points of the branches, and these, as they swell, turn out to be green figs. The leaves come forward afterwards, and by the time the tree is fully covered with leaves, the figs are ready for eating. When a fig tree is in full leaf, you expect to find figs upon it; and if you do not, it will bear no figs for that season. This tree put forth leaves abundantly before its season, and therein excelled all other fig trees. Yes, but it was a freak of nature, and not a healthy result of true growth. Such freaks of nature occur in forests and in vineyards; and their like may be met with in the moral and spiritual world. Certain men and women seem far in advance of those round about them, and astonish us by their special virtues. They are better than the best; more excellent than the most excellent — at least in appearance. They are so zealous that they are not chilled by the surrounding world: their great souls create a summer for themselves. The

backwardness of saints, and the wickedness of sinners, do not hinder them; they are too vigorous to be affected by their surroundings. They are very superior persons, covered with virtues, as this fig tree with leaves.

Observe, that they overleap the ordinary rule of growth. As I have told you, the rule is, first the fig, and afterwards the fig leaves; but we have seen persons who make a profession before they have produced the slightest fruit to justify it. I like to see our young friends, when they believe in Christ, proving their faith by holiness at home, by godliness abroad, and then coming forward and confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That looks to be the sober and normal way of proceeding, for a man first to be, and then to profess to be; first to be lighted, and then to shine; first to repent and believe, and then to confess his repentance and his faith in the Scriptural way, by baptism into Christ. But these people think it unnecessary to attend to the trifle of heart-work — they dare to omit the most vital part of the matter. They attend a revival meeting, and they declare themselves saved, though they have not been renewed in heart, and possess neither repentance nor faith. They come forward to avow a mere emotion. They have nothing better than a resolve; but they flourish it as if it were the deed itself. Quick as thought, the convert sets up to be a teacher. Without test or trial of his brand-new virtues, he holds himself forth as an example to others. Now, I do not object to the rapidity of the conversion; on the contrary, I admire it, if it be true; but I cannot judge till I see the fruit and evidence in the life. If the change of conduct is distinct and true, I care not how quickly the work is done; but we must see the change. There is a heat which leads to fermentation, and a fermentation which breeds sourness and corruption. O dear friends, never think you may skip the fruit and come at once to the leaf. Be not like a builder who should say, “It is all nonsense to spend labor and material on works underground. Foundations are never seen; I can run up a house in no time; four walls and a roof will not take long.” Yes; but how long will such a house last? Is it worthwhile building a house without foundations? If you omit the foundation, why not omit the house altogether? Is there not a tendency, especially in these days, when men are either skeptical or fanatical, to cultivate a mushroom godliness, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night? Will it not be ruinous if conviction of sin is slighted, repentance slurred, faith imitated, the new birth counterfeited, and godliness feigned? Beloved, this will never do. We must have figs before leaves, acts before declarations, faith before baptism, union to Christ before union with the church. You cannot leap

over the processes of nature, neither may you omit the processes of grace, lest haply your foliage without fruit become a curse without cure.

These people usually catch the eye of others. According to Mark, our Lord saw this tree "afar off." The other trees were not in leaf, and consequently, when he began to go up the hill toward Jerusalem, he saw this one tree quite a long way before he reached it. A fig tree dressed in its vesture of lovely green would be a striking object, and would be observable at a distance. It stood, also, near the track from Bethany to the city gate. It stood where every wayfarer would observe it, and probably speak with wonder of its singular leafage for the season. Persons whose religion is false are frequently prominent, because they have not grace enough to be modest and retiring. They seek the highest room, aspire to office, and push themselves into leadership. They do not walk in secret with God, they have little concern about private godliness, and so they are all the more eager to be seen of men. this is both their weakness and their peril. Though least of all able to bear the wear and tear of publicity, they are covetous for it, and are, therefore, all the more watched. This is the evil of the whole matter; for it makes their spiritual failure to be known by so many, and their sin brings all the greater dishonor upon the name of the Lord, whom they profess to serve. Better far to be fruitless in a corner of a wood than on the public way which leads to the temple.

Such people not only catch the eye, but they often attract the company of good men. Who blames us for drawing near to a tree which is in leaf long before its fellows? Is it not right to cultivate the acquaintance of the eminently good? Our Savior and his disciples went up to the leafy fig tree: not merely did it win their eye, but it drew them to itself. Have we not been fascinated by the charming conduct of one who seemed to be a brother in the Lord, more devout than usual, fearing God above many? Like Jehu, he has said, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord;" and we have been glad enough to ride in the chariot with him: he seemed so godly, so generous, so humble, so useful, that we looked up to him, and wished that we were more worthy to be associated with him. Young converts and seekers are naturally apt to do this; and hence it is a sad calamity when their confidence turns out to have been misplaced.

Whenever we see any standing out prominently, and making a bold profession, what should be our thoughts about them? I answer, do not judge them; do not fall into habitual mistrust. Your Lord did not stand at a

distance and say, "That tree is worthless." No, he went up to it, with his disciples, and carefully inspected it. These prominent persons may be wonders of divine grace: let us hope and pray that they may be. Let the Lord and his love be magnified in them! God has his fig trees that bear figs in winter; God has his saints who are filled with good works when the love of others has waxed cold. The Lord raises some up to be as standards for the truth, rallying points in the battle. The Lord can make young men mature, and new converts useful. It has been said, by way of proverbial expression, that "some men are born with beards." The Lord can give great grace, so as to make spiritual growth rapid and yet solid. He does this so often that we have no right to doubt but what the prominent brother before us is one of these growths of grace. Unless we are forced to see with bitter regret that there are no marks of grace, no evidences of faith, let us hope for the best, and be glad at the sight of God's grace. If we are inclined to be suspicious, let us turn the point of that sword towards our own bosoms. Self-suspicion will be healthy; suspicion of others may be cruel. We are not judges; and even if we are, we had better keep to our own court, and sit on our own judgment-seat, dispensing the law within the little kingdom of our own selves.

Where those who are prominent turn out to be all they profess to be, they are a great blessing. It would have been well if that morning there had been figs upon that fig tree. It would have been a great refreshment to the Savior if he had been fed by the green fruit. When the Lord makes the first in position to be first in holiness, it is a blessing to the church, to the family, and to the neighborhood; indeed, it may prove to be a blessing to the whole world. We ought, therefore, to pray the Lord to water with his own hand those trees which he has planted; or, in other words, to uphold by his grace those men of his right hand whom he has made strong for himself.

But when we take the text and lay it home to our own hearts, we need not be so gentle with it as in the cases of others. We have, many of us, for long years been like this fig-tree, as to prominence and profession. And in this matter, so far, there is nothing of which to be ashamed. Yet it is evidently to ourselves that the parable speaks; for we have stood in open avowal and distinct service by the wayside, and we have been seen "afar off." Certain of us have made a very bold profession, and we are not ashamed to repeat that profession before men and angels. Hence the enquiry: Are we truthful in it? What if we should turn out to be contending for a faith in which we have no share? What if in us there should be none of the life of love, and

consequently our profession should be “as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”? What if there should be talk, and no work; doctrine, and no practice? What if we are without holiness? Then we shall never see the Lord. Whatever terrible aspect this parable-miracle may have, it bears upon many of us. I, the preacher, feel how much it bears upon me. In that spirit have I thought it over, anxiously trusting that every deacon and every elder of this church, and every member and every worker among you, may have great searchings of heart. May every minister of Christ who may have dropped in here this morning, say to himself, “Yes, I have been like that fig tree in prominence and in profession; God grant that I be not like it in being devoid of fruit!”

II. It is time that we remembered the solemn truth of our second head:
THESE WILL BE INSPECTED BY KING JESUS.

He will draw nigh to them, and when he comes up to them he will look for fruit. The first Adam came to the fig tree for leaves, but the Second Adam looks for figs. He searches our character through and through, to see whether there is any real faith, any true love, any living hope, any joy which is the fruit of the Spirit, any patience, any self-denial, any fervor in prayer, any walking with God, any indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and if he does not see these things, he is not satisfied with chapel-going, church-going, prayer meetings, communions, sermons, Bible readings; for all these may be no more than leafage. If our Lord does not see the fruit of the Spirit upon us, he is not satisfied with us, and his inspection will lead to severe measures. Notice that what Jesus looks for is not your words, not your resolves, not your avowals, but your sincerity, your inward faith, your being indeed wrought upon by the Spirit of God to bring forth fruits meet for his kingdom.

Our Lord has a right to expect fruit when he looks for it. When he went up to that fig tree he had a right to expect fruit; because the fruit, according to nature, comes before the leaf. If, then, the leaf has come, there should be fruit. True, it was not the time of figs; but then, if it was not the time of figs, it certainly was not the season for leaves, for the figs are first. This tree, by putting forth leaves, which are the signs and tokens of ripe figs, virtually advertised itself as bearing fruit. So, however bad the times may be, some of us profess that we will not follow the times, but will follow the one immutable truth. As Christians, we confess that we are redeemed from among men, and have been delivered from this perverse generation. Christ

may not expect fruit of men who acknowledge the world and its changing ages as their supreme guide; but he may well look for it from the believer in his own Word. He looks for fruit from the preacher, from the Sunday-school teacher, from the church-officer, from the sister who conducts a Bible class, from that brother who has a band of young men around him, to whom he is a guide in the gospel. He does expect it of all who submit to his gospel rule. As Christ had a right to expect fruit of a leaf-bearing fig tree, so he has a right to expect great things from those who avow themselves his trustful followers. Ah me! how this fact should move the preacher with trembling! Should it not affect full many of you in the same manner?

Fruit is what the Lord earnestly desires. The Savior, when he came under the fig tree, did not desire leaves; for we read that he hungered, and human hunger cannot be removed by leaves of a fig tree. He desired to eat a fig or two; and he longs to have fruit from us also. He hungers for our holiness: he longs that his joy may be in us, that our joy may be full. He comes up to each of you who are members of his church, and especially to each of you who are leaders of his people, and he looks to see in you the things in which his soul is well pleased. He would see in us love to himself, love to our fellow-men, strong faith in revelation, earnest contention for the once delivered faith, importunate pleading in prayer, and careful living in every part of our course. He expects from us actions such as are according to the law of God and the mind of the Spirit of God; and if he does not see these, he does not receive his due. What did he die for but to make his people holy? What did he give himself for but that he might sanctify unto himself a people zealous of good works? What is the reward of the bloody sweat and the five wounds and the death agony, but that by all these we should be bought with a price? We rob him of his reward if we do not glorify him, and therefore the Spirit of God is grieved at our conduct if we do not show forth his praises by our godly and zealous lives.

And mark here, that when Christ comes to a soul he surveys it with keen discernment. He is not mocked. It is not possible to deceive him. I have thought that to be a fig which turned out to be only a leaf was a mistake; but our Lord makes no such mistake. Neither will he overlook the little figs, just breaking forth. He knows the fruit of the Spirit in whatever stage it may be. He never mistakes fluent expression for hearty possession, nor real grace for mere emotion. Beloved, you are in good hands as to the trial of your condition when the Lord Jesus comes to deal with you. Your

fellow-men are quick in their judgments, and they may be either censorious, or partial; but the King gives forth a righteous sentence. He knows just where we are, and what we are; and he judges not after the appearance, but according to truth. Oh, that our prayer might this morning rise to heaven: “Jesus, Master, come and cast thy searching eyes upon me, and judge whether I am living unto thee or not! Give me to see myself as thou seest me, that I may have my errors corrected, and my graces nourished. Lord, make me to be indeed what I profess to be; and if I am not so already, convince me of my false state, and begin a true work in my soul. If I am thine, and am right in thy sight, grant me a kind, assuring word to sink my fears again, and I will gladly rejoice in thee as the God of my salvation.”

III. I come, thirdly, by the help of the Spirit of God, to consider the truth, that THE RESULT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSOR WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE.

The searcher finds nothing but leaves where fruit might have been expected. Nothing but leaves means nothing but lies. Is that a harsh expression? If I profess faith, and have no faith, is not that a lie? If I profess repentance, and have not repented, is not that a lie? If I unite with the people of the living God, and yet have no fear of God in my heart, is not that a lie? If I come to the communion-table, and partake of the bread and wine, and yet never discern the Lord’s body, is not that a lie? If I profess to defend the doctrines of grace, and yet am not assured of the truth of them, is not that a lie? If I have never felt my depravity; if I have never been effectually called, never known my election of God, never rested in the redeeming blood, and have never been renewed by the Spirit, is not my defense of the doctrines of grace a lie? If there is nothing but leaves, there is nothing but lies, and the Savior sees that it is so. All the verdure of green leaf to him without fruit is but so much deceit. Profession without grace is the funeral pageantry of a dead soul. Religion without holiness is the light which comes from rotten wood — the phosphorescence of decay: I speak dread words, but how can I speak less dreadfully than I do? If you and I have but a name to live, and are dead, what a state we are in! Ours is something worse than corruption: it is the corruption of corruption. To profess religion and live in sin, is to sprinkle rose-water upon a dunghill, and leave it a dunghill still. To give a spirit an angel’s name when it bears the devil’s character, is almost to sin against the

Holy Ghost. If we remain unconverted, of what use can it be to have our name written among the godly?

Our Lord discovered that there was no fruit, and that was a dreadful thing; but, next, he condemned the tree. Was it not right that he should condemn it? Did he curse it? It was already a curse. It was calculated to tantalize the hungry, and take them out of their way to deceive them. God will not have the poor and needy made a jest of. An empty profession is a practical curse; and should it not receive the censure of the Lord of truth? The tree was of no use where it was: it ministered to no man's refreshment. So, the barren professor occupies a position in which he ought to be a blessing, but, in truth, an evil influence streams forth from him. If he has not the grace of God in him, he is utterly useless, and in all probability he is a curse: he is an Achan in the camp, grieving the Lord, and causing him to refuse success to his people.

Our Lord did, however, use the fig tree for a good purpose when he caused it to wither away; for it became, henceforth, a beacon and a warning to all others who put forth vain pretenses. So, when the ungodly man, who has exhibited a flourishing profession, is allowed to fade away in his ways, some moral effect is produced upon others: they are compelled to see the peril of an unsound profession; and if they are wise, they will no longer be guilty of it. Would God it might be so in every case whenever a notable religionist withers away!

After that, when the Savior had condemned it, he pronounced sentence upon it; and what was the sentence? It was simply, "As you were." It was nothing more than a confirmation of its state. This tree has borne no fruit, it shall never bear fruit. If a man chooses to be without the grace of God, and yet to make a profession of having it, it is only just that the great Judge should say, "Continue without grace." When the great Judge at last shall speak to those who depart from God, he will simply say to them, "Depart!" Throughout life they always were departing, and after death their character is stamped with perpetuity. If you choose to be graceless, to be graceless shall be your doom. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." May the Lord Jesus never have to sentence any of you in this way; but may he turn us, that we may be turned, and work in us eternal life to his praise and glory!

Then there came a change over the tree. It began at once to wither. I do not know whether the disciples saw a quiver run through it at once; but on the next morning when they passed that way, according to Mark, it had

dried up from the roots. Not only did the leaves hang down, like streamers when there is no wind; not only did the bark seem to have lost every token of vitality; but the whole fabric was blighted fatally. Have you ever seen a fig tree with its strange, weird branches? It is a very extraordinary sight when bare of leaves. In this case I see its skeleton arms! It is twice dead, dead from the very roots. Thus have I seen the fair professor undergo a blight. He has looked like a thing that has felt the breath of a furnace, and has had its moisture dried up. The man is no longer himself: his glory and his beauty are hopelessly gone. No axe was lifted; no fire was kindled; a word did it, and the tree withered from the root. So, without thunderbolt or pestilence, the once brave professor is stricken as with the judgment of Cain. It is an awful fate. Better far to have the vine-dresser come to you with the axe in his hand, and strike you with the head of it, and say to you, "Tree, thou must bear fruit, or be hewn down." Such a warning would be terrible, but it would be infinitely better than to be left in one's place untouched, quietly to wither to destruction.

Now I have delivered my heavy burden, laying it far more upon myself than upon any one of you; for I stand more prominent than you; I have made a louder profession than most of you; and if I have not his grace in me, then I shall stand before the multitude that have seen me in my greenness, and shall wither away to the very roots, a terrible example of what God doth with those who bear no fruit to his glory.

But now I desire to conclude with tenderer words. Let no man say, "This is very hard." Brother, it is not hard, is it, that if we profess a thing we should be expected to be true to it? Besides, I pray you not to think that anything my Lord can do is hard. He is all gentleness and tenderness. The only thing he ever did destroy was this fig tree. He destroyed no men, as Elias did when he brought fire from heaven upon them; nor as Elisha did when the bears came out of the wood. It is only a barren tree that he causes to wither away. He is all love and tenderness: he does not want to wither you, nor will he, if you be but true. The very least he may expect is that you be true to what you profess. Are you rebellious because he asks you not to play the hypocrite? If you begin to kick against his admonition, it will look as if you were yourself untrue at heart. Instead of that, come and bow humbly at his feet, and say, "Lord, if anything in this solemn truth bears upon me, I beseech thee so to apply it to my conscience that I may feel its power, and flee to thee for salvation." Many men are converted in this way

— these hard but honest things drive them from false refuges, and bring them to be true to Christ and to their own souls.

“But,” saith one, “I know what I will do; I will never make any profession; I will bear no leaves.” My friend, that also is a sullen, rebellious spirit. Instead of talking so, you should say, Lord, I do not ask thee to take away my leaves, but let me have fruit. The fruit is not likely to ripen well without leaves; leaves are essential to the health of the tree, and the health of the tree is essential to the ripening of the fruit. Open confession of faith is good, and must not be refused. Lord, I would not drop a leaf.

*“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause;
Maintain the honor of his word,
The glory of his cross.”*

Lord, I do not want to be set away in a corner; I am satisfied to stand where men may see my good works, and glorify my Father who is in heaven. I do not ask to be observed; but I am not ashamed to be observed; only, Lord, make me fit for observation. If a commander said to a soldier, “Stand firm, but mind you have your cartridges ready, so that you may not lift an empty gun;” suppose that soldier answered, “I cannot be so particular. I would rather run to the rear.” Would that be a fit reply? Coward! because your captain warns you that you must not be a sham, you would therefore, run off altogether! Surely, you are of an evil sort. You are not truly one of the Lord’s, if you cannot bear his rebuke. Let not these solemn truths drive us away, but let them draw us on to say, “Lord, I pray thee, help me to make my calling and election sure. I beseech thee, help me to bring forth the expected fruit. Thy grace can do it.”

I would suggest to everyone here to cry to the Lord to make us conscious of our natural barrenness. Gracious ones, may the Lord make us mourn our comparative barrenness, even if we do bear some fruit. To feel quite satisfied with yourself is perilous: to feel that you are holy, and indeed that you are perfect, is to be on the brink of the pit of pride. If you hold your head so high, I am afraid you will strike it against the top of the doorway. If you walk on stilts, I fear you will fall. It is a safer thing to feel, “Lord, I do serve thee, and I am no deceiver. I do love thee; thou hast wrought the works of the Spirit in me. But alas! I am not what I want to be, I am not what I ought to be. I aspire to holiness: help me to attain it. Lord, I would lie in the very dust before thee to think that after being digged about and

dunged, as I have been, I should bear such little fruit. I feel myself less than nothing. My cry is, ‘God be merciful to me.’ If I had done all, I should still have been an unprofitable servant; but having done so little, Lord, where shall I hide my guilty head?”

Lastly, when you have made this confession, and the good Lord has heard you, there is one emblem in Scripture I should like you to copy. Suppose this morning you feel so dry and dead and barren, that you cannot serve God as you would, nor even pray for more grace, as you wish to do. Then you are something like these twelve rods. They are very dead and dry, for they have been held in the hands of twelve chiefs, who have used them as their official staves. These twelve rods are to be laid before the Lord. This one is Aaron’s rod; but it is quite as dead and dry as any of the rest. The whole twelve are laid in the place where the Lord dwelleth. We see them next morning. Eleven are dry rods still; but see this rod of Aaron! What has happened? It was dry as death. See, it has budded! This is wonderful! But look, it has blossomed! There are almond flowers upon it. You know they are rosy pink and white. This is marvelous! But look again, it has brought forth almonds! Here, you have them! See these green fruits, which look like peaches. Take off the flesh, and here is an almond whose shell you may break and find the kernel. The heavenly power has come upon the dry stick, and it has budded and blossomed, and even brought forth almonds. Fruit-bearing is the proof of life and favor. Lord, take these poor sticks this morning, and make them bud. Lord, here we are, in a bundle, perform that ancient miracle in a thousand of us. Make us bud and blossom, and bear fruit! Come with divine power, and turn this congregation from a fagot into a grove. Oh, that our blessed Lord may get a fig from some dry stick this morning! at least, such a fig as this, “God be merciful to me a sinner;” there is sweetness in that fig as this, “Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.” Here is another, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” — that is a whole basketful of the first ripe figs, and the Lord rejoices in their sweetness. Come Holy Spirit, produce fruit in us this day, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen, and Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Matthew 21:12-32.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” —
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PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS

NO. 2108

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
OCTOBER 6TH, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” — Jeremiah 32:40.

LAST Sabbath morning we were called to deep searching of heart. It was a very painful discourse to the preacher, and it was not less so to many of his hearers. Some of us will never forget that fig tree, covered with untimely leaves, which yielded no fruit, and was condemned to stand a beacon to the unfruitful of all ages. I felt that I was in the surgery, using the knife: I felt great tenderness, and the operation was grievous to my soul. When the winnowing fan was used to chase away the chaff, some of the wheat felt that it was none too heavy: the wind stirred it in its place, so as to make it fear that it would be carried into the fire. To-day, I trust we shall see that, despite all sifting, not one true grain shall be lost.

May the King himself come near and feast his saints to-day! May the Comforter who convinced of sin now come to cheer us with the promise! We noticed concerning the fig tree, that it was confirmed in its barrenness: it had borne no fruit, though it made large professions of doing so, and it was made to abide as it was. Let us consider another form of confirmation: not the curse of continuance in the rooted habit of evil; but the blessing of perseverance in a settled way of grace. May the Lord show us how he establishes his saints in righteousness, and makes the works which he has begun in them to abide, and remain, and even to go onward towards perfection, so that they shall not be ashamed in the day of his appearing!

We will go to our text at once. In the world there are men and women towards whom God stands in covenant relationship. Mixed up with these myriads of God-forgetting, or even God-defying people, there are a number of covenanted ones, who think of God, know God, trust God, and are even in league with God. God has made with them a covenant. It is a wonder of mercy that Jehovah should enter into covenant with men; but he has done so. God has pledged himself to his people, and they have, in return, through his grace, pledged themselves to God. These are heaven's Covenanters, in bonds of amity, alliance, and even union with the Lord their God. This covenant shall stand when the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed: it is not a thing of passing time; but, like its Author, it is everlasting. Happy people who are joined unto the Lord by an eternal bond!

These covenanted ones may be known by certain marks and evidences. It is most important that we should know that we ourselves belong to them. They are a people, according to the text, to whom God is doing good. Friend, do you perceive that he is doing good to you? Has the Lord dealt graciously with you? Has he appeared to you, and said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"? Do all things work together for good for you? I mean, for your spiritual good? your lasting good? Have you received the greatest good by the renewal of the Holy Spirit? Has he given Christ to you? Has he made you hate evil and cleave to that which is good? If these good gifts have been bestowed on you, he has done you good; for these gifts are the outcome of the covenant, and are sure guarantees that it stands fast between God and your soul.

These people are known by having the fear of God in their hearts. Judge ye, whether it be so in your own case. This is the covenant promise — "I will put my fear in their hearts." Do you fear the Lord? Do you reverence Jehovah, our God? Do you desire to please the Lord? Do you please him? Do you desire to be like him? Are you like him in some humble degree? Do you feel ashamed when you see how sadly you come short; and does this make you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is the gracious presence of God your heaven below? Is it all the heaven you desire above? If so, this fear of God in your heart is the seal of the covenant to you. Towards you God has thoughts of love which shall never change.

This leads us to a close consideration of our text. We notice in it, first, the everlasting covenant: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Secondly, we reverently perceive the unchanging God of the covenant: "I will not turn away from them, to do them good." Thirdly, we see with joy the persevering people in that covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." I am sure I shall not find language suitable to such a theme as this; but I am cheered with the reflection that, however poor and simple my words may be, the matter of which I speak is in itself enough for the delight of all true believers. When you have an abundance of solid food wherewith to make a meal, you need not fret, even though you miss the tasteful adornments of the table. Hungry men are not eager for a display of plate or of damask; nor even for a show of flowers bedecking the table. They are best satisfied with solid food. In my subject there is meat fit for kings: however badly I may carve it, you who have appetites will not fail to feed thereon. May the Holy Spirit make it so!

I. First, here is THE EVERLASTING COVENANT: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them."

In the previous chapter, in the thirty-first verse, this covenant is called "a new covenant"; and it is new in contrast with the former one which the Lord made with Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. It is new as to the principle upon which it is based. The Lord had said unto his people, that if they would keep his laws and walk in his statutes, he would bless them. He set before them a long line of blessings, rich and full: all these would be their portion if they would hearken to the Lord and obey his law. Truly Jehovah was a husband to them, tenderly supplying all their need, and upholding them in all their journeying. He fed them with angels' food; he sheltered them by day from the heat, and at night he lit up their canvas city with a pillar of fire. He himself walked in the midst of them, and revealed himself to them as he had done to no other nation: they were a people near unto him, a nation beloved of the Lord. But under the exceedingly favorable circumstances in which they lived in the wilderness, where they had no temporal cares, and no neighbors to mislead them, they did not keep the statutes of their God; nay, they did not even remain faithful to him as their God; for they worshipped a molten image, and likened the Lord of Glory to an ox that eateth grass. They bowed down before the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs; and they cried, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Thus they brake the covenant in the most wanton and wicked

manner. Such a covenant was easily violated by a rebellious people; therefore the Lord, in his immeasurable grace, resolves to make with them a covenant of a new kind, which cannot thus be broken. The Lord was faithful to the old covenant: the breaking was on the part of the people, as we read in Jeremiah 31:32:

“Which my covenant they brake,
although I was an husband unto them.”

After long patience, he visited them for their iniquities, and their carcases fell in the wilderness, for they could not enter into his rest. In after-ages he gave them into the hands of their enemies, who were a scourge to them; he made them to be carried away captive; and at last he suffered the Roman to burn their holy city, and scatter the people throughout all lands. They would not keep the covenant of God, and therefore their treachery was visited upon them. But in these days the Lord hath, in Christ Jesus, made with the true seed of Abraham, even with all believers, a new covenant; not after the tenor of the old, nor liable to be broken as it was. Brethren, take care to distinguish between the old and the new covenants; for they must never be mingled. Many never catch the true idea of the covenant of grace; they do not understand a compact of pure promise. They talk about grace, but they regard it as dependent upon merit. They speak about God's mercy, and then combine with it conditions which make it rather justice than grace. Distinguish between things which differ. If salvation be of grace, it is not of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; and if it be of works, it is not of grace, otherwise work is no more work. The new covenant is all of grace, from its first letter to its closing word; and we shall have to show you this as we go on.

It is an “everlasting” covenant, however: that is the point upon which the text insists. The other covenant was of very short duration; but this is an “everlasting covenant.” Despite modern thought, I hope I shall be allowed to believe that the word “everlasting” means lasting for ever. While there is any meaning in language, we shall be satisfied that “an everlasting covenant” means a covenant that will never come to an end. Why is it so?

The first reason why it is an everlasting covenant is, that it was made with us in Christ Jesus. The covenant of works was made with the race in the first Adam; but the first Adam was faulty, and failed full soon; he could not bear the stress of his responsibility, and so that covenant was broken. But the surety of the new covenant is our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is not

faulty, but perfect. The Lord Jesus is the federal head of his chosen, and he stands for them: they are regarded as members of his body, and he is their head, their mouthpiece, their representative. The Lord Jesus, as the second Adam, entered into covenant with God on the behalf of his people; and because he cannot fail — for in him there is no infirmity or sin — therefore the covenant of which he is the surety must stand. He abideth for ever in his Melchizedek priesthood, and in the power of an endless life. He is, both in his nature and in his work, eternally qualified to stand before the living God. He stands in absolute perfectness under every strain, and, therefore, the covenant stands in him. When it is written, “I have given him for a covenant to the people,” we see that the covenant cannot fail, because he cannot fail who is the sum and substance of it. Because the Lord Jesus represents all his believing people in the covenant, therefore the covenant is everlasting.

Next, the covenant cannot fail because the human side of it has been fulfilled. The human side might be regarded as the weak side of it; but when Jesus became the representative of man that side was sure. He has at this hour fulfilled to the letter every stipulation upon that side of which he was the surety. He has magnified the law, and made it honorable by his own obedience to it. He has met the demands of moral government, and made amends to holiness for man’s offenses. The law is more glorified by his atoning death than it was dishonored by man’s sin. This Man hath offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and that is so effectual for the fulfillment of the covenant that he sits down at the right hand of God. Since, then, that side of the covenant has been fulfilled which appertains to man, there remaineth only God’s side of it to be fulfilled, which consists of promises — unconditional promises, full of grace and truth, such as these: — “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” Will not God be true to his engagements? Yes, verily. When he makes a covenant, and on man’s part the compact has been fulfilled, depend upon it, on the Lord’s side no word will fall to the ground. Even to the jots and tittles, all shall be carried out.

Furthermore, the covenant must be everlasting, for it is founded upon the free grace of God. The first covenant was conditioned upon the obedience

of men. If they kept the law, God would bless them; but they failed through disobedience, and inherited the curse. The divine sovereignty determined to deal with men, not according to merit, but according to mercy; not according to the personal character of men, but according to the personal character of God; not according to what men might do, but according to what the Lord Jesus would perform. Sovereign grace declares that he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. This basis of sovereignty cannot be shaken. The covenant which saves men according to God's will and good pleasure, is founded upon a rock; for God's free grace is always the same, and God's sovereignty is linked to immutability, even as it is written, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The slightest touch of merit puts perishable material into the covenant; but if it be of pure grace, then the covenant is everlasting.

Again, in the covenant, everything that can be supposed to be a condition is provided. It is necessary that a man, to be forgiven, should repent; but then the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. It is necessary that a man, in order to be saved, should have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but faith is of the operation of God, and the Holy Ghost worketh in us this fruit of the Spirit. It is needful, before we enter heaven, that we should be holy; but the Lord sanctifies us through the Word, and worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. All that is required is also supplied. If there be, anywhere in the Word of God, any act or grace mentioned as though it were a condition of salvation, it is in another Scripture described as a covenant gift which will be bestowed upon the heirs of salvation by Christ Jesus. So that the condition, which might seem to put the covenant in danger, is so surely provided for, that thence ariseth no flaw or fracture.

Moreover, the covenant must be everlasting, because it cannot be superseded by anything more glorious. In the order of God's working he always advances from the good to the better. The old law was put away because he found fault with it, and therefore the new covenant must last till a fault can be found with it; which will never be. This is the glory which excelleth: no brightness can exceed the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There can be nothing more gracious, nothing more righteous, nothing more just to God or more safe to man, than the plan of salvation set forth in the covenant of grace. The moon gives way to the sun, and the sun gives way to a lustre which shall exceed the light of seven days; but

what is to supersede the light of free grace and dying love, the glory of the love which gave the Only-begotten that we might live through him! The covenant of grace made with us in Christ Jesus is the masterpiece of divine wisdom and love, and it is established on such sure principles that it must last for ever.

Beloved, rest in the covenant of grace as affording you eternal security and boundless comfort. It may well be everlasting, since it was divine in its conception. Surely the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Who else could have thought of a covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” to be made with guilty man? It was also divine in its carrying out, and therefore it shall endure. Who could have provided a Savior like the Only-begotten of the Father? Who could have given him for a covenant but the Father? The covenant is divine in its maintenance. Note well the word of the Lord: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” He does not say, “They shall make a covenant with me”; but “I will make a covenant with them.” That God is the maker of the covenant, is a reason for its certainty and everlastingness. The faithful God has given guarantees which fix it fast, even his promise and his oath; those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie. Through these we have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first head; and very little it is, compared with the grandeur of the subject.

II. Secondly, we have now devoutly to think upon THE UNCHANGING GOD OF THE COVENANT: “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

Please notice the terms here: the Lord does not merely say, “I will not turn away from them,” but, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.” He will not cease to work good for his chosen. The Lord is always doing his people good; and here he promises that he will never leave off blessing them. Not only will he always love them, but he will always prove his love by active kindness and blessing. He is pledged to continue the gifts and work of his goodness. In effect he says, “I will not cease blessing them; I will continually, everlastingly be doing them good.” Now, why is this, that God is thus unchanging in his doings towards his covenanted ones?

He will not turn away from doing them good, first, because he has said so. That is enough. Jehovah speaks, and in his voice lies the end of all controversy. He says, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good”; and we are sure that he will not forfeit his word. I do not need to bring

forth more reasons: this suffices, the Lord hath said it. Hath he said, and will he not do it?

Still, let us remember that there is no valid reason why he should turn away from them to do them good. You remind me of their unworthiness. Yes, but observe that when he began to do them good they were as unworthy as they could possibly be. He began to do them good when they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” He began to do them good when they were enemies, rebels, and under condemnation. When first the sinner feels the movement of divine love upon his heart, he is in no commendable state. In some cases the man is a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, or a profane person. In certain cases the man has been a persecutor like Manasseh or Saul. If God left off blessing us because he could see no good in us, why did he begin to do us good when we were without desire towards him? We were a mass of misery, a pit of wants, and a dunghill of sins when he began to do us good. Whatever we may be now, we are not otherwise than we were when first he revealed his love towards us. The same motive which led him to begin leads him to continue; and that motive is nothing but his grace.

Moreover, there can be no reason in the faultiness of the believer why the Lord should cease to do him good, seeing that he foresaw all the evil that would be in us. No wandering child of God surprises his heavenly Father. He foreknew every sin we should commit: he proposed to do us good notwithstanding all this foreknown iniquity. If, then, he entered into a covenant with us, and began to bless us with all our sin before his mind, nothing new can spring up which can alter the covenant once made with all these drawbacks known and taken into account. There is no scarlet sin which has been omitted, for the Lord has said, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet.” He entered into a covenant that he would not turn away from us, to do us good; and no circumstance has arisen, or can arise, which was unknown to him when he thus pledged his word of grace.

Moreover, I would have you remember that we are by God at this day viewed in the same light as ever. He saw us at the first as under sin, fallen and depraved, and yet he promised to do us good.

*“He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all.”*

And if to-day I am sinful, if to-day I have to groan by reason of my evil nature, yet I am but where I was when he chose me, and called me, and redeemed me by the blood of his Son. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were undeserving objects upon whom he bestowed his mercy, out of no motive but that which he drew from his own nature; and if we are undeserving still, his grace is still the same. If it be so, that he still deals with us in the way of grace, it is evident that he still views us as undeserving; and why should he not do good towards us now as he did at the first? Assuredly, the fountain being the same, the stream will continue to flow.

Moreover, remember that he sees us now in Christ. Behold, he has put his people into the hands of his dear Son. He has even put us into Christ's body; "for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." He sees us in Christ to have died, in him to have been buried, and in him to have risen again. As the Lord Jesus Christ is well-pleasing to the Father, so in him are we well-pleasing to the Father also; for our being in him identifies us with him. If, then, our acceptance with God stands on the footing of Christ's acceptance with God, it standeth firmly, and is an unchanging argument with the Lord God for doing us good. If we stood before God in our own individual righteousness, our ruin would be sure and speedy; but in Jesus our life is hid beyond peril. Firmly believe that until the Lord rejects Christ he cannot reject his people; until he repudiates the atonement and the resurrection, he cannot cast away any of those with whom he has entered into covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord will not turn away from his people, from doing them good, because he has shown them so much kindness already; and all that he has done would be lost if he did not go through with it. When he gave his Son, he gave us a sure pledge that he meant to finish his work of love. They say of a man that does not finish his work, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish"; but that shall never be said of the Lord Jehovah. The Lord God has laid out his whole Deity to save his people, and given his whole self in the person of the Well-beloved for our redemption; and can you believe that he will fail in it? Surely, the idea is blasphemous. Some of us have known too much love already to believe that it will ever cease to flow towards us. We have been so favored that we dare not fear that his favor toward us will cease. So heavenly, so divine is the sense of the love of God, when it is revealed to the soul, that we cannot believe that it has been given to mock us. We have been carried away with such torrents of

love, that we will never believe that they can be dried up. The Lord has communed with us so closely, that the secret of the Lord is with us, and he will for ever recognize that mystic token by which our union has been sealed. Like Paul, each one of us may say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The cost to which our Lord has gone assures us that he will complete his designs of grace.

Beloved, we feel sure that he will not cease to bless us, because we have proved that even when he has hidden his face he has not turned away from doing us good. The Lord has withdrawn the light of his countenance, but never the love of his heart. When the Lord has turned away his face from his people, it has been to do them good, by making them sick of self and eager for his love. How often he has brought us back from wandering by making us feel the evil of the sin which grieves his Spirit! When we have cried, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" we have been greatly blessed by the anguish of our search. Bear me witness, ye tried people of God; the Lord's chastenings have always been for your good. When the Lord has bruised you till the wound has been blue, your heart has been bettered. When the Lord has taken away your comforts, he has done you good by driving you closer to the highest good. The Lord has enriched you by your losses, and made you healthy by your sicknesses. If, then, the Lord our God, when he is seen in darkest colors, has not turned away from doing us good, we are persuaded that he will never cease daily to load us with benefits.

Moreover, I close with this argument, that he has involved his honor in the salvation of his people. If the Lord's chosen and redeemed are cast away, where is the glory of his redemption? Will not the enemy say of the Lord, "He had not the power to carry out his covenant, nor the constancy to continue blessing them"? Shall that ever be said of God? Will he thus lose the glory of his omnipotence and immutability? I cannot believe that any purpose of the Lord can fail; neither can I conceive that he can withdraw his declarations of love to those with whom he is in covenant. The God whom we adore and reverence, the God of Abraham, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, fainteth not, neither is weary. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" "He will ever be mindful of his covenant." Of our Lord Jesus we truly sing —

*“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hands securely keep.”*

Whether my arguments seem good to you or not, is of small consequence; for the text is the inspired Word of God, and it cannot be misunderstood or questioned. Thus saith the Lord, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good.”

III. The third part of our subject leads us to see THE PERSEVERING PEOPLE IN THE COVENANT: “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

Let me read very distinctly these words: “They shall not depart from me.” If there were only that text in the Bible, it would suffice to prove the final perseverance of the saints: “They SHALL NOT depart from me.” The salvation of those who are in covenant with God is herein provided for by an absolute promise of the omnipotent God, which must be carried out. It is plain, clear, unconditional, positive: “They shall not depart from me.”

It is not carried out by altering the effect of apostasy. If they did depart from God, it would be fatal. Suppose a child of God should utterly depart from the Lord, and wholly lose the life of God: what then? Would he nevertheless be saved? I answer, His salvation lies in the fact that he will never utterly lose the life of God. Why are we to ask what would happen in a case which can never occur? But if we must suppose it, we are not slow to say that if the believer were wholly separated from Christ, he must, without doubt, perish everlastingly. If a man abide not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. The Scripture is very positive about it: if grace were gone, safety would be gone. “Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” “If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” If the work of grace could wholly and totally fail in any man, the case would be beyond all remedy, since the best means has, on that supposition, been tried and has failed. If the Holy Ghost has indeed regenerated a soul, and yet that regeneration does not save it from total apostasy, what can be done? There is such a thing as being “born again”; but there is no such thing as being born again and again. Regeneration is once for all: it cannot be repeated. Scripture has no word or hint that it could be. If men have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and this

sacred process has failed, there remains no more. When old things have passed away and all things have become new, can it be imagined that these will grow old again? No man may therefore say, "Though I go back to my old sin, and cease to pray, or repent, or believe, or have any life of God in me, yet I shall be saved because I was once a believer." Nay, nay, profane talker; the text saith not, "They shall be saved though they depart from me"; but "They shall not depart from me" — which is a very different matter. Woe unto them that depart from the living God! for they must perish, and with them no covenant of peace has been made.

Neither does this perseverance of the saints come in by the removal of temptation. It is not said, "I will put them where they shall not be tempted; I will give them such a sufficient livelihood that they shall not be tried by poverty, and at the same time they shall never be so rich as to know the temptations of wealth." No, the Lord does not take his people out of the world; but he allows them to fight the battle of life in the same field as others. He does not remove us from the conflict, but "he giveth us the victory." We are tempted as was our Lord; but we have a way of escape provided. Our heart is prone to wander, and we are not kept from the scene of possible wandering. But what is said is this — "They shall not depart from me." What a blessed assurance! They may be tempted; but they shall not be overcome. Though they sin in measure, yet shall they not so sin as to depart from God. They shall still hold on to him, and live in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

How, then, are they preserved? Well, not as some falsely talk, as though we preached, "that the man who is converted may live as he likes." We have never said so; we have never even thought so. The man who is converted cannot live as he likes; or, rather, he is so changed by the Holy Spirit, that if he could live as he likes, he would never sin, but live an absolutely perfect life. Oh, how deeply do we long to be kept clear of every sin! We preach not that men may depart from God and yet live; but that they shall not depart from him.

This is effected by putting a divine principle within their hearts. The Lord saith, "I will put my fear in their hearts." It would never be found there if he did not put it there. It will never spring up naturally in any heart. "I will put my fear in their hearts"; that is, regeneration and conversion. He makes us tremble before his law. He makes us feel the smart and bitterness of sin. He causes us to remember the God we once forgot, and to obey the Lord

whom once we defied. "I will put my fear in their hearts" is the first great act of conversion, and it is continued throughout life by the perpetual working of the Spirit upon the heart. The work which commences at conversion is duly carried on in the converted ones; for the Lord still puts his fear into their hearts. How the Spirit of God works we cannot tell: he has ways of acting directly upon our minds which are all his own, and cannot be understood by us. But without violating the freedom of our nature, leaving us men as we were before, he knows how to make us continue in the fear of God. This is God's great holdfast upon his people, "I will put my fear in their hearts."

What is this fear of God? It is, first, a holy awe and reverence of the great God. Taught of God, we come to see his infinite greatness, and the fact that he is everywhere present with us; and then, filled with a devout sense of his Godhead, we dare not sin. Since God is near, we cannot offend. The words, "my fear," also intend filial fear. God is our Father, and we feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." This child-like love kindles in us a fear to grieve him whom we love, and therefore we have no desire to depart from him. There moves also in our hearts a deep sense of grateful obligation. God is so good to me, how can I sin? He loves me so, how can I vex him? He favors me so greatly from day to day that I cannot do that which is contrary to his will. Did you ever receive a choice and special mercy? It has often fallen to my lot; and when the tears have been in my eyes at the sight of so great a favor, I have felt that if a temptation came to me, it would come at a time when I had neither heart, nor eye, nor ear for it. Gratitude bars the door against sin. Great love received overthrows great temptation to wander. Our cry is, "The Lord bathes me in his love, he indulges me with the nearest and dearest fellowship with himself, and how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Loved of him so specially, and united to him by an everlasting covenant, how can we fly in the face of love so wonderful? Surely, we can find no pleasure in offending so gracious a God; but it is our joy to do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

See, beloved, this perseverance of the saints, is perseverance in holiness: "They shall not depart from me." If the grace of God has really changed you, you are radically and lastingly changed. If you have come to Christ, he has not placed in you a mere cup of the water of life, but he has said it: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The work that is done in regeneration is not a

temporary work, by which a man is, for a time, reformed; but it is an everlasting work, by which the man is born for heaven. There is a life implanted at the new birth, which cannot die, for it is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. Grace will go on working in a man until it leads him to glory.

If any differ from what I have said, I cannot help it; but I would beg them not to differ from the text; for the Scripture cannot be broken. Read it: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." There it stands, "They shall not depart from me." But if you ask, By what instrumentality does God maintain this fear in the hearts of his people? I answer, it is the work of the Spirit of God: but the Holy Spirit usually works by means. The fear of God is kept alive in our hearts by the hearing of the Word; for faith cometh by hearing, and holy fear cometh through faith. Be diligent, then, in hearing the Word. That fear is kept alive in our hearts by reading the Scriptures; for as we feed on the Word, it breathes within us that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. This fear of God is maintained in us by the belief of revealed truth, and meditation thereon. Study the doctrines of grace, and be instructed in the analogy of the faith. Know the gospel well and thoroughly, and this will bring fuel to the fire of the fear of God in your hearts. Be much in private prayer; for that stirs up the fire, and makes it burn more brilliantly. In fine, seek to live near to God, to abide in him; for as you abide in him, and his words abide in you, you shall bring forth much fruit, and so shall you be his disciples.

I find this precious doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to be a very fruitful one. One Thursday night, not long ago, I preached this doctrine with all my might, and many were comforted by it; but, better still, many were set thinking, and were led to turn their faces Christ-ward. Some preach a doctrine which has a very wide door, but it is all door, and when you get in, there is nothing to be had; you are no safer than you were outside. Sheep are not in a hurry to enter where there is no pasture. Some have thought my doctrine narrow, though I am sure it is not; but if a door should seem strait, yet, if there is something worth the having when you get in, many will seek admission. There are such wonderful blessings provided in the covenant of grace that those who are wise are anxious to obtain them. "Oh!" says one, "if salvation is an everlasting thing, if this regeneration means a change of nature such as can never be undone, let me have it. If salvation is a mere plated article which will wear out, I do not want it; but if it is pure silver all through, let me have it." Does the gift of

grace make us partakers of the divine nature, and cause us to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust? then let us have it. I pray that some here may desire salvation, because it secures a life of holiness. The sweetmeat which tempted me to Christ was this — I believed that salvation was an insurance of character. In what better way can a young man cleanse his life than by putting himself into the holy hands of the Lord Jesus, to be kept from falling? I said — If I give myself to Christ, he will save me from my sins. Therefore, I came to him, and he keeps me. Oh, how musical these words, “They shall not depart from me!”

To use an old figure: be sure that you take a ticket all the way through. Many people have only believed in God to save them for a time; so long as they are faithful, or so long as they are earnest. Beloved, believe in God to keep you faithful and earnest all your life: take a ticket all the way through. Get a salvation which covers all risks. There is no other ticket issued from the authorized office but a through-ticket. Other tickets are forgeries. He that cannot keep you for ever cannot keep you a day. If the power of regeneration will not last through life, it may not last an hour. Faith in the everlasting covenant stirs my heart’s blood, fills me with grateful joy, inspires me with confidence, fires me with enthusiasm. I can never give up my belief in what the Lord hath said, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Hebrews 8; 10:12-39.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 27, 229, 228.

THE EYE AND THE LIGHT.

NO. 2109

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”-Luke 11:33-36.

IN this parable, our Lord Jesus Christ is the light. Some saw his brightness, and were even dazzled by it, as was that woman who cried, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.” The malicious saw not his light, but even dared to impute his miracles to the Prince of darkness. Others professed to see so little light in him that they demanded a sign from heaven. Our Lord’s constant answer was, to go shining on. He was meant to be observed; even as a lamp is intended to be seen. A lamp is not lighted to be placed in a cellar, nor to be hidden under a bushel: the lamp is lighted on purpose that all who come into the house may see the light. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ could not be hid. In the narrow circle of the Holy Land, he shone so clearly that Gentiles came to the brightness of his rising. Yet, to make him seen to the ends of the earth, he must needs be set on the lamp-stand. He was lifted up by crucifixion; and anon he was further raised by resurrection: he was lifted up from earth to heaven at his ascension, and in another sense he was set on high by the descent of the Holy Ghost and the widespread ministry of his servants. Our Lord was thus

taken from under the bushel of the obscurity which attached to his humble origin, brought away from the dark cellar of the despised Jewish nation, and set out in the open, where Greek and Roman, Barbarian and Scythian, might rejoice in his light. It is our duty to keep his name and his truth ever before the world, waiting for the time when every eye shall see him on the throne of his glory.

Our Lord would have all men behold the light of his gospel; for the text saith, "that they which come in may see the light." Whosoever comes into the church, or even into the world, should be met with this lamp; for this gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven. The mighty deeds of his salvation were not done in a corner: they are for world-wide observation. He that hath eyes to see let him see. If you do not see Jesus, it is not because he has hidden himself in darkness, but because your eyes are blinded. The light which streams from the face of Jesus is meant for human eyes: the tempered brightness of the Mediator's glory suits those eyes, which are bidden to look to him and live. Light is not for the rich, the wise, the strong, but for men as men. The doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ are not meant to be the monopoly of a few learned doctors; they are the common inheritance of those who labor and are heavy laden. As the morning breaks for all weary, watching eyes, so shines the light of the glorious gospel for all who sit in darkness and long for the light of God.

Beloved, the great thing to be desired is that the light which is so freely given forth by the Lord Jesus may become light within our souls. There he stands, as the lamp placed upon the lampstand, conspicuous to all; but we need that the light outside in the room may become light inside, within the soul. Nothing more truly needs light than our inner man. We are, by nature, as a lantern with the candle blown out. Whether we will believe it or not, by nature we are in thick Egyptian night. Well saith the apostle, "Ye were sometimes darkness." Much is said about the light of conscience, but in many this is but a glimmering taper whose beams are "not light, but darkness visible." The light of nature is dimmed by so many surroundings, and has so little oil to sustain it, that it leads no man to eternal life, unless there be added to it light from above—the light of grace, the clear shining of the Holy Spirit.

Light is absolutely essential to spiritual life. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, but of superstition. Knowledge, grace, truth, are the nurses of true faith. The light of God is needful to the life of God. We must know

Christ, we must be illuminated by his Holy Spirit, we must have fellowship with the Father's truth, or else we are dead, as well as dark. Light within we must have, or the light outside will not benefit us. Upon that subject we will speak at this time. May God grant us the light of his Spirit; for it would be idle for us to try to explain the action of light while ourselves in darkness. Shine within, O Holy Spirit, that we speak not of theory, but of actual experience!

First, we will consider how the light enters: "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light." Secondly, we shall note how this light may be perverted: "When thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." In conclusion, we shall observe how the light acts within: "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light."

I. First, then, consider HOW THE LIGHT ENTERS THE SOUL. Into the body the light enters through the eye. A man without an eye might as well be without the sun, so far as light is concerned. The eye is as needful as the lamp, if a man is to see. The most brilliant light that ever has been invented, or ever can be discovered, will be of no use to the person who has no eye: hence it is true, "The light of the body is the eye." It is most important to attend to that which is the eye of the inner man; for in vain doth Christ himself shine if his light cannot enter our souls. The condition of the eye of the mind is of the utmost importance: our light or our darkness will depend upon it. The eye of the soul may be viewed as the understanding, the conscience, the motive, or the heart. It would not be possible to confine it to any one of these names. I venture to call it "the intent of the mind"; or, if you will, "the aim of the heart," the honesty of the understanding. When God has given a man a true intent to see the light of the gospel, he has in that honest intent furnished him with an eye for the heavenly light. If the Holy Ghost makes us truly willing to know the truth, he has cleared the mental eye. The worst of it is, that men have no will to see the light of God: their foolish heart is darkened, and hence they do not understand, but altogether misrepresent the doctrine of the Lord Jesus. The battle of grace is with man's unwillingness to see those truths against which he is naturally at enmity. If a man wills to see the honest truth, and submits himself to the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost, he will not be left in darkness. When a man does not want to see, he cannot see: when he is determined not to

learn, when truth is unpalatable to him, when he designedly twists it from its meaning, then his eye is diseased, and the light is hindered from its due effect.

Many things darken the eye of the soul. One of the most common is prejudice. The man conceives that he has light already. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and previous generations, were brought up in a certain religion, and therefore it must be right. Whether the lamp gives light or not, is not the question: it is the family lamp, and he will have no other. He will not enquire: he is quite sure, and wants no evidence. When the light of God comes to him, he at once repels it. He cannot be disturbed, and therefore he will not hear, nor read, nor consider the matter: he is satisfied to let things be as they are. The very supposition that he may be wrong he regards as an insult, maliciously invented by an uncharitable mind. What is to be done with one so blindfolded? Are there not many such?

Sloth, too, is a great blinder of the eye: it draws down the eyelid, and shuts out the light by the spirit of slumber. The man does not care what the gospel is, or is not. Like Pilate, he asks, "What is truth?" but he never waits for an answer. It is too much trouble to some people to think, to search the Scriptures, and to pray. They have no heart for a process so troublesome. "No," saith the worldling, "I have other fish to fry. I go my way to my farm, and to my merchandise. Let graceless bigots fight about creeds and the like; it matters not one jot what a man believes." Thus do many abide in the blackest darkness, because it is too much trouble to open the shutters, and draw up the blinds. Ah me! how dark are they who prefer an indolent ease to the light of God!

The light is often shut out by gross error. I cannot go over the list of the favourite errors of the present hour; for that list has grown too long for one day's reading. Speciously taught in selected phrases, cunningly supported by a dreamy science, and adorned with certain great names, errors come to us nowadays as respectable forms of thought. Falsehoods of which we heard when we were children-but only heard of them as loathsome heresies, long ago decayed and thrown into the limbo of worthless and mischievous imaginations- these are now refashioned, freshened up with touches of bright color, and brought out as advanced ideas. When any of these are permitted to occupy the mind, as they so commonly do nowadays, the old gospel is no longer seen, because the eye

is inflamed by the incoming of a foreign and irritating substance. Can it be that what was true a hundred years ago, is not true now? Can it be that the gospel which saved souls in the days of the apostles, cannot save souls now? Is it so, that some men are wiser than God, and are qualified to sit in judgment upon prophets and apostles? Surely, judicial blindness has happened to this generation: the chaff of their own folly has darkened their eyes, and Christ is hid from them.

One thing darkens the eye more than any other, and that is the love of sin. Nine times out of ten, allowed sin is the cataract which darkens the mental eye. Men cannot see truth, because they love falsehood. The gospel is not seen, because it is too pure for their loose lives and lewd thoughts. Christ's holy example is too severe for the worldly; his Spirit is too pure for lovers of carnal pleasure. When people reject the doctrines of the gospel, they also tolerate laxity of morals, and give predominance to the customs of the world. How can men see, when sin hath pricked the very eyeballs of the mind! "How can ye believe," said Christ, "which receive honor one of another?" The love of worldly honor prevented the Pharisees from believing in the lowly Messiah. When sin, like a handful of mud, seals up the eye, you need not wonder that the man becomes an agnostic, a doubter, a caviller. To have a clear eye one must have a clean heart. The pure in heart shall see God; and hence the pure in heart see God's truth, so as to appreciate it and delight in it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may wash the filth out of our eyes, that we may walk in the light, as God is in the light.

Pride, too, is a great darkener of the soul's eye. When a man admires himself he never adores God. He that is taken up with the conceit of his own righteousness will never see the righteousness of Christ. If thou believest thyself to be pure thou wilt never prize the blood which cleanses from all sin. If thou believest thyself to be already perfect, thou wilt not prize the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. No man cries for grace till he perceives his own need of it: if, therefore, we be puffed up with the notion that we are rich and increased in goods, we shall never see the riches of grace which are treasured up in Christ Jesus. The light of God dwells not with human self-sufficiency. A man's own shadow is very often the means of keeping him in the dark.

Self-seeking, in every form, is a sad cause of obscuring the light of the soul. Self-seeking, in the grosser form of avarice, makes men grope in the daytime. The glitter of gold is injurious to the eye. How could Judas see

the beauty of Christ when he saw such value in the thirty pieces of silver? How can a man set store by a future heaven when a present fortune is heaven enough for him? Mammon repays its worshippers with blinded eyes. Self does the same when it appears as ambition, desire of honor and respect, or a wish to have a finger in one's own salvation. The proud desire to share the glory of our salvation with free grace prevents the entrance of the light of God. Self, in the form of magnifying the nobility of human nature, extolling the grandeur of our common humanity, and all that, is a very blinding thing. How can a man that has his eye upon self have any sight for Jesus? Of all antichrists, self is the hardest to overcome. It is written, "He must increase, but I must decrease"; but if proud self will not endure a decrease, how can I see Christ increasing? There is no room for him in my heart. Appreciation of self leads to depreciation of the Lord Jesus.

Multitudes are kept in darkness through fear of men. They dare not see. They feel bound to think as the fashion goes-and there is a fashion of opinions as well as of coats and bonnets. If you resolve to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints you will be regarded as antiquated, and you will be as much pointed out for your faith, as you would be for your dress if you should walk down the street in the costume of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. To many it would be great sin to be singular. They never think for themselves; in fact, they are mentally shiftless. They ask their way of a certain person supposed to be a deeper student than themselves: of him they enquire what they ought to believe, disbelieve, praise, or blame. I remember well a man who never knew whether he liked a sermon till he had asked a certain knowing old gentleman whether it was a good one or not: he had no home-grown judgment, he imported his ideas. His brains, for safe keeping, were placed in another person's head: this is a very convenient thing, and saves a good deal of headache; but it has its drawbacks. Some persons put all their thinking out, and have it done for them by the dozen: but he that would have God's light, knows that it comes not to the coward who fears the frown of a mortal, and makes man his god. God could have given to the crowd a common judgment, and have left us to be guided by a central authority, if he had thought it right so to do; but having given to each individual an understanding, he expects us to use it, and to an honest personal use of understanding he gives the light. The eye of the sparrow or of the ant may be very small, yet it sees the great light, if it be a single and clear eye. Pray, then, for grace, that you may

search out for yourselves the truth of God, free from the fear of man which bringeth a snare. Let us never enquire, "Have any of the rulers believed?" Whether the rulers have or have not believed, let us follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and rejoice in that pure light which flows from him.

God save you, dear friends, from having your eye injured by any of the mischiefs I have mentioned. There are legions more of these blinding things: may grace guard you from them! God give you a "single eye," by which is meant an eye which does not look at two things at a time—a mind which is free from sinister motives, and from anything which would cause you to choose falsehood rather than truth, and wrong rather than right. God grant that we may have a desire to be right, a resolute design to know the truth as it is in Jesus, and to feel and act in sincere conformity therewith! Oh, to be sincere, simple-hearted, child-like, true! We want neither great genius nor sparkling wit, but we need an unsophisticated mind; for so the light gets entrance into the soul through the Spirit of God.

II. Secondly, let us consider HOW THE LIGHT MAY BE PERVERTED. Some men might have light enough, but their eye is in such an evil condition that the light is turned into darkness. I suppose that in the natural world light could not actually become darkness; but in the spiritual kingdom it is certainly so: "When thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." Harken, my brethren, and take heed.

A man has heard the gospel of free grace and dying love, he has heard a message full of love concerning the forgiveness of sin, and pardon bought with blood, and freely given to him that believeth. The doctrine of justification by faith has been clearly explained to him. He believes firmly in these great evangelical truths, and calls them glorious and precious. But he draws an inference from this teaching which is ruinous to his soul. He considers that, after all, sin is of small consequence, and he may indulge in it freely, for God is merciful, and grace is infinite. At some time or other he will repent and believe in Jesus, and then he will be set right, however grossly he may have offended. God is gracious, and therefore he may be sinful: God freely forgives, and therefore he may recklessly offend. This is to turn light into darkness. Such turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness is infamous. Words cannot set forth the hideous ingratitude of such depraved argument. We may justly say of a man who thus turns

light into darkness, "his damnation is just." Yet no doubt there are many such who silently, in their own hearts, draw from the goodness of God a license to sin. Ah, my hearer! if your eye be in this condition, the more freely we preach to you the gospel of the grace of God, the more surely will you go from sin to sin. This is terrible. O false hearts! what shall I do with you? You make me wish to be dumb, lest I minister to your condemnation. In the lowest hell you are digging for yourselves a deeper hell: you use the promises of mercy as the instruments of your own destruction. What! can you hang yourselves nowhere but on the cross? Can you drown yourselves nowhere but in the waters of Siloah? What has come to you, that you are so infatuated as to find your death in the gospel which is ordained for life?

Let me set before you another form of this evil. A man perceives the great value of the means of grace, but he goes further and misuses them. Having been brought up religiously, he has a deep respect for the ministers of God's house, for the services of the sanctuary, and especially for the two ordinances which Christ has established in his church-Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. He reverences the Sabbath and the inspired Word, and the church and all its sacred ministries. But it may be that he proceeds from a due regard of these things to a superstitious trust in them, making of them what God has never made of them: thus his light becomes darkness. He regards attendance upon public worship as a substitute for inward religion; he looks upon membership with a church as a certificate of salvation. He may be so foolish as to speak of Baptism as an ordinance whereby he was made a member of Christ, and a child of God; and of the Supper of the Lord as a saving ordinance, or even as a sacrifice for the quick and dead. When instructive symbols are perverted into instruments of priestcraft, the light is turned into darkness. By multitudes, in these days, aids to faith are degraded into the machinery of superstition. The church, which is our mother and nurse, is made into an antichrist, and men look to her for salvation instead of looking wholly and alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. Outward modes of worship and instruction may be very beneficial, but if they are allowed to usurp the confidence of the soul, they may gender disease and death. When a man's religion becomes his destruction, how sure is that destruction!

I have known many go another way: they have said, "I care very little about the shape or form of religion. A sincere spirit is everything. The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life." Such a man professes to clutch at the

soul of things, but I have seen him grow indifferent in creed and licentious in life. He believes everything to have some measure of truth in it; every evil practice to have some good point about it. This is a poisonous atmosphere for any man to breathe. Hear him talk, if you would see how the worse can be made to seem the better. Nothing to him is fixed truth, nor even settled right. He is like the chameleon, which takes its color from the changing light about it. This he calls "liberty"; but assuredly it is not the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. Say, rather, it is the light of charity turned into the darkness of indifference. How great is this darkness! How many are deceived by it! After all, there is light and there is darkness, and they are not the same thing. There is truth, taught of God, and there is a lie, which is the devil's own; and these will never sit at the same table. There is a blessing for the preacher of the truth; but if any man preach another gospel, for him there is an anathema which none can reverse.

I have also seen this light turned to darkness in the case of 'the student who has gathered great erudition, and enrolled himself among the learned. He begins to criticize. Do not condemn him for that: he judges very properly at first, he criticizes things that ought to be criticized; but he stops not there. Once having his critical faculty aroused, he is like a boy with a new knife; he must cut something or other. Nothing comes in his way more often than the Scriptures; and he must have a cut at them. He whittles at Genesis; he makes a gash in Deuteronomy; he halves Isaiah; he takes slices out of the Gospels, and cuts the Epistles into slivers. You see, he has so sharp a knife that he must use it. By-and-by, from a critic he advances to an irreverent faultfinder, and from that to an utter unbeliever, hard in the mouth and stiff in the neck. His light has blinded him. He has taken his own eye to pieces that he might study its anatomy, and henceforth the light will be of no more use to him than to the dead.

We have seen the light turned to darkness in a further sense; hear and understand. There is a blessed light called the full assurance of faith: the more we have of it the better. Blessed is that man who never doubts his God, who hangs with holy confidence upon the eternal promise and the immutable covenant, and is never staggered through unbelief. He walks in the light of God, and enjoys divine fellowship. But I have seen something very like to this holy confidence which has been before the Lord a very different matter. Assurance has been counterfeited by presumption. The man has taken for granted that he is a child of God when he is not, and he has appropriated privileges which are none of his. He has supposed himself

to be in the covenant when he has neither part nor lot in the matter; and without repentance, without the new birth, and without saving faith, he has dared to boast of those sacred securities which belong only to the heirs of grace, sanctified in Christ Jesus. Dreadful is the case of the man who has presumed to hope for heaven while living an ungodly life; boasting of freedom from all fear, when, indeed, he was destitute of all hope.

I have also seen the light turned to darkness in quite another manner. Sweet and soft is the light of holy fear: it is as the twilight of the evening. It is a light that comes from God, when a man is afraid to sin, when he fears lest he should grieve the Spirit of God, when he trembles lest in anything he should err from the teaching of his heavenly Father. But then this light may be corrupted into slavish dread, despondency, and despair.

Introspection, or looking within, may degenerate into a morbid habit: under its influence, the soul may refuse to look to Christ, and may enshroud itself in the gloom of remorse. Truth may be distorted till it takes a most alarming shape, and the soul, in sullen despair, refuses to be comforted, refuses to believe in the Son of God.

Do you wonder that our Lord seemed to hold up his hands in astonishment as he said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" If that which should lead misleads, how misled you will be! If your better part turns out to be evil, how evil must you be! See to it then, dear friends, as before the living God, that you have a clear eye, and that the light of Christ comes streaming into your soul in all its glorious purity and power.

III. I close by coming to the third and most important point: How THE LIGHT ACTS WHEN IT COMES WITHIN. If the eye be right, single, and clear, there is no laborious work for that eye to do to obtain the light. When the sun is shining, if you wish for light you simply open your eyes, and you have light at once. You have not to rub the eye, or work it into some singular position: let the outward light come to the eye, and at once it enters it, and conveys an image to the mind. When the eye is sound it takes pleasure in the light, and with delight conveys the image of things external to the mind within. If the Lord, in his great grace, has made your eye single, so that you desire only to know the truth, and to be yourself true, then without toil you will perceive truth, and the image thereof will readily appear before your mind. The light is willing enough to enter when the window of the soul allows its admission. When that light comes in, you will

know it. No man passes from his natural darkness into heavenly light without being aware that a great change has taken place. Beloved, I will try to show you how the holy light acts when it enters our nature.

When it first comes in it reveals much that was before unperceived. If a room has been long shut up, and kept in darkness, the light has a startling effect. You may have hurried through that room with a candle, but you never stayed to look, and therefore did not notice the state of things. The room did not strike you as being very unpleasant, though it smelt a little stale and fusty; but now that you have put back the shutters and drawn up the blind, the light has made the mould and dust very manifest. That black festoon of spiders' webs; those insects which hurry out of the light; that all-encrusting dust-these had been overlooked. The room cannot be suffered to remain in such a state. What a change is demanded! All hands are summoned to clean out the den, and turn it into a healthy chamber fit to be inhabited. The light of heaven reveals a thousand sins, and causes their removal. The first effect of the light of God in the soul is painfully unpleasant: it makes you loathe yourself, and almost wish that you had never been born. Things grow worse and worse to our consciousness as the light shines more and more. Beloved, we wish it to be so. We would have no part kept in the dark. We would have every idol discovered and broken, every secret chamber of imagery exposed to the sun, and then destroyed. Is it not so? Do you wish to keep the light from any one part of your nature? Do you not far rather desire that the light should search you through and through, and lay bare all the deceitfulness of the heart, and all the falseness of the depraved mind?

As that light continues to enter, it gradually illuminates each faculty of the mind. The will by nature prefers the darkness: the man claims the right to act as he pleases, and to give no reasons for his waywardness. When the light of God enters the soul, the Lord Jesus becomes altogether lovely, and then the sacred light falls on the proud will, and the man sees that it is evil and perverse, and he cries, "O Lord Jesus, not my will, but thine, be done." This same light falls on the outward life which is ruled by the will, and the conduct and conversation become bright with the light of love. The judgment feels the inner illumination, and decides according to the law of truth and righteousness. With the judgment the delight is lit up also, and the heart rejoices in the law of the Lord.

The light is poured in upon the conscience, and now that poor, halfblinded thing issues edicts and gives forth verdicts which are according to the oracles of God. What a difference between a natural conscience and a conscience instructed by God, and enlightened by his Word! There remains much more to be done in this direction than many of us suspect. We may be living unconsciously in evils for which our consciences have never once accused us. Godly men, in old time, persecuted those who differed from them, and thought it a duty to do so: they even called toleration a crime. The best of men owned negro slaves, and were not conscious of wrong. When Mr. Whitefield left certain negroes to the Orphan House, he did not dream that he was violating the rights of man: in fact, he was very careful for their present and future welfare. Conscience does not tolerate slavery now. Do you not think that a great enlightenment has taken place upon the drink question? Is not similar light needed as to war, as to wage-paying and wage-earning, and a thousand other things? It is a happy thing that we have received a light which will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. There is nothing hid within us which this light will not manifest; and so, as, one by one, we see our imperfections, we shall cry for grace to remove them, and thus we shall grow in holiness through the grace of God.

This same light, falling on the memory, awakens penitence for our faults and gratitude for God's goodness. Shining on our thoughts, it makes them sparkle with the beauty of holiness; shining upon our emotions, it makes them flash and glow with love to God and heavenly things. A soul is a fine object when thus lit up! The holy light falls on our motives, and unveils the secret heart of all our actions. You do right, but this light shows you why you do right. You are a friend to man, but why? You are a Christian professor, but are you sincere? The light makes short work with that which did not flow from a pure motive. This light falls also on the spirit in which a deed was done; and here much is seen which some had rather not see.

Did you ever have the light of God brought to bear upon your imagination? Imagination is the play-room of the soul. Here many a man considers that he is without law. "Surely," says he, "thought is free." The man gloats over sins which he would fear to commit: he finds a pleasure in thinking over lusts which his circumstances compel him to avoid, In the dark chambers of imagination the heart commits adulteries, murders, thefts, and all manner of infamies. When the light falls here, the man shudders as he learns that as he thinketh in his heart so is he. He trembles as he perceives that the fond imagination of sin is sin. Then is the floor of imagination purged, and the

foul dust and chaff are driven into the fire. Fancy then gleams in the light of God, and imagination, washed in the brazen layer, sings songs on her stringed instruments unto the God of her salvation, who has brought her out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Brethren, we need the light to shine in upon our tempers. We know some Christian people who will not let you mention their tempers: they have taken out a license to be as surly as they like, on the ground of "it is their constitution." "No," they say, "I cannot help being passionate. My mother was a very quick-tempered woman, and I am naturally in that way. There's no help for it." Let the light in upon that unseemly thing. If what you say be true, write it down in black and white that you are an incorrigible vixen, and must be so all your life. What! Do you not like it? If it is true, let the light in upon it. Let it be known to your own self and to others that you are a mad dog, and that there is no curing you. Are you angry with me for suggesting it? I am only taking you at your word. Do not say, "I cannot help having a bad temper." Friend, you must help it. Pray God to help you to overcome it at once; for either you must kill it, or it will kill you. You cannot carry a bad temper into heaven. They will have none of your passions in the Father's house above. Let in the light of Christ's love on it, and the vile thing will be made to die. It is a night-bird; it cannot bear the light of grace and love. Live near to Jesus, and his compassion will destroy your evil passion. Try it.

Your desires, your hopes, your fears, your aspirations, should all be set in the light, and what a joy it will be when they all glitter in it! "No part dark"-what a wonderful condition! Some professors appear to have a little light in the upper rooms; they have notions in their heads, and ideas on their tongues! Alas! the first floor is dark, very dark. From their common conversation the light of God is absent. Enter at the door, and you cannot see your way into the passage, or up the stairs; the light is up aloft, but not in the dwelling-rooms. Oh, for light in the region of the heart! Oh, for light upon the household talk, and the business conversation! From garret to cellar may the whole houses of our humanity be lighted up! This is the true work of grace, when the whole man is brought into the light, and no part is left to pine in the darkness. Then are we the children of light, when we abide in the light, and have no fellowship with darkness. Then is the distinction seen between Israel and Egypt; for while all Egypt sat in a darkness which might be felt, in the land of Goshen there was light.

Where this light comes it gives certainty: we cease to doubt, and we know whom we have believed. With this comes direction: we see our way, and how to walk in it. We pursue a plain path, and are no more in a maze. "This is the way, walk ye in it," is sounded in our ears as the light reveals to us the narrow way which leads to life eternal.

This light, when it dwells in the heart, brings good cheer with it. Darkness is doleful, light brings delight. Did you never travel by a train which passed through a tunnel, but was destitute of a single lamp? Somebody has struck a match, and lighted a candle, and all eyes have turned towards him. In a small way he was a benefactor: all eyes are glad of light. Oh, what a sweet thing is the light of the Holy Spirit to one that has been long in the darkness of ignorance, sorrow, and despair! A poor boy who was put down in the coal mine to close a door after the coal waggons had passed by, was forced to sit there all alone, hour after hour, in the dark. He was a gracious child; and when one said to him, "Are you not weary with sitting so long in the dark?" he said, "Yes, I do get tired; but sometimes the men give me a bit of candle, and when I get a light I sing." So do we. When we get a light we sing. Glory be to God, he is our light and our salvation, and therefore we sing. O child of God, when your eye is single, and the light of God fills every part of your being, then you sing, and sing again, and feel that you can never have done singing on earth, till you begin singing in heaven.

The text has perplexed many a learned reader; and therefore you will not wonder that I confess that it has puzzled me many times. See what it says:—"If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light." Is not this saying the same thing? The Holy Spirit would not use a tautology, nor utter a trite, self-evident thing. Yet we must not go beyond what the text says. It seems to me that our Lord wished us to feel that he could say nothing better in praise of a soul in which there was no part dark than what he had said, namely, "The whole shall be full of light." Some have thought that he meant that being lighted within we shall be full of light to others. That is a great truth; but our Lord does not say so here; for he compares our inward light to a candle which shines on ourselves: "as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." He refers to our own personal comfort. When a room is thoroughly well lighted up in every corner, it has a joyous splendor. One looks about and feels content and satisfied. So, when the whole nature is filled with the light of God, we have sweetness and light to the full, and heaven seems begun

below. It is inexpressibly delightful, luxuriously blessed, to dwell in the full light of God when there is no concealment and no love of evil. When once the sun thus shines full on me I would cry with Joshua, "Sun, stand thou still"!

This inner light will make us shine before others. It is the only shining we should seek. A clean lantern with a lighted candle in it makes no noise, and yet it wins attention: the darker the night, the more is it valued. There never was a time in which true inner light was more needed than now: may the Lord impart it to each one of us, and then we shall shine as lights in the world! The Lord God bring this light to you, and fill you with it; and unto his name shall be the glory! You have not to work for the light, you have only to receive it. Then shall your profiting be known unto all men when it is true profiting to your own character. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

THE MUSTARD SEED: A SERMON FOR THE SABBATH-SCHOOL TEACHER

NO. 2110

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
OCTOBER 20TH, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”
— Luke 13:18-19.

I SHALL not attempt fully to explain this great little parable. A full exposition may be left for another occasion. The parable may be understood to relate to our Lord Himself, who is the living seed. You know also how His church is the tree that springs from Him, and how greatly it grows and spreads its branches until it covers the earth. From the one man Christ Jesus, despised and rejected of men, slain and buried, and so hidden away from among men — from Him, I say, there arises a multitude which no one can number. These spread themselves, like some tree which grows by the rivers of waters, and they yielded both gracious shelter and spiritual food. I called it a great little parable, and so it is: it has a world of teaching within the smallest compass. The parable is itself like a grain of mustard seed, but its meanings are as a great tree.

At this time of the year, Sabbath-school teachers come together especially to pray for a blessing on their work, and pastors are invited to say a word to cheer them in their self-denying service. This request I would cheerfully

fulfill, and therefore my discourse will not be a full explanation of the parable, but an adaptation of it to the cheering of those who are engaged in the admirable work of teaching the young the fear of the Lord. Never service more important; to overlook it would be a grave fault. We rejoice to encourage our friends in their labor of love.

In this parable light is thrown upon the work of those who teach the Gospel. First, notice a very simple work: “a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden.” Secondly, observe what came of it: “it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”

FIRST, NOTICE A VERY SIMPLE WORK. The work of teaching the gospel is as the casting of a grain of mustard seed into a garden.

Note, first, what the nameless man did. “It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took.” He took it; that is to say, picked it out from the bulk. It was only one grain, and a grain of a very insignificant seed; but he did not let it lie on the shelf; he took it in his hand to put it to its proper use. A grain of mustard seed is too small a thing for public exhibition; the man who takes it in his hand is almost the only one who spies it out. It was only a grain of mustard seed, but the man set it before his own mind as a distinct object to be dealt with. He was not sowing mustard over broad acres, but he was sowing “a grain of mustard seed” in his garden. It is well for the teacher to know what he is going to teach, to have that truth distinctly in his mind’s eye, as the man had the grain of mustard seed between his fingers. Depend upon it, unless a truth is clearly seen and distinctly recognized by the teacher, little will come of it to the taught. It may be a very simple truth, but if a someone takes it, understands it, grasps it, and loves it, he will do something with it. Beloved, first and foremost let us ourselves take the Gospel, let us believe it, let us appreciate it, let us prize it beyond all things; for truth lives as it is loved, and no hand is so fit for its sowing as the hand which grasps it well.

Further, in this little parable we notice that this man had a garden: “Like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden.” Some Christian people have no garden — no personal sphere of service. They belong to the whole clan of Christians, and they pine to see the entire band go out to cultivate the whole world, but they do not come to personal particulars. It is delightful to be warmed up by missionary addresses, and to feel a zeal for the salvation of all the nations; but, after all, the net result of

a general theoretic earnestness for all the world does not amount to much. As we should have no horticulture if people had no gardens, so we shall have no missionary work done unless each person has a mission. It is the duty of every believer in Christ, like the first man, Adam, to have a garden to dress and to till. Children are in the Sunday-schools by millions: thank God for that! But have you a class of your own? All the church at work for Christ! Glorious theory! Are you up and doing for your Lord? It will be a grand time when every believer has his allotment, and is sowing it with the seed of truth. The wilderness and the solitary place will blossom as the rose when each Christian cultivates his own plot of roses. Where should this unnamed man sow his mustard seed but in his own garden? It was near him, and dear to him, and to it he went. Teach your own children, speak to your neighbors, seek the conversion of those whom God has especially entrusted to you.

Having a garden, and having this seed, the man sowed it, and simple as this is, it is the hinge of the instruction. You have a number of seeds in a pill-box. There they are: look at them! Take that box down this day a year from now, and the seeds will be just the same. Lay them by in that dry box for seven years, and nothing will happen. Truth is not to be kept to ourselves; it is to be published and advocated. There is an old proverb, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail." The proverb is true in a sense, but it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. If you put truth away and leave it without a voice, it won't prevail; it will not even contend. When have great truths prevailed? Why, when brave men have persisted in declaring them. Daring spirits have taken up a cause which has been at the first unpopular, and they have spoken about it so earnestly and so often that at length the cause has commanded attention; they have pressed on and on until the cause has triumphed altogether. Truth has been mighty, and has prevailed, but yet not without the people who gave it life and tongue. Not even the Gospel itself, if it is not taught, will prevail. If revealed truth is laid on one side and kept in silence, it will not grow. Mark how through the dark ages the Gospel lay asleep in old books in the libraries of monasteries until Luther and his fellow reformers fetched it out and sowed it in the minds of men.

This man simply cast it into his garden. He did not wrap it around with gold leaf, or otherwise adorn it, but he put it into the ground. The naked seed came into contact with the naked soil. O teachers, do not try to make the Gospel look fine; do not overlay it with your fine words or elaborate

explanations. The Gospel seed is to be put into the young heart just as it is. Get the truth concerning the Lord Jesus into the children's minds. Make them know, not what you can say about the truth, but what the truth itself says. It is wicked to take the Gospel and make a peg of it to hang our old clothes upon. The Gospel is not a boat to be freighted with human thoughts, fine speculations, scraps of poetry, and pretty tales. No, no. The Gospel is the thought of God; in and of itself it is the message which the soul needs. It is the Gospel itself which will grow. Take a truth, especially that great doctrine, that humanity is lost and that Christ is the only Savior, and see to it that you place it in the mind. Teach plainly the great truth that whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and that the Lord Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree and suffered for us, the just for the unjust — I say take these truths and set them forth to the mind, and see what will come of it. Sow the very truth; not your reflections on the truth, not your embellishments of the truth, but the truth itself. This is to be brought into contact with the mind, for the truth is the seed, and the human mind is the soil for it to grow in.

These remarks of mine are very plain and trite; and yet everything depends upon the simple operation described. Nearly everything has been tried in preaching of late, except the plain and clear statement of the glad tidings and of the atoning sacrifice. People have talked about what the church can do, and what the Gospel can do; we have been informed as to the proofs of the Gospel, or the doubts about it, and so forth; but when will they give us the Gospel itself? Friends, we must come to the point and teach the Gospel, for this is the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is an easy thing to deliver an address upon mustard seed, to give the children a taste of the pungency of mustard, to tell them how mustard seed would grow, what kind of a tree it would produce, and how the birds would sing among its branches. But this is not sowing mustard seed. It is all very fine to talk about the influence of the Gospel, the ethics of Christianity, the elevating power of the love of Christ, and so on; but what we want is the Gospel itself, which exercises that influence. Sow the seed: tell the children the doctrine of the Cross, the fact that with the stripes of Jesus we are healed, and that by faith in Him we are justified. What is wanted is not talk about the Gospel, but the Gospel itself. We must continually bring the living Word of the living God into contact with the hearts of men. Oh, for the aid of the Holy Spirit in this! He will help us, for He delights to glorify Jesus.

That which is described in the parable was an insignificant business: the man took the tiny seed and put it into his garden. It is a very commonplace affair to sit down with a dozen children around you and open your Bible and tell them the well-worn tale of how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. No Pharisee is likely to stand and blow a trumpet when he is going to teach children; he is more likely to point to the children in the temple and sneeringly say, "Hearest thou what these say?" It is a lowly business altogether, but yet, to the mustard seed, and to the man with a garden, the sowing is the all-important matter. The mustard seed will never grow unless put into the soil; the owner of the garden will never have a crop of mustard unless he sows the seed. Dear Sunday-school teacher, do not become weary of your humble work, for none can measure its importance. Tell the boys and girls of the Son of God, who lived and loved and died that the ungodly might be saved. Urge them to immediate faith in the mighty Savior that they may be saved at once. Tell of the new birth, and how the souls of human beings are renewed by the Holy Spirit, without whose divine working none can enter the kingdom of heaven. Cast in mustard seed, and nothing else but mustard seed, if you want to grow mustard. Teach the Gospel of grace, and nothing but the Gospel of grace, if you would see grace growing in the hearts of your young people.

Secondly, let us consider what it was that the man sowed. We have seen that he sowed; what did he sow? It was one single seed, and that seed a very small one; so very, very small that the Jews were accustomed to say, "As small as mustard seed." Hence the Savior speaks of it as the smallest among seeds, which it may not have been absolutely, but which it was according to common parlance; our Lord was not teaching botany, but speaking a popular parable. Yes, the Gospel seems a very simple thing: Believe and live! Look to Jesus lying in the sinner's stead! Look to Jesus crucified, even as Israel looked to the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It is simplicity itself; in fact, the Gospel is so plain a matter that our superior people are weary of it and look out for something more difficult of comprehension. People nowadays are like the person who liked to hear the Scriptures "properly confounded"; or like the other who said, "You should hear our minister dispense with the truth." Sowing seed is work too ordinary for the moderns; they demand new methods. But, beloved, we must not run after vain inventions; our one business is to sow the Word of God in the minds of children. It is yours and mine to teach everybody the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that

whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We know nothing else among adults or among children. This one seed, apparently so little, so insignificant, we continue to sow. They sneeringly say, "What can be the moral result of preaching such a Gospel? Surely it would be better to discourse upon morals, social economics, and the sciences?" Ah, friends! if you can do any good in those ways, we will not hinder you, but our belief is that a hundred times more can be done with the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes. The Gospel is not the enemy of any good thing; say, rather, it is the force by which good things are to be carried out. Whatsoever things are pure and honest and of good repute are all nurtured by that spirit which is begotten by the simple Gospel of Christ. Yet conversions do not come by essays upon morals but by the teaching of salvation by Christ. The cleansing and raising of our race will not be effected by politics or science, but by the Word of the Lord, which lives and abides forever. To bring the greatest blessings upon our rising youth we must labor to implant in their minds faith in the Lord Jesus. Oh, for divine power in this work!

But the seed, though very small, was a living thing. There is a great difference between a mustard seed and a piece of wax of the same size. Life slumbers in that seed. What life is we cannot tell. Even if you take a microscope you cannot spy it out. It is a mystery, but it is essential to a seed. The Gospel has a something in it not readily discoverable by the philosophical inquirer, if, indeed, he can perceive it at all. Take a maxim of Socrates or of Plato, and inquire whether a nation or a tribe has ever been transformed by it from barbarism to culture. A maxim of a philosopher may have measurably influenced a person in some right direction, but who has ever heard of a someone's whole character being transformed by any observation of Confucius or Socrates? I confess I never have. Human teachings are barren. But within the Gospel, with all its triteness and simplicity, there is a divine life and that life makes all the difference. The human can never rival the divine, for it lacks the life-fire. It is better to preach five words of God's Word than five million words of human wisdom. Human words may seem to be the wiser and the more attractive, but there is no heavenly life in them. Within God's Word, however simple it may be, there dwells an omnipotence like that of God from whose lips it came.

Truth to tell, a seed is a very comprehensive thing. Within the mustard seed what is to be found? Why, there is all in it that ever comes out of it. It must

be so. Every branch and every leaf and every flower and every seed that is to be is, in its essence, all within the seed. It needs to be developed, but it is all there. And so, within the simple Gospel, how much lies concentrated? Look at it! Within that truth lie regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, zeal, consecration, perfection. Heaven hides itself away within the Gospel. Like a young bird in its nest, glory dwells in grace. We may not at first see all its results, nor, indeed, shall we see them at all until we sow the seed and it grows; yet it is all there. Do you believe it, young teacher? Have you realized what you have in your hold when you grasp the Gospel of the grace of God? It is the most wonderful thing beneath the skies. Do you believe in the Gospel which you have to teach? Do you discern that within its apparently narrow lines the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect, and the Divine are all enclosed? As in the babe of Bethlehem there was the Eternal God, so within the simple teaching of "Believe and live" there are all the elements of eternal blessedness for people, and boundless glory for God. It is a very comprehensive thing, that little seed, that Gospel of God.

And for this reason it is so wonderful: it is a divine creation. Summon your chemists, bring them together with all their vessels and their fires. Select a jury of the greatest chemists now alive, analytical or otherwise, as you will. Learned sirs, will you kindly make us a mustard seed? You may take a mustard seed, and pound it and analyze it, and you may thus ascertain all its ingredients. So far so good. Is not your work well begun? Now make a single mustard seed. We will give you a week. It is a very small affair. You have all the elements of mustard in yonder mortar. Make us one living grain; we do not ask for a ton weight. One grain of mustard seed will suffice us. Great chemists, have you not made so small a thing? A month has gone by. Only one grain of mustard seed we asked of you, and where is it? Have you not made one in a month? What are you at? Shall we allow you seven years? Yes, with all the laboratories in the kingdom at your service and all known substances for your material and all the world's coal beds for your fuel, get to your work. The air is black with your smoke and the streams run foul with your waste products; but where is the mustard seed? This baffles the wise; they cannot make a living seed. No; and nobody can make a Gospel, or even a new Gospel text. The thinkers of the age could not even concoct another life of Christ to match with the four Gospels which we have already. I go further: they could not create a new incident which would be congruous with the facts we already know. Plenty of novel writers nowadays can beat out imaginary histories upon their

anvils: let them write a fifth Gospel — say the Gospel according to Peter, or Andrew. Let us have it! They will not even commence the task. Who will write a new psalm, or even a new promise? Clever chemists prove their wisdom by saying at once, “No, we cannot make a mustard seed”; and wise thinkers will equally confess that they cannot make another Gospel. My learned brethren are trying very hard to make a new Gospel for this nineteenth century, but you teachers had better go on with the old one. The advanced men cannot put life into their theory. This living Word is the finger of God. That simple grain of mustard seed must be made by God, or not at all; He must put life into the Gospel, or it will not have power in the heart. The Gospel of Sunday-school teachers, that Gospel of “Believe and live,” however people may despise it, has Godgiven life in it. You cannot make another which can supplant it, for you cannot put life into your invention. Go on and use the one living truth with your children, for nothing else has God’s life in it.

I want you to see what a little affair the sowing seemed, as we answer the question, What was it to him? It was a very natural act; he sowed a seed. It is a most natural thing that we should teach others what we believe ourselves. I cannot make out how some professors can call themselves Christians and yet never communicate the faith to others. That the young people of our churches should gather other young people around them and tell them of Jesus, whom you love, is as natural as for a gardener to put seeds into his prepared ground.

To sow a mustard seed is a very inexpensive act. Only one grain of mustard: nobody can find me a coin small enough to express its value. I do not know how much mustard seed the man had; certainly it is not a rare thing, but he only took one grain of it and cast it into his garden. He emptied no exchequer by that expenditure; this is one of the excellencies of Sabbath-school work, that it neither exhausts the church of people nor of money. However much of it is done, it does not lessen the resources of our Zion; it is done freely, quietly, without excitement, without sacrifice of life, and yet what a fountain of blessing it is!

Still, it was an act of faith. It is always an act of faith to sow seed, because you have, for the time, to give it up and receive nothing in return. The farmer takes his choice seed corn and throws it into the soil of his field. He might have made many a loaf of bread with it, but he casts it away. Only his faith saves him from being judged a maniac: he expects it to return to

him fiftyfold. If you had never seen a harvest, you would think that someone burying good wheat under the clods had gone mad; if you had never seen conversions, it might seem an absurd thing to be constantly teaching to boys and girls the story of the Man who was nailed to the tree. We preach and teach as a work of faith, and remember, it is only as an act of faith that it will answer its purpose. The rule of the harvest is, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee." Believe, dear teacher, believe in the Gospel. Believe in what you are doing when you tell it. Believe that great results from slender causes spring. Go on sowing your mustard seed of salvation by faith, expecting and believing that fruit will come thereof.

It was an act which brought the sower no honor. The Savior has chronicled the fact that the man took a grain of mustard seed and sowed it, but thousands of people had gone on sowing mustard seed for half a lifetime without a word. Nobody has ever spoken in your honor, my friend, though you have taught the truth. Dear teacher, go on sowing, though nobody should observe your diligence or praise your faithfulness. Sow the seed of precious truth in the garden of the child's mind, for much more will come of it than you have dared to hope.

It seems to me that our Lord selected the mustard seed in this parable, not because its results are the greatest possible from a seed — for an oak or a cedar are much greater growths than a mustard tree — but He selected it because it is the greatest result as compared with the size of the seed. Follow out the analogy. Come to yonder school, and see! That earnest young man is teaching a boy, one of those wild creatures of the street; they swarm in every quarter. A dozen young Turks are before him, or say young Arabs of the street; he is teaching them the Gospel. Small affair, is it not? Yes, very; but what may come of it? Think of how joyfully much may grow out of this little! What is that young man teaching? Only one elementary truth. Do not sneer; it is truth, but it is the mere alphabet of it. He touches upon nothing deep in theology; he only says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Dear boy, believe in the Lord Jesus and live." That is all he says. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? The teacher himself is teaching the one truth in a very poor way; at least, he thinks so. Ask him, when he has done, what he thinks of his own teaching, and he replies, "I do not feel fit to teach." Yes, that young man's teaching is sighed over, and in his own judgment it is poor and weak, but there is life in the truth he imparts and eternal results will follow — results of which I have now to speak in the second part of my sermon. May the good Spirit help me so to

Speak as to encourage my beloved friends, who have given themselves up to the Christlike work of teaching the little ones!

SECONDLY, let us enquire, **WHAT CAME OF IT?**

First, “it grew.” That was what the sower hoped would come of it: he placed the seed in the ground hoping that it would grow. It is not reasonable to suppose that he would have sown it if he had not hoped that it would spring up. Dear teacher, do you always sow in hope, do you trust that the Word will live and grow? If you do not, I do not think your success is very probable. Expect the truth to take root and expand and grow up. Teach divine truth with earnestness and expect that the life within it will unveil its wonders.

But though the sower expected growth, he could not himself have made it grow. After he had placed the seed in the ground he could water it, he could pray God to make the sun shine on it, but he could not directly produce growth. Only He that made the seed could cause it to grow. Growth is a continuance of that almighty act by which life is at first given. The putting of life into the seed is God’s work, and the bringing forth of the life from the seed is God’s work too. This is a matter within your hope, but far beyond your power.

A very wonderful thing it is that the seed should grow. If we did not see it every day, we should be more astonished at the growth of seed than at all the wonders of magicians. A growing seed is God’s abiding miracle. You see a piece of ground near London covered with a market garden, and after a few months you go by the place and you see streets and a public square and a church and a great population. You say to yourself, “It is remarkable that all these houses should have sprung up in a few months.” Yet that is not at all so wonderful as for a plowed field to become covered four feet high with corn, and all without the use of wagons to bring the material, or tools to work it up into a harvest. Without noise of hammer, or the ringing of trowels; without handiwork of man, the whole has been done. Wonder at the growth of grace. See how it increases, deepens, strengthens! Growth in grace is a marvel of divine love. That a person should repent through the Gospel, that he should believe in Jesus, that he should be totally changed, that he should have a hope of heaven, that he should receive power to become a child of God — these are all marvelous things; yet they are going on under our eyes and we fail to admire them as we should. The growth of

holiness in such fallen creatures as we are is the admiration of angels, the delight of all intelligent beings.

To the sower this growth was very pleasing. How pleasant it is to see the seed of grace grow in children! Do you not remember when you first sowed mustard-and-cress as a child, how the very next morning you went and turned the ground up to see how much it had grown? How pleased you were when you saw the little yellow shoot, and afterward a green leaf or two! So is it with the true teacher: he or she is anxious to see growth and makes eager inquiry for it. What was expected is taking place and it is most delightful to that teacher, whatever it may be to others. An unsympathetic person cries, "Oh, I do not think anything of that child's emotions. It is merely a passing impression: he will soon forget it." The teacher does not think so. The cold critic says, "I don't think much of a child's weeping. Children's tears lie very near the surface." But the teacher is full of hope that in these tears is a real sorrow for sin, and an earnest seeking after the Lord. The questioner says, "It is nothing for a child to say that he gives his heart to Jesus. Youngsters soon think that they believe. They are so easily led." People talk thus because they do not love children and live with the desire to save them. If you sympathize with children, you are pleased with every hopeful token and are on the watch for every mark of divine life within them. If you are a florist, you will see more of the progress of your plants than if you are no gardener and have no interest in such things. Think, then, of what my text says: "It grew." Oh, for a prayer just now from all of you this morning, "Lord, make the Gospel grow wherever it falls! Whether the preacher scatters it, or the teacher sows it; whether it falls among the aged people, or the young; Lord, make the Gospel grow!" Pray hard for it, friends! You cannot make it grow, but you can prevail with God to bless it to His honor and praise.

Next, having started growing, it became a tree. Luke says, "It waxed a great tree." It was great in itself, but the greatness was seen mainly in comparison with the size of the seed. The growth was great. Here is the wonder, not that it became a tree, but that being a mustard seed, it should become "a great tree." Do you see the point of the parable? I have already brought it before you. Listen! It was only a word spoken — "Dear boy, look to Jesus." Only such a word, and a soul was saved, its sin was forgiven, its whole being was changed, a new heir of heaven was born. Do you see the growth? A word produces salvation! A grain of mustard seed becomes a great tree! A little teaching brings eternal life. That is not all: the

teacher, with many prayers and tears, took her girl home, and pleaded with her for Christ, and the girl was led to yield her heart to the dominion of Christ Jesus — a holy, heavenly life came out of that pleading. See! she becomes a thoughtful girl, a loving wife, a gracious mother, a matron in Israel, such a one as Dorcas among the poor, or Hannah with her Samuel. What a great result from a little cause! The teacher's words were tearfully spoken; they could not have been printed, for they were far too broken and childlike; but they were, in God's hands, the means of fashioning a life most sweet, most chaste, most beautiful.

A boy was about as wild as any roamer of our streets; a teacher knelt by his side with his arm about the lad's neck. He pleaded with God for the boy, and with the boy for God. That boy was converted, and as a youth in business he was an example to the workroom; as a father he was a guide to his household; as a man of God he was a light to all around; as a preacher of righteousness he adorned the doctrine of God his Savior in all things. There is much more which I might easily picture, but you can work it out as well as I can. All that is to be desired may spring out of the simple talk of a humble Christian with a youth. A mustard seed becomes a great tree; a few words of holy admonition may produce a noble life.

But is that all? Beloved, our teaching may preserve souls from the deep darkness of the abode of the lost. A soul left to itself might hurry down from folly to vice, from vice to obduracy, from obduracy to fixed resolve to perish; but by the means of loving teaching all this is changed. Rescued from the power of sin, like a lamb snatched from between the jaws of the lion, the youth is now no longer the victim of vice, but seeks holy and heavenly things. Hell has lost its prey, and see up yonder, heaven's wide gate has received a precious soul. "Sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem" many have come who were led there from the Sunday-school. They who once were foul are now white-robed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Hark to their songs of praise! You may keep on listening, for those songs will never come to an end. All this was brought about through a brief address of a trembling brother who stood up one Sunday afternoon to close the school and talk a little about the Cross of Jesus. Or all this came of a gentle sister who could never have spoken in public, yet was enabled to warn a young girl who was growing giddy and seemed likely to go sadly astray. Wonderful that a soul's taking the road to heaven or to hell should be made, in the purpose of God, to hinge upon the humble endeavors of a

weak but faithful teacher! You see how the mustard seed grew until it waxed a great tree.

This great tree became a shelter: “the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” Mustard in the East does grow very large indeed. The commonest kind of it may be found eight or ten feet high, but there is a kind which will grow almost like a forest tree, and there probably were some of these latter trees in the sheltered region wherein our Lord was speaking. A mustard which grew here and there in Palestine was of surprising dimensions. When the tree grew, the birds came to it. Here we have unexpected influences. Think of it. That man took a mustard seed which you could hardly see if I held it up. When he took the mustard seed, when he put it into his garden, had he any thought of bringing birds to that spot? Not he. You do not know all you are doing when you are teaching a child the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. When you are trying to bring a soul to Christ, your action has ten thousand hooks to it, and these may seize on innumerable things. Holy teaching is the opening of a well, and no one knows all the effect which the waters will produce on that spot. There seems no link between sowing a grain of mustard seed and birds of the air, but the winged wanderers soon made a happy connection. There may seem no connection between teaching that boy and the reclaiming of cannibals in New Guinea, but I can see a very possible connection. Tribes in Central Africa may have their destiny shaped by your instruction of a tiny child. When John Pounds bribed an urchin with a hot potato to come and learn to read the Bible, I am sure John Pounds had no idea of all the Ragged schools in London, but there is a clear line of cause and effect in the whole matter. A hot potato might be the coat of arms of the Ragged school Union. When Nasmyth went about from house to house visiting in the slums of London, I do not suppose that he saw in his act the founding of the London City Mission and all the Country Town Missions. No one can tell the end of his beginnings, the growth of his sowings. Go on doing good in little ways and you shall one day wonder at the great results. Do the next thing that lies before you. Do it well. Do it unto the Lord. Leave results with His unbounded liberality of love, but hope to reap at least a hundredfold.

How many fowls came and roosted under that one mustard tree I do not know. How many birds in a day, how many birds in the year, came and found a resting place, and picked the seeds they loved so well, I cannot tell. When one person is converted, how many may receive a blessing out of

him none can tell. Now is the day for romances: our literature is drenched with tales religious or irreligious. What stories might be written concerning benefits bestowed, directly and indirectly, by a single godly man or woman! When you have written a thrilling story upon the subject, I can assure you I can match it with something better still. One single individual can scatter benedictions across a continent, and belt the world with blessing.

But what is that I hear? I see this mustard tree — it is a very wonderful tree; but I not only see, I hear! Music! music! The birds! the birds! It is early morning, the sun is scarcely up — what torrents of song! Is that the way to produce music? Shall I sow mustard seed, and reap songs? I thought we must buy an organ or purchase a violin, or by some wind or stringed instrument come at music, but here is a new plan altogether. Nebuchadnezzar had his flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, but all that mingled sound could not rival the melody of birds. I shall sow mustard seed now, and get music in God's own way. Friends, when you teach your children the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, you are sowing the music of heaven. Every time you tell the tidings of pardon bought with blood, you are filling the choirs of glory with sweet voices which, to the Eternal Name, shall day and night trill out songs of devout gratitude. Go on, then, if this is to be the result. If even heaven's high harmonies depend upon the simple teaching of a Ragged school, let us never cease from our hallowed service.

Having said so much, I now close with these three practical observations. Are we not highly honored to be entrusted with such a marvelous thing as the Gospel? If it is a seed comprehending so much within it which will come to so much if it be properly used, blessed and happy are we to have such good news to proclaim! I thought this morning, when I awoke into the damp and rain, and felt my bones complaining, I shall be glad when four more Sundays shall have gone, and I shall be free to take a little rest in a sunnier clime. Jaded in mind, and weary in spirit, I braced myself with this reflection — what blessed work I have to do! What a glorious Gospel have I to preach! I ought to be a very happy man to have such glad tidings to bear to my fellows. I said to myself, "So I am." Well now, beloved teacher, next Sunday, when you leave your bed, and say, "I have had a hard week's work, and I could half wish that I had not to go to my class," answer yourself thus: "But I am a happy person to have to talk to children about Christ Jesus. If I had to teach them arithmetic or carpentering, I

might get tired of it, but to talk about Jesus, whom I love, why, it is a joy forever.

Let us be encouraged to sow the good seed in evil times. If we do not see the Gospel prospering elsewhere, let us not despair; if there were no more mustard seed in the world, and I had only one grain of it, I should be all the more anxious to sow it. You can produce any quantity if only one seed will grow. So now today there is not very much Gospel about, the church has given it up, a great many preachers preach everything but the living truth. This is sad, but it is a strong reason why you and I should teach more Gospel than ever. I have often thought to myself — Other men may teach socialism, deliver lectures, or collect a band of fiddlers that they may gather a congregation, but I will preach the Gospel. I will preach more Gospel than ever if I can; I will stick more to the one cardinal point. The others can attend to the odds and ends, but I will keep to Christ crucified. To those of vast ability who are looking to the events of the day I would say, “Allow one poor fool to keep to preaching the Gospel.” Beloved teachers, be fools for Christ, and keep to the Gospel. Don’t you be afraid. It has life in it, and it will grow; only you bring it out, and let it grow. I am sometimes afraid that we may prepare our sermons and addresses too much, so as to make ourselves shine. If so, we are like the man who tried to grow potatoes — he never grew any, and he wondered much, “for,” said he, “I very carefully boiled them for hours.” So, it is very possible to extract all the life out of the Gospel, and put so much of yourself into it that Christ will not bless it.

And, lastly, we are bound to do it. If so much will come out of so little, we are bound to go in for it. Nowadays people want ten percent for their money. Hosts of fools are readily caught by any scheme or speculation or limited liability company that promises to give them immense dividends! I would like to make you wise by inviting you to an investment which is sure. Sow a mustard seed, and grow a tree. Talk of Christ, and save a soul; that soul saved will be a blessing for ages, and a joy to God throughout eternity. Was there ever such an investment as this? Let us go on with it. If on our simple word eternity is hung, let us speak with all our heart. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, hang on the lips of the earnest teacher of the Gospel of Jesus. Let us never cease speaking while we have breath in our body. The Lord bless you! Amen, and Amen.

Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon — Matthew 13:1-23.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 916, 643, 30.

FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT, AND DRUNKENNESS WITH WINE.

NO. 2111

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 26TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”-
Ephesians 5:18.*

WHILE I was reading to you just now, in the fourth and fifth chapters of Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers, I could not help feeling that you could little understand the elevation and the purity of the precepts of the apostle, as they must have appeared to the inhabitants of such a wicked city as Ephesus. When first read, these precepts must have seemed like an unearthly light. We have now a public sentiment which condemns drunkenness, lying, and many other vices, which were scarcely considered worthy of censure by that degraded people. Christianity had not affected public sentiment at the time: that sentiment was distinctly immoral. The sin of fornication was scarcely judged to be sinful; theft was most common, as, indeed, it is in the East to this day; lying was universal, and only blamed if committed so clumsily as to be found out. I may say of drunkenness, that, although it was not regarded as a commendable thing, yet it was looked upon as a failing of great minds, not to be too much condemned. Alexander the Great, as you know, died through drink. He offered a prize on one occasion to those who could drink the most, and in that famous drinking-bout, large numbers of his chieftains and nobility died in the attempt to rival others. Even of such a man as Socrates it is said (though I know not with what truth) that he was famous for the quantity that he could drink. The stories of the feasts of that age I would be ashamed to repeat; and you certainly would not have the patience to hear them. Drunkenness, and gluttony, and such like, were the common faults both of the great and of

the small; for while some had no opportunity for gluttony, for they did not get enough to eat, they only failed to be gluttons for that reason, and not from principle. The apostle sets before his new converts, not a modified system of right and wrong, but the purest virtues and the most heavenly graces. As the ages have rolled on, we have seen the wisdom of holding up from the first an elevated standard, both of doctrine and practice. We must not bring the standard down to the men, but the men up to the standard. We may not, with the design of making converts more rapidly, alter the pure Word with which our Lord has entrusted us.

Brethren, I am not going to speak to you to-night about the sin of drunkenness. Many of you feel an intense aversion to that degrading vice. If there are any here who require a homily upon drunkenness, they have only to let conscience speak, and it will tell them how base a sin it is. If they do not know the shamefulness of their wicked habit, there are plenty round about them who will let them know in indignant language. Perhaps of all the sins that are rife in our country to-day, drunkenness brings the most present misery upon mankind. A very large proportion of the want from which people suffer is due to wasteful excess in drink. You know it is so, if you are intelligent observers. Other sins may seem to go deeper into the soul, and are more subject to punishment by law; but for creating widespread suffering, suffering brought upon the innocent, upon the wife, and upon the child, this vice raises its head above all others. This throngs our workhouses, fills our jails, and crowds our lunatic asylums; ay, and fats our cemeteries with carcasses of men and women who die before their time. This is the Moloch of the nineteenth century. I am not going to preach about that one particular vice to-night, as though I would saw off a big limb from the tree of evil. It is my custom to lay the axe at the root of the tree, aiming my blows at the very nature which bears this evil branch. Still, this is a very farspreading bough; and, as I have seen the woodmen lopping the tree before they cut it down, there will be no waste of time if I aim a blow or two at this huge branch of the tree of evil, this bough of drunkenness. It is far too common to this day; but, thank God, through the efforts of temperance friends, and, I hope, through the power of the Spirit of God upon many, it is not as it used to be; and it is regarded now in a very different light from that in which it was viewed even by Christian people years ago.

The apostle has been pleased, in this passage, guided by the Holy Spirit, to put in apposition, and, in some respects, in opposition, a prohibition and a

command: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." He had a reason for putting these two things together. There is a very, very, very wide and deep abyss between being drunk with wine and being filled with the Spirit. Drunkenness is down, down, down to the depths of the brute, and far lower still; fullness with the Spirit is up, up, up, to the very heights of God. However did it happen that in the same verse, without a break, Paul should put the two together-the prohibition and the command? There was a reason, and a very good reason, for this conjunction of things so far apart in character. I think that I see two reasons. The first is because there is a parallel between them-a degree of similarity amid their infinite difference. Secondly, he so placed them because there is a contrast between them of a very striking kind. The contrast is as instructive as the parallel. "Be not drunk with wine"; but hasten to the very opposite extreme, and "Be filled with the Spirit."

I. First, LET ME DRAW THE PARALLEL. Why do men become drunk with wine, or other alcoholic liquors? There are several reasons. I shall not mention them all, for they are innumerable, and many of them too ridiculous to be mentioned in a sermon.

One motive is to find in wine an exhilaration. It is a feast-day; let us have wine, that we may warm our hearts, and laugh, and sing, and make merry. It is a marriage-day; it is a birthday; it is a royal holiday; it is something out of the common; bring forth the winecup! So say the sons of men. When the man has drunk what he ought to think enough, feeling already a little elevated, he must drink yet more, with the same view. He would rise higher, and higher, and higher, and be filled with glee, and jollity, and make uproarious laughter, and be lord of misrule for the day. Strong drink is taken to exhilarate; and for a while it has that effect. How some men are carried away when intoxicated! How lifted up they are! What a great man the least becomes! What a divine the man who never looked into his Bible! What a philosopher the boor that does not know his letters! What a lord of creation the loon who has not two shirts! What a hero, every way, the coward who is afraid of his shadow! He is exhilarated when he has taken wine.

I grant you, that it is natural that we should all wish to be somewhat exhilarated. We like to have stirring times, in which we do not lie still and stagnant: we would have our whole nature stirred with pleasure. We like to have our high -days and holidays, even as others. "Now," says the apostle,

“that you may enjoy the most exquisite exhilaration, be filled with the Spirit.” When the Spirit of God comes into a man with extraordinary power, so as to fill his soul, he brings to his soul a joy, a delight, an elevation of mind, a delightful and healthful excitement, which lifts him up above the dull dead-level of ordinary life, and causes him to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

This is safe delight, and hence I commend it to you. It is safe delight, because it is holy delight; holy delight, because it is the Holy Spirit that works it in you, and he makes you to delight in everything that is pleasing to the Holy God. Seek no longer the excitement which comes from the flowing-bowl; for here is for you something more safe, more suitable, more sacred, more ennobling: “Be filled with the Spirit.” I know there are some Christians who never have much joy. You remember one, an old acquaintance of yours, the elder brother. His experience was expressed to his father in grumbling tones: “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gayest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” Far too many Christians are of that order. Hear what they say: “I have always been regular in my attendance on the means of grace, have read my Bible, have acted consistently with my profession; yet I know nothing of delight in God.” Now, my dear friend, take this advice, “Be filled with the Spirit.” You have, as yet, received only a few drops from the divine shower of his sacred influences. Ask for the rivers, the floods, the torrents of his sacred power. Let the heavenly floods come in and fill you up to the brim, and then will you have a joy which shall rival the bliss of those who are before the throne of God.

Furthermore, I have known people take wine with the idea of being strengthened thereby. There are such individuals still alive in the light of this advanced century. Many of the best physicians tell us that there is no strength whatever in strong drink. At any rate, whatever strength there is in the drink, it does not give any strength to the man. I am not going into physical or metaphysical discussions to-night. There is no doubt that many indulge in wine to an extreme, with the object of getting strength thereby. I believe their action to be founded on a very grave mistake. But to you Christian people instruction comes in here. “Be not drunk with wine,” with the view of gaining strength thereby; “but be filled with the Spirit,” for the Spirit of God can give you strength to the highest degree. He can gird you with spiritual strength—the strength of faith; and there is no strength like it;

for all things are possible to him that believeth. He can give you the strength that wrestles in prayer, that lays hold upon the angel of the covenant, and will not let him go, except he grant a blessing. The Spirit of God gives the strength to suffer and the strength to labor; the strength to receive and the strength to give out again; the strength to hope, the strength to love, the strength to conquer temptation, the strength to perform holy action. When you are filled with the Spirit, how strong you are! There is no influence about us for good when the Holy Spirit has departed. But when a man gets the Spirit of God to fill him to the full, his presence has a mystic power about it

“Tis e’en as if an angel shock his wings.”

Though such a man tarrieth but for a short time in a place, he leaves a savor behind him that will not be forgotten. Dear brothers and sisters, whether you are preachers, or teachers, or parents, or persons engaged in the service of God in your ordinary labor, if you want strength with which to bring glory to the Most High, be ye filled with the Spirit, Oh, that we had in our midst many that were strong because of this!

In the next place, wine has been taken by a great many, and taken to excess, to embolden them; and it does embolden them to a very high degree. A man under the influence of liquor will do what he would never think of doing at any other time: he will be rash, fool-hardy, and daring to the last degree. We have heard of foreign nations whose troops have been so afraid of the fight that they have dosed them with strong drink to induce them to march into the battle. We used to hear the expression, “Dutch courage,” which meant the boldness which came of ardent spirits; though I do not suppose the Dutch had more of it than the English. No doubt many a man under the influence of drink has risked his life, and performed what looked like feats of valor, when, indeed, he was simply beyond himself, and out of his right mind, or he would not have been so foolhardy. Wine does embolden many men in a wrong way. Beloved friends, we are not to make ourselves ridiculous with fanaticism; but bold with the spirit of truth. “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot,” in order to be emboldened to do anything; but be ye filled with the Spirit of the living God, wherein is quietness, and whereof cometh a courage which is to be admired, and not derided. Oh, how brave a man is when he is filled with the Spirit of God! Then, knowing a thing to be right, he resolves to do it, and he never counts the cost. He has counted that cost long ago, and reckoned that the light

suffering that would come by doing right was no longer worthy to be compared with the glory of being found a faithful servant of God. When a man has little of the Spirit of God he begins calculating the pence. "Will it pay? The thing is right enough," he says, "but then I cannot afford it. I know that what I am doing is wrong; but, still, I could not give it up. It would involve too much sacrifice." That man has little, if any, of the Spirit of God; for the Spirit destroys selfishness, and all that love of gain which eats as doth a canker. A man in whom the Spirit of God dwells abundantly says, "I shall never think, from this day forth, what may be to me the consequences of any course of action which the Lord my God commands me to follow. If it is right in the sight of God, I will do it. If God approves it, so shall it be; but if it be wrong, not a world made of gold, if it could all be mine, should tempt me to parley for a moment." Be ye filled with the Spirit. It will make you bold in the cause of the Lord Jesus. How bold the martyrs were! How bravely humble women were wont to speak up for Christ! How slaves, peasants, persons of no education, faced the Roman governors-ay, stood before the Roman Emperor himself, and were not in the least afraid! When they cried, "To the lions with them!" they flinched not from so cruel an end. They were a brave people, those early Christians, for they were filled with the Spirit. And our men and women in England, in the days of Mary, how bold they were when filled with the Spirit! The Holy Spirit is the creator of heroes. If the Spirit of God be gone, we are a cowardly set; but if the Spirit of God shall come down upon us, as I hope he may, then every man and woman here, however timid by nature, will be able to bear witness for Christ, according as Christ shall call him to that work. O my beloved, for whom I long and pray that you may be an army for the Lord, "Be filled with the Spirit."

Wine has been also taken in large quantities, for the destruction of pain, for the drowning of misery, for support in the agony of a cruel death. Solomon says, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." It was an old custom, that when a man was doomed, and about to die, they gave him some narcotic cup that he might be somewhat stupefied and suffer the less. There was some mercy in this; though truly "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." No doubt many persons have most foolishly taken to drink in order to forget their grief and assuage their sorrow. We must earnestly condemn such wicked conduct; but still, so it is; and the apostle puts it, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein

is excess; but be filled with the Spirit"; for that will remove depression and sustain under anguish in a most wonderful way; indeed, in a holy and perfect way. If you want to forget your misery, remember to apply for a sweet visitation of the Comforter. If there has lately happened some great calamity to you, and you are saying, "How shall I bear it?" the answer is, "Be filled with the Spirit of God." Here shall you drink oblivion of the heavy trial; or, better still, you shall forget the sharpness of the trial, in your knowledge that it worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, which maketh not ashamed. O beloved friend, do not kick at the trial, be willing to bear it; but get more of the indwelling of the sacred Comforter. "Be filled with the Spirit." Perhaps this may be a direction to some dear friend here who has lately been called to tread a more trying path than usual. "How shall I bear it, sir? How shall I bear it? I never was so tried before." Seek earnestly for more of the Spirit of God than you ever had before. He will give you in proportion to your necessity. He is fully equal to every emergency. His consolations can balance your tribulations. Wait upon him for the comfort of the Spirit. The day may come when you will glory in your infirmities and afflictions, because God used them to make room for more of his Spirit to dwell in you. Certain I am that if you have to go home to-night to lie for the next twenty years upon a sick bed-and certain of God's saints have not been off the sick-bed for all that time-or if all your property is gone, and you are called to endure poverty during the rest of your pilgrimage; or if you shall hear of the death of the dearest one you have, if the Holy Spirit be but given in a larger measure to you, you will have more happiness and more content, and be a better man by reason of all this affliction that has come upon you. God grant that you may find it to be true that you may forget your poverty and misery, and discover no gall in your bitterest cup! May you drink deep draughts of the joy of the Lord till you are filled with the Spirit of God! Touch not the wine-cup, lest in this you dishonor the Holy Ghost, who by his own power is able to cheer your heavy heart.

Again, I think a fifth reason why some have been drinking is to arouse themselves. They feel flat, they say. Ah, ah! if I were lecturing to-night, I could give you some of those abundant excuses for drinking which tipplers so readily invent. You can always find reasons, such as they are, when you want to pursue a career of self-indulgence. You may find them of every color-black, white, red, blue and grey, at every time, every day. The most unreasonable reasons will come cropping up if you want to do what your

flesh desires. But there are some who feel, "I want a pick-me-up. I am rather down, seedy, dull. I want something that will brace me, so that I may be up to the mark." By the time the man has had enough of his stimulant he is worse than before. Many have most effectually knocked themselves down in their desire to set themselves up. But, Christian man, if ever you feel dull, "be filled with the Spirit." "If ever I feel dull!" cries one, "Why, I often do, even at this time I have come into the house of prayer, and do not feel as if I could worship." Well, then, go where life and strength are to be had. One of our brethren observed to me, the other day (I do not think he meant to flatter me), "I often go into the Tabernacle feeling that I cannot worship as I should; but," said he, "you always seem to be lively and all right." I thought-Ah, dear brother! you do not know much about me, or you would not praise me; for I often feel the reverse of lively: but I cannot bear to have it so, lest others should be injured by it. There is not a more dull or stupid head than mine in this place. But I have a remedy, and I fly to it: I wish you would all do so. I go to him, you know his glorious name: he is the Resurrection and the life. I look to him for quickening, and it comes. May that be an example to some of you whenever you feel dull! Do not say, "I cannot pray to-day; I cannot sing to-day." No, but go to the Lord to help you to present acceptable worship. It would be a great relief to me if I could be excused from preaching to you when I do not feel like preaching. Yet, it would not be a blessing to me, for it would encourage me in dulness, and that would be a curse. If you do not pray except when you feel like praying, you will not pray much, nor pray when you most need it. My brethren, when you do not feel like praying, you ought to pray all the more, and go to the Lord to help you to pray. When one does not feel like doing the Lord's work, he must say, "Out with you, Mr. Sluggard! You must get to your work. Stir yourself up"; and here is the hallowed power which will effectually help you therein-"Be filled with the Spirit." Oh, if the Spirit of God makes us feel what poor creatures we are, and what a great Savior we have; if the Spirit of God makes us feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts; if we burn with love to the souls of men; if we rejoice in pardon bought with blood; if we see our justification and realize it; if we feel the Spirit of God melting us to tenderness or bracing us to holy bravery-then it is that we are refreshed and stimulated after the best manner. We have found the true arousing; and there will be no reaction after it, no falling back into a deeper depression. I wish that those who feel dull to-night, may be so filled with the Spirit that

they will not be content to go to sleep till they have spoken to a poor sinner about salvation and eternal life.

Once more, many men, no doubt, become drunkards from love of what is called good fellowship. "Look," said a wife to her husband, "how can you drink at the rate you do? Why, a hog would not do so." The wretched man replied, "No, I do not suppose that it would. It would be more sensible than I am, no doubt; but," he said, "if there was another hog at the other side of the trough that said, 'I drink your health,' this hog would be obliged to do the same; and if there were half-a-dozen of them together, and they kept on toasting one another, I expect the hog would get as drunk as I am." Sad are the effects of evil fellowship. The fellowship in which people indulge, and which they think it necessary to stimulate by drink, has led many into drunkenness. Now see the beauty of this expression, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." When the Spirit of God comes upon Christian men, what fellowship they have with one another, what delight they take in holy conversation, what joy there is in meeting together for solemn worship! I do not wonder that it is added immediately after, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." See the effect of being filled with the Spirit. It brings a fellowship of holy music, sacred gratitude, and heavenly thanksgiving. It makes us feel concerning the house of prayer-

*"I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."*

It makes us sing with rapture:

*"Hail, ye days of solemn meeting!
Hail, ye days of praise and prayer!
Far from earthly scenes retreating,
In your blessings we would share
Sacred seasons,
In your blessings we would share."*

The Lord grant us grace to seek our fellowship where he finds it, with holy men and holy women; that among them in joyous fellowship we may rejoice and praise his name.

II. I cannot stay longer on this parallel, I have already been too long: now, LET ME POINT OUT THE CONTRAST. I do not think that Paul was running the parallel only, for it would dishonor the work of the Holy Spirit to think that his operations could be in all things likened to the influence of alcohol. No, the divine afflatus far excels anything that earthly excitements can produce.

“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot; but be filled with the Spirit.” The contrast is at the very beginning; for it is written, “Be filled with the Spirit.” Wine does not fill. No man is satisfied with all that he drinks. He is still thirsty. His thirst is often increased by that which was supposed to quench it. The Spirit of God has a satisfying, satiating, never nauseating, influence upon the heart. It fills it to the very brim, until the man delights himself in God, and cries, “My cup runneth over.” Then the saint becomes like the tribe of which we read, “O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord.” Wine ministers to lust, and lust is a burning sense of want; but the Spirit of the Lord brings fullness with it, and a perfect rest of heart.

“Wine creates riot,” says the apostle; and that is the second point of contrast. When men are drunken, what a noise they will make! They are ready for any disturbance; but the Holy Spirit, when you are full of him, makes you quiet with a deep, unutterable peace. I do not say that you will not sing and rejoice, but there will be a deep calm within your spirit. I wish that some Christian people were filled with the Spirit, if there were no other effect produced upon them but that of peace, self-possession, restfulness, and freedom from passion. Our friends, the members of the Society of Friends, who speak much of the Spirit of God, whatever virtues they may not have, certainly have this one—that they are, usually, a very quiet, unexcitable, peaceable people. We want more Christians of this sort. We can put up with all the uproar of the Salvation Army, if it comes in very deed from warm hearts and genuine zeal. I will not find any fault with them for a little noise, though the less of it the better. If your genius goes that way, sing unto the Lord, and blow your trumpet; but at the same time, the solid people in the church are those who possess their souls, who go about their business, who suffer, and who labor with an inward peace which is not disturbed, a holy calm which is not ruffled. Do not create riot, but abide in holy peace by being filled with the Spirit. May the Lord keep you in perfect peace with your minds stayed on him.

The next point of contrast is, that wine causes contention. When men are drunken with it, how ready they are to quarrel! They make a harmless word to be an insult. Many a man, when full of wine, will bear nothing at all: he is ready to fight anybody and everybody: he cannot have his fill of fighting. But when you are filled with the Spirit, what is the result? Why, peaceful submission.. Listen to this: “ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Human nature likes rule; but the Spirit of God works submissiveness of mind. Instead of wanting to be first, the truly spiritual man will be satisfied to be last, if he can thus glorify God. That man who must be always king of the castle, is not filled with the Spirit of God; but he that is willing to be a door-mat, on which the saints may wipe their feet, is great in the kingdom of heaven. Be filled with the Spirit, and you will soon submit to inconvenience, misapprehension, and even exaction for the sake of doing good to those who are out of the way, and in the hope of edifying the people of God. Wine causes riot; the Spirit causes peace. Drunkenness causes contention; the Spirit of God causes submission.

Furthermore, drunkenness makes men foolish; but the Spirit of God makes them wise. I am keeping to the connection of my text. Read the fifteenth verse, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” The drunken man cannot walk at all, because he has not made up his mind as to which way he will go. He attempts to go two ways, and ends in staggering till he falls. The man filled with the Spirit has a very definite idea of which way he is going. He knows the right, and he deliberately chooses it; he perceives the strait and narrow way, and he steadfastly follows it; for God has made him wise. Folly clings to the wine-cup; but wisdom comes with the Holy Spirit.

Drunkenness wastes time; but the Spirit of God, when we are filled with him, makes us save it. Read the sixteenth verse: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot.” How much of time is wasted over the unholy cup! But the child of God, when the Spirit of God enters into him, makes a conscience of his odd moments and leisure minutes. As goldsmiths sweep up the very dust of their shops, that no filings of the precious metal may be lost, so does the Christian man, when filled with the Spirit, use his brief intervals. It is wonderful what may be done in odd minutes. Little spaces of time may be

made to yield a great harvest of usefulness, and a rich revenue of glory to God. May we be filled with the Spirit in that respect!

In the next place, drunkenness makes men forget their relationships, but the Holy Spirit makes us remember them. The rest of the chapter goes on to mention our domestic conditions as wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, masters. The drunken man is bad in every relation, and the drunken woman is, if possible, worse. The drunken man ought never to be a husband, but he sometimes wears that name, and then he has a power to inflict misery which he is sure to use to the utmost. The drunken man will often do towards his wife what I will not trust my lips to speak of—it would be a libel on the brutes of the stall or the beasts of the jungle to liken him to them. A drunken father! Is he worth calling “father”? And it is even worse, if worse can be, when it is a drunken wife or a drunken mother. A special infamy hovers around womanhood soaked in liquor: relationships, in such instances, are quite forgotten under the influence of the accursed drink. Selfishness eats up the very heart of those who else might have been the objects of reverence and love. The contrast to this is the fact that when filled with the Spirit the husband is the tenderest of husbands, the wife the best of wives. No master is so just as the man that is mastered by the Spirit of God; no servant so diligent as he that serves the Lord. By the Holy Spirit our relationships become ennobled; and what was but a commonplace position wears a glory of holiness about it. We are transfigured by the Spirit of God, and we transfigure everything we touch. Dear friends, you see that the contrast is a very vivid one. Look into it very narrowly, and it will repay the inspection.

Lastly, excess of drink leaves a man weak and exposed to peril. But to be filled with the Spirit!—listen to what comes of it according to the tenth verse of the next chapter: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” When filled with the Spirit the man is no longer naked, like the drunkard. He no longer lies upon the ground in danger as one overcome with wine. He is no longer open to the attack of adversaries, as one who sleeps through strong drink. God hath

made him strong, and armed him, and now he goes forth to fight in the service of his Master. I think that you will see the contrast. It is as evident as the parallel.

I shall keep you no longer except to say this. My beloved Christian friends, our heart's desire is, that the members of this church, and, indeed, all the members of Christ's mystical body, should be filled with the Spirit, Oh, that you may come absolutely under the sway of the Holy Ghost, and may abide under his most powerful inspirations! Do you ask how this is to be? First, reverently regard him. Worship him. Speak not of the Holy Ghost as it. Talk not of the Third Person of the adorable Trinity as an influence. He is very God of very God. God has guarded the sanctity of the Holy Spirit by causing a certain sin to be specially condemned, and excepted from pardon-the sin against the Holy Ghost. Honour him much, then: worship him, and adore him, and look to him for help. Next, do not grieve him. If there be anything that would grieve the Holy Spirit, let it grieve you, so that you may keep clear of it. Put away every thought, idea, principle, and act that is not agreeable to his mind. Neither live in sin, nor trifle with evil, nor fall into error, nor neglect the reading of the Word of God, nor fail to obey the commands of the Lord. Do not grieve the Comforter, but welcome him as your best Friend. Open your heart to his influences. Watch each day to hear his monitions. Pray every morning, "Holy Spirit, speak with me, bedew me, enlighten me, set me on fire, dwell in me"; and during the day lament to yourself if you do not feel the Spirit of God moving in you, and ask why it is. "Has he left me? Is he grieved with me?" Say-

***"Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I bate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast."***

As you welcome him when he comes, so be fit for him to come to you and dwell in you. Be clean, for he is pure. Do not expect the Holy Ghost to dwell in a foul chamber. You cannot make that chamber like Solomon's temple, wherein the cedar-wood was overlaid with pure gold; but you can take care that it is well cleansed. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Oh, for a clean life, a clean tongue, a clean hand, a clean ear, a clean eye, a clean heart! God give you these, and then you shall be ready for the Spirit of God to dwell in you.

And when he does come, learn this thing. If you would have him fill you, obey him. If you believe that an impulse is from the Spirit of God, follow it out. Never trifle with conscience—especially you that are beginning life. Mind you set the tune for the whole of your life by the tenderness of your consciences at the first. When I was a lad I learned a certain truth, which my friends and relatives did not know, but I had to follow my conscience. It looked very egotistical and wayward for a lad to set up his opinion against older people; but I could not help it. I saw believer's baptism in the Bible, and therefore the highest law compelled me to be obedient to that ordinance. I looked over the matter again and again, to see if it was not so; and I became more and more assured as to the mind of the Lord. Therefore I was not disobedient. It is true that it was suggested to me that if I did follow out my views, I should have to cut out quite another career for myself from the one anticipated; but I could not help that. I must do the Lord's will, whatever might be the consequences. From that day to this I have never had cause to regret my youthful decision. The trial was severe at the time, but it was beneficial to my whole character. It taught me to follow truth wherever it might lead me, and to expect the Spirit of God to abide with me in so doing. Since then I have often come to a place where interest has gone one way and principle has gone another; but it has not cost me half-a-minute's thought which should be my way. I must follow what I believe to be right and true, and preach what I believe to be God's Word; and I will do so whether men hear or whether they forbear. Young men, young women, mind you begin straight. Do not begin with truckling and making compromises. If you take your hats off to the devil to-day, you will have to take your shoes off to him soon; and by-and-by you will become utterly his slaves. Be strong for the truth. Quit yourselves like men. Stand fast for God and holiness. You will be filled with the Spirit if you are obedient to him.

If you are filled with the Spirit of God, and wish to retain his gracious presence, speak about him. Note this, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking." That is a curious word to follow so soon. The Holy Ghost is not a dumb Spirit; he sets us speaking. "Speaking to yourselves"; it is a poor audience; but still it is a choice audience if you speak to your brethren. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Beloved, when the Spirit of God fills you, you will not only speak, but sing. Let the holy power have free course: do not quench the

Spirit. If you feel like singing all the while, sing all the while, and let others know that there is a joy in the possession of the Spirit of God which the world does not understand, but which you are feeling, and to which you wish to bear witness. Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon this entire church, and fill you all to overflowing! May the members of other churches that are here to-night take home fire with them, and set their churches on flame! The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PEACE: HOW GAINED, HOW BROKEN.

NO. 2112

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
OCTOBER 27TH, 1889,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.”-Psalm 85:8.

“I WILL hear what God the Lord will speak.” There were voices and voices. There were voices of the past concerning God’s wondrous mercy to his people: “Thou hast been favorable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.” But mingled with these were the sad voices of the present. He heard the wailing and the pleading of those who said, “Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?” From this mingling of singing and sighing, the Psalmist turned away, and cried, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak; I will get me into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High; I will hear that voice from between the cherubim which speaketh peace to the soul.” Beloved, herein is wisdom. Resort to the sanctuary of God. When you cannot find harmony in the voices of the street, or the voices of the church, turn to the melody of that one voice which “will speak peace unto his people.”

Again, the Psalmist had been praying. At the mercy-seat he had spread out this petition, “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.” When he had spoken, he desired an answer. He watched and waited till the Lord God should give him a reply. A friend, kindly wishing to spare me, puts at the end of his letter, “No answer expected.” This is too often a foot-note to

men's prayers. David did not pray in that fashion: he did expect an answer from the mouth of the Lord. He said within himself, "I have spoken: but now I will speak no more, but hear what God the Lord will speak." Always follow up prayer with holy expectancy. Prayers which expect no answer are guilty of taking the name of God in vain; they are a misuse of the holy ordinance of supplication; and they are a question put upon the divine existence, inasmuch as they reduce the Godhead to an idol, like to those images of the heathen which have ears, but they hear not, neither speak they through their throats. Prayers without faith are an insult to the attributes of God, and do dishonor to his sacred name. If thou prayest aright, in the name of Jesus, expect the Lord to hear thee, even as thou wouldst hear thy child, if he asked bread of thee.

In addition to this, it should be the daily resolve of every Christian man—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Not only when I am dazed and confused with other voices, nor only when I have expressed my heart in prayer, but at all times and seasons, I will hear what God the Lord shall speak. There are many doctrines and controversies; but "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." His voice, by his prophets and apostles, shall be the umpire of every dispute with me. I will also turn to the Word of God for the rule of my daily life, as well as for the instruction of my mind in doctrine. I will have regard to the precepts as well as to the promises. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." When I would know my duty, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"; and, hearing his word of command, I will need neither whip nor spur, but will make haste in the way of his commands. I will listen to his Word, whatever I may do with the precepts of men. Has he spoken? Did the primeval darkness hear it? Shall not the light which he has given me be attentive to it? Even the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. Shall not I, who have been quickened by his Spirit, joyfully say, "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me"?

Our Savior speaks of some who enter into life halt and maimed, and having one eye; but he does not speak of anybody entering into life without ears. We must hear the voice of God, for it is written, "Hear, and your soul shall live." Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. By ear-gate the Prince Emmanuel enters the town of Mansoul. Men are saved, not by what they touch, or see, or taste, or smell; but by what they hear. Oh, that we all heard the voice of Christ with solemn attention! Our Lord saith, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Be this our resolve: "I will hear

what God the Lord will speak.” Like young Samuel, let each one say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.”

There is one special reason given by the Psalmist why the people of God should be most willing and eager to hear what God the Lord shall speak, and that is because “He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.” You, beloved, will hear nothing from the Lord but that which will calm your fears, and cheer your hearts. The Lord speaks no thunders against you. His tones are tenderness, his words are mercy, his spirit is love, his message is peace. I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace, and nothing else but peace, unto his own people. That is the subject for us to consider this morning. The Lord Jehovah gives peace to his holy ones.

First, what we know the Lord will speak; and, secondly, what we fear may hinder our enjoying the blessing which he speaks to us: “Let them not turn again to folly”—a notable word of warning, to which we shall do well to give heed.

I. First, let us consider WHAT WE KNOW THE LORD WILL SPEAK. “I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace.”

The first point is, He speaks peace to a certain company—”to his people, and to his saints.” Let us, then, ask ourselves, Has the Lord ever spoken peace to us, or will he do so? He will certainly do so if we have an ear to hear his voice; for God will not speak sweet words to those who turn to him a deaf ear. He that will not hear the gospel of peace, shall never know the peace of the gospel. If you will not hear the Holy Spirit when he warns you of your sin, neither shall you hear him revealing peace through pardon. If you will not hear the Lord when he proposes to you reconciliation through the sacrifice of his dear Son, if you will not hear him when he bids you repent and believe, and be washed in the blood of the Lamb, then he will never speak peace to your soul. There is no peace out of Christ, who is our peace. There is one Ambassador, and one Mediator, and only one. There is one atonement by blood, and only one. There is one covenant of peace, and there can never be another. Reconciliation comes to men by Jesus Christ, but by no other gate; and if you will not hear the Lord when he speaks concerning his dear Son, who is the propitiation for sins, he will never speak peace to your heart. Oh, for the ear which is opened to hear the Lord, for this is the sure mark of grace! Does not Jesus say, “My sheep hear my voice”?

Those to whom the Lord speaks peace are his people, and they acknowledge him to be their God. Many men have no God. They would not like to be called atheists, but it practically comes to that. God is not in their thoughts, their plans, their actions, their business, their life. But there is peace to that man to whom God is the greatest fact of his existence. Happy is he who has God first, and last, and midst in all that he does. Look him through and through, and you will perceive that as the color tinges the stained glass, so does faith in God color all his life, God is with him in his loneliness, and among the multitude: God is above him to govern him, beneath him to uphold him, within him to quicken him. The man has a God to worship, a God to trust, a God to delight in. If God is everything to you, you are among his people, and he will speak peace unto you. That peace is, however, always connected with holiness, for it is added, "and to his saints." His people and his saints are the same persons. Those who have a God know him to be a holy God, and therefore they strive to be holy themselves. He that hath no saintship about him will have no peace about him. If thou livest a blundering, careless, godless life, thou wilt have much tossing to and fro, and many questionings of heart. "There is no peace," saith my God, "unto the wicked"; but to his people, his saintly ones, his sanctified ones, the people who follow after righteousness-to these the Lord himself will secure peace by his own word of mouth.

Do I hear anyone saying, "Alas! I could not venture to be classed with saints"? Listen one minute: these people, though they are now God's people, and though they are now made saintly by his grace, Were once given over to folly. How do I know this? Because the text says, "Let them not turn again to folly;" which shows that once they did follow after folly. Once they followed sin with all their hearts; they knew not God, neither served him; but they have been turned away from folly, sin, and shame: a change, a conversion has taken place in them, by the grace of God. Therefore, dear hearer, let not thy past foolishness dismay thee, if thou wouldst now come to God. Fool as thou mayest have been, the Lord is turning thee from folly; and if he brings thee to be numbered among his people and his holy ones, he will speak peace to thee.

I think I hear one say, "I have turned away from folly, but I feel that there is in my heart a tendency to return to it!" I know it. I, too, have felt the old Adam pulling at my sleeve, to draw me back to the old way, if possible. So it was with these people, or else the Lord would not have needed to say, "Let them not turn again to folly." They were his people, they were his

saints, too: and he spoke peace to them; but the old nature lurked within, and made the heart in danger of turning again to folly. If thou findest the old leaven working within thee, fermenting unto evil, and making thee feel sick at heart to think that thou shouldst be so base, then bow low at thy Savior's feet, and cry to him in the language of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner. Yet remember, even if it be so with thee, yet nevertheless thou mayest be numbered with the Lord's people, of whom he has said that he will speak peace unto them. But if you have no horror of sin; if you have no conflict with evil; if you have no longing for righteousness, and no ear for the voice of the Lord, then God will not speak peace to you; but one of these days he will speak thunderbolts, and accent his words with flames of fire, and this shall be the tenor of his speech: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." May you never hear that voice of wrath; but may peace be spoken into your soul.

But now, dear friends, I notice here that the peace which is to be desired is peace which God speaks, and all other peace is evil. The question is sometimes put—"We see bad men enjoy peace, and we see good men who have but little peace." That is one of the mysteries of life; but it is not a very difficult one as to its first part. Why do bad men enjoy a kind of peace? I answer: sometimes their peace arises from sheer carelessness. They will not think, reflect, or consider. They do not intend to look about them, or before them; for "they count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away." They go through the world like blind men. They are on the verge of a precipice, and they do not know their danger, or wish to know it. They will go over the edge of the cliff, and be broken to pieces; but they have hardened their neck, and if you warn them they will hate you for it. These are your men that fill high the bowl, and chase the flying hours with glowing feet. They live right merrily, like the men of the old world, they marry and are given in marriage, they drink and are drunken, till the flood comes, and there is no escape.

Many are quiet in conscience because of worldliness. They are too much occupied to give fair attention to the affairs of their souls. They are taken up with business; at it from morning to night; shuts up and shuts down; they can find time for nothing but counting their money, or shifting their stock. Adam was lost in the garden of Eden; but these men are lost in their shops, lost in their warehouses, lost in their ships, lost in their farms,

lost in the market. They give no thought to the world to come, because this world engrosses them. From this kind of peace may we be delivered!

Some have a brawny conscience-I mean a conscience hard, callous, horny; you cannot make it feel. A healthy conscience is tender as a raw wound, which fears a touch; but some men's consciences are covered with a thick skin, and are devoid of feeling. Certain sinners have a conscience seared as with a hot iron, and this brings with it that horrible peace which is the preface of eternal damnation.

Around us are persons who have a peace which Satan preserves. "When a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace." When Satan is in full possession of a man, then no disturbing thoughts come in, and the sinful heart is well content. "They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men they may even die at peace, for the Psalmist complains, "there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm." Satan has filled them with "a strong delusion to believe a lie," and so in peace they perish; they go willingly to destruction, like sheep to the slaughter.

And some have a peace of sullenness; an awful peace of despair, in which the man steels himself against that which he calls his fate. A man says, "I know I am to be lost; I have sinned myself beyond all hope of mercy; and why should I trouble myself further?" Like a condemned criminal, who hears the hammers fitting up the scaffold, and gives himself up to silent despair, he feels, "I am doomed: it is all over with me." O my friend, it is not so; this is a lie of Satan's own invention, Whilst thou livest, there is hope. Whilst thou art yet in the land where Christ is preached, thou mayest come to him and live. But deadness, sullenness, and obstinacy, are thy worst enemies. Waters of enmity to God often run silently because they are so deep. The man has a settled enmity against God, and this makes him set his teeth, and defy the Almighty in grim determination to perish. God save you from this! May you be driven out of every peace except that peace which comes from God! To that I now come.

God alone can speak true peace to the soul. When once a soul begins to feel its sinfulness, and to tremble at the wrath to come, none but God can speak peace to it. Ministers cannot. I have often failed when I have desired to bring comfort to troubled hearts. Books cannot do it, not even the most wise and gracious of them. The Bible itself cannot do it, apart from the Spirit of God. The ordinances of God's house, whether they be baptism, or

the Lord's Supper, or prayer, or preaching—none of these can bring peace to a heart apart from the still small voice of the Lord. I pray that none of you may rest in anything short of a divine assurance of salvation. See how the waves are tossing themselves on high! Hark to the howling of the wind! Rise, Peter, and bid the waves be quiet! Awake, John, and pour oil upon the waves! Ah, sirs! the apostles will themselves sink, unless a greater than they shall interpose. Only he who lay asleep near the tiller could say, "Peace, be still!" May he say that to everyone here who is troubled about his sin! The voice of the blood of Jesus speaks "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." We read that on the storm-tossed lake "there was a great calm." How great is the quiet of a soul which has seen and felt the power of the atoning sacrifice!

I have told you that only God can speak this peace; let me remind you that he can give you that peace by speaking it. One word from the Lord is the quietus of all trouble. No deed is needed, only a word. Peace has not now to be made: the making of peace was finished more than eighteen hundred years ago on yonder cross. The Lord Jesus, who was our peace, went up to the tree bearing our iniquities, and thus removing the dread cause of the great warfare between God and man. There he ended the quarrel of the covenant. Hearken to these words, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." He made peace by the blood of his cross. Through his death, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. "It is finished."

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Now is the way paved for man to come back to God by reconciliation through sacrifice. There is no more blood to be shed, nor sacrifice to be offered: peace is fully made, and it only remains for the Lord God to speak it to the conscience and heart by the Holy Ghost. Yet think not that for God to speak is a little thing. His voice is omnipotence in motion. He spake the universe out of nothing: he spake light out of darkness. Where the word of our King is, there is power. He speaks, and it is done. If he speaks peace, who can cause trouble? In Jesus Christ there is divine peace for the guilty soul. "Come unto me," saith he, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." From a tempest of distress to perfect peace a word from the God of peace can lift us in an instant.

Sooner or later the Lord will speak peace to his own. How blessed are the shalls and wills of the Lord God!—"He will speak peace unto his people." Doubt it not. He will. He will. Some of you have lost your peace for a while; yet, if you are believers, "He will speak peace unto his people." You

have come to Christ, and are trusting him, but you do not enjoy such peace as you desire. Yet "He will speak peace unto his people." There may be a time of battling and of struggling, the noise of war may disturb the camp for months: but in the end "He will speak peace unto his people." I have seen some of the Lord's true people terribly harassed year after year. One for a very long time was in the dark-wrecked on a barbarous coast, and neither sun nor moon appearing. I do not excuse him for some of his despondency; there was a fault, undoubtedly, and there may also have been weakness of the brain; but he was a true child of God, and at length he came out into the light, and wrote a book which has cheered many. If peace comes not before, yet "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." The Lord will not put his child to bed in the dark: he will light his candle ere he sleeps the sleep of death. Sickness of body, and weakness of mind, or some other cause, may be a terrible kill-joy; but in the end "The Lord will speak peace unto his people." He cannot finally leave a soul that trusts in him. No believer shall die of despair. You may sink very low: but underneath are the everlasting arms, and these will bring you up again. Many women of a sorrowful spirit have a hard time of it, but yet the Lord has set a day in which he will give beauty for ashes. O captive daughter, thy chains last not for ever! Hold you on to your hope: the night is very dark, but the morning will surely come; for as God is light, so shall his children be.

Beloved, when the Lord does speak peace to his people, what a peace it is! It is sound and safe. You may have as much of it as you will, and suffer no harm. The peace of God is never presumptuous. It is a holy peace; and the more you have of it, the more you will strive to be like your Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. It is a peace which rules the heart and mind, and not merely the face and the tongue. It is a peace that will rise superior to circumstances. You may be very poor; but you shall find an inward wealth of contentment. You may be lonely; but communion with God will bring you company. You may be very sick in body; but peace of soul enables a man to bear pain without complaining. There may even be a measure of depression of spirit about you, and yet an inward peace will enable you to reason with yourself, and say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" If God gives you peace, the devil cannot take it away. If God breathes peace into your soul, the roughest winds of earth or hell cannot blow that peace from you. They that have ever enjoyed this peace will tell you that it is the dawn of heaven. They that walk in the

light of God's countenance, at this moment, are as the courtiers of a king, and for them there is a Paradise Restored. Perfect peace brings a joy of which no tongue can fully tell. There is no war above; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are all reconciled to us. There is no war within: conscience is cleansed, and the heart relieved. There is no fear even of the arch-enemy below; he may grind his teeth at us, but he cannot destroy us. Even the world of nature is at peace with us. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." A deep peace, a high peace, a broad peace, an endless peace is ours. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have," in the most emphatic and unlimited sense, "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Beloved friends, do not be satisfied without the constant possession of unbroken peace. You may have it; you ought to have it. It will make you greater than princes, and richer than misers. This peace will shoe your feet for ways of obedience or suffering. "May the peace of God keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!"

II. Now we must come down from our elevation, to talk about a more humbling theme, WHAT WE FEAR MAY MAR THIS BLESSING OF PEACE. "He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly."

The grounds of a believer's peace are always the same, but a believer's enjoyment of that peace varies very greatly. I always have a right to the divine inheritance, but I do not always enjoy the fruits of that inheritance. Peace may be broken with the Christian, through great trouble, if his faith is not very strong. It need not be so; for some of those who have had the greatest fight of affliction have had the sweetest. peace in Christ Jesus. Peace may be broken through some forms of disease, which prey upon the mind as well as the body; and when the mind grows weak and depressed from what are rather physical causes than spiritual ones, the infirmity of the flesh is apt to crush spiritual peace. Yet it is not always so; for sometimes, when heart and flesh have failed, yet God has been the strength of our heart, as he is our portion for ever. Inward conflict, too, may disturb our enjoyment of peace. When a man is struggling hard against a sin, when

some old habit has to be hanged up before the Lord, when corruption grows exceedingly strong and vigorous, as at seasons it may do, the believer may not enjoy peace as he would wish. And yet I have known warring times when the fight within has not diminished my peace. "How so?" you may say. I have found peace in the very fact that I was fighting! I have seen clearly that if I were not a child of God, I should not struggle against sin. The very fact that I contend against sin, as against my deadliest foe, proves that I am not under the dominion of sin; and that fact brings to my soul a measure of peace. Satan, too-oh, it is hard to have peace under his attacks! He has a way of beating his hell-drum at a rate which will let no believer rest. He can inject the most profane thoughts; he can flutter us and worry us, by making us think that we are the authors of the thoughts which he fathers upon us-which are his, and not ours. It is a very glorious thing, then, to be able to say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again."

When the Lord hides his face, as he may do as the result of grave offense that we have given him, ah! then we cannot have peace. Peace runs out to a very low ebb when we are under withdrawals; and then we cry, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his feet!" We can never rest till we again behold the smilings of his face, and take our place among the children.

But, after all, the chief reason why a Christian loses his peace, is because he "turns again to folly." What kind of folly? Folly is sin and error, and everything contrary to divine wisdom. I will briefly show you a few of the different shapes of this folly.

There is the folly of hasty judgment. Have you never judged without knowing and considering all the surroundings of the case? Have you not come to a wrong conclusion, when you have ventured to judge the dealings of God with you? You have said, "This cannot be wise, this cannot be right; at any rate, this cannot be a fruit of love;" but you have found out afterwards that you were quite mistaken, that your severest trial was sent in very faithfulness. Your rash judgment was most evidently folly; and if you turn again to such folly in your next season of sorrow, you will certainly lose your peace. What! will you measure the infinite wisdom of God by the foot-rule of your short-sighted policy? Are eternal purposes to be judged of according to the tickings of the clock? There can be no peace

when we assume the judgment-throne, and dare accuse our Sovereign of unkindness or mistake.

*“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace.”*

Consider things in the long run when you would estimate the ways of God. Behold, he dwells in eternity, and his measures are only to be seen in the light of the endless future. Oh, that we could either judge the Lord's ways upon eternal principles, or leave off judging altogether! My soul, be thou as a little child before the Lord, and thou wilt find peace!

Another kind of folly is of like order: it is repining, and quarrelling with the Most High. Some are never pleased with God; how can he be pleased with them? There can be no use in contending with our Maker; for what are we as compared with him? Let the grass contend with the scythe, or the tow fight with the flame; but let not man contend with God. Besides, who are you? “Who art thou, Oman, that repliest against God?” It is true you may be, like Job, terribly smitten, and brought very low, and you cannot understand the why and the wherefore of it; but I pray you bow your head in sweet submission, for your heavenly Father must be doing the best possible thing for you. Kick not against the pricks. When the ox, newly yoked to the plough, kicks against the goad, what is the result? It drives the goad into its own flank. It would not have been so hurt had it not defied the driver. “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” No man, by quarrelling with God, can gain any advantage, for the right is on God's side, and eternal principles establish his government. When the barque wars with the rock, we know which will suffer. Yield thee, O my brother, yield thee to the Lord of love! Thine hope can only climb on bended knee; thy peace can only return with bowed head; for to proud rebellion there is no peace, since it is folly of the grossest kind.

Another kind of folly to which men often turn is that of doubt and distrust. What peace you have had has come by faith; and when faith departs, peace goes also. To doubt the Lord is folly; even the least degree of it is folly of the worst order. When you said, “God is true, and I will trust him,” then your peace was like a river. One who lay dying was in such joy that his friends said to him, “You used to be much tempted; how is it that you are so happy?” He replied, “This is the reason: it is written, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.’ “ For the very reason that he trusts God, the Lord will keep him in

perfect peace. Be satisfied with God, and you shall be satisfied in God. Go not back to your old doubts and fears, for they are as a thicket of thorns. It seems to me that some of you were born doubting, and have hardly left off ever since. Some professors never seem to be happy unless they are miserable. I hardly know whether to call some of you doubters or believers. Yes, I thank God that I hope you are really believers; but you are terrible old doubters still. I am persuaded you will get to heaven, but you will not have much of heaven on the road unless you shake off this pernicious habit of distrust. Who ever gained anything by doubting the Lord, questioning his promises, or distrusting his providence? He abideth faithful: he will never deny himself. Believe in him, and so shall you be established. He will speak peace unto his people; but let them not turn again unto this inexcusable folly of doubting the word of him who cannot lie.

Some turn to the old folly of looking for life upon legal principles. You remember how Paul seemed astonished at this perversity. He exclaimed, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" He demanded of them, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" When you try to draw your comfort from what you are, and what you do, you are foolish. Self is at best a dry well. To seek consolation from your own consecration or sanctification is risky work. You must not turn your sanctification into an antichrist by putting it in the place of Christ. "Be ye holy," saith he, "for I am holy;" but he never bade you trust in your holiness. However sanctified you may become, even if you could attain to perfection, it would be wise to say with Job, "Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul." Your wisdom is to stand upon the finished work of Christ. If you get off from that ground, you have placed yourself upon the ice; and if it does not melt from under you, you will yourself slip down upon it. Mix anything of man with the work of the Lord, and you have turned again to folly. It brought you into great bondage years ago, and it will do so again, if you return to it. Hope in Christ, and in nothing else but Christ. When your expectation is in the Lord alone, then will your peace be like a river.

Some lose their peace by turning again to the folly of intellectual speculation. Some of our friends, who once walked in the light, as God is in the light, and were as happy as all the birds of the air, have now lost their joy, because they have read a pernicious book, which started for them a whole host of difficulties, of which they never dreamed before. Would

you like me to answer those difficulties? Suppose I took the trouble to do so, and succeeded, what would happen? You would read another book to-morrow, and come to me with another set of doubts; and if we were to slay all these, you would simply invite another band of invaders to land on the shores of your mind. Therefore I decline to begin the endless task. At Mentone, the trouble of some of our friends is to catch the mosquitoes, which worry them. But there is little or no use in it; for if you catch a dozen of these little pests, twenty-four will come to the funeral. It is just the same with these intellectual difficulties; you may, by overcoming some of them, make room for more of a worse kind. No fact, however certain, is beyond a critic's questioning. I have done with the whole band of quibblers. People say, "Have you seen the new book? It is terribly unsettling." It will not unsettle me: first, because I know what I know; and secondly, because I do not care one atom what the unbeliever has to say. I care, indeed, so little that I am not curious even to know what his craze may happen to be. "I know whom I have believed." I am going no further than that which the Holy Spirit has taught me through the infallible Word. What is more, I am not going to waste my time by reading what every doubter may please to write. I have had enough of these poisonous drugs, and will have no more. Does anyone say, "We ought to read everything"? Nay, nay, if I go out to dinner, and there should happen to come to table a joint that is far gone, I let it alone. When the knife goes into it, the perfume betrays it, and I do not pass up my plate. Others may carve slices from the carrion of unbelief; but having long eaten sweet gospel food, I cannot bring my soul to feed on that which is unholy, and only fit for dogs. That which denies Scripture, and dishonors the blood of the Lord Jesus, is fitter for burning than reading. If you have once been staggered by modern thought, do not turn again to that folly. Be not like silly people, who seem to fall down in the mud for the sake of being brushed. Why desire to be befogged and bewildered for the sake of getting set in the right way after long straying? Stick to the Scriptures. When you have read so much of your Bibles that there is nothing more in them, then you may devote your time and study to some other book; but for the present keep to the book whose author is the All-wise Jehovah. Between the covers of this book you shall find all wisdom, and I pray you turn not again to the folly which opposes the infallible, and censures the perfect. God grant us grace to maintain our peace by never turning again to the folly of human wisdom!

But the worst form of folly is sin. Scripture continually calls sinners fools; and so they are. What a touching pleading there is about this use of language! "God will speak peace unto his people; but let them not turn again to folly;" as much as to say, "to turn aside will not only grieve me, but it will harm you. Sin is not only fault, but folly. It will be to your own injury as well as to my displeasure." Dear child of God, are you out in the storm just now? Have you no rest? Let me whisper in your ear. Is there not a cause? Somebody on board your vessel has brought this storm upon you. Where is he? He is not among the regular sailors that work the ship; he is neither captain nor mate; but he is a stranger. Down under the hatches is a man named Jonah; is he the cause of the tempest? "No," you say, "he is a good fellow, for he paid his fare." This makes me feel all the more suspicious. He is the cause of the mischief. You will never get peace until the Jonah of sin is overboard. Cast him into the sea, and it will be calm unto you. Many a child of God harbours a traitor, and hardly knows that he is doing so; and the Lord is at war with him because of the harboured rebel. When Joab pursued Sheba, the son of Bichri, he came to the city of Abel, where Sheba had taken shelter. A wise woman came to him out of the city, and pleaded for the people. Joab explained to her that he warred not with the city, but with the rebel; and he added, "Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." Then they cut off the head of Sheba, and cast it out to Joab, and he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. God is besieging you with trials and distresses, turning his batteries against your walls; and there is no chance of any peace until the traitorous sin shall be given up to vengeance. I do not know what particular sin it may be, but the head of it must be thrown over the wall: and then the warriors of the Lord will go their way. Bring forth the Achan, and the accursed thing, and let all Israel stone him with stones. Search and see! Arrest the hidden foe! "Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?" God help us to institute a solemn search this morning, and may we discover the intruder, and destroy him!

Beloved, I pray that no one of us may go back to folly. If we have ever tasted the peace of God, and communion with God, can we leave it for earthly joys? Can we quit the banquets of infinite love for the coarse pleasures of sin? God forbid! Remember all the sorrow which sin has cost you already. Take not this viper a second time to your bosom. We were drowned in tears, and sunken in distress when we found ourselves guilty of sin. Further and further from it may we fly; but never, never may we turn

back! Remember what it cost your Lord to make you free from the consequences of former folly; never return to it. He must needs die to save us from our folly; shall we count his death as nothing? Bethink you what tugs the Spirit of God has had with us to bring us so far on our journey towards heaven; are we now willing to turn our backs on God and holiness? Consider also what lieth just beyond. Look a little way before you. Think of the street of gold, the river which never dries, the trees which bear eternal fruit, the harps of ceaseless melody. Beloved, we cannot turn again to folly! O God, do not permit us to do so! Grant us thy peace, that by it we may be kept, both in heart and mind, loyal to thee! Peace spoken to the soul by the Holy Spirit is the sure preventive of turning again to folly. Be sure that, if it passeth all understanding, it also conquereth all folly. With minds at perfect peace with God, we set our face like a flint, and press on towards the haven where peace will never end. Glory be to God, who will bring us safely there! Amen.

BY THE FOUNTAIN.

NO. 2113

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,
NOVEMBER 3RD, 1889,**

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall.”-Genesis 49:22.*

*“And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the
precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that
coucheth beneath.”-Deuteronomy 32:13.*

DEAR friends, we long to have many converts; we count that church happy to which God adds daily of such as are being saved. But we are very much concerned about the quality of our converts. We do not wish to make up a church with a number of shallow professors, whose religion lies upon the surface, and is of a doubtful character. We are very anxious that we should have those in our fellowship who are thoroughly converted, richly experienced, and fully instructed in the deep things of God. We would have as our associates people who are established by principle rather than moved by passion. We would earnestly pray to have a company of believers added to the church who shall be like Joseph in character-fruitful trees growing by the well, whose branches ran over the wall. Jacob describes Joseph as a fruitful offshoot, and he explains his fruitfulness by his position: he is fruitful “by a well.” When a vine grows near a well which is always full, and when it is able to send its roots down to drink of the unfailing spring, it may very well be fruitful, and send forth many branches. The point is, to get by the well; or, to use our second text, to tap “the deep that coucheth beneath.” If we can reach the secret fountains, and say to God, with the Psalmist, “All my fresh springs are in thee,” then shall we find nourishment for our branches, and our fruit and leaf will never fail.

“Dwell deep” is a prophetic word of much value to Christians. To live upon land-drainage and casual rains may suffice for ordinary plants; but the trees of the Lord which bring forth much fruit need to penetrate below the topsoil and reach the secret fountains of grace.

Upon that subject I am going to talk this morning. Our desire is, that we may each one of us abide in Christ Jesus, and be in constant fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit, so that we may, in very truth, be rooted by the well, and may drink from “the deep that lieth under.” We would be grounded and settled by living and lasting union and communion with the Eternal God. We would know the secret of the hidden life, and be filled with its fundamental principles, its constraining influences, its spiritual powers. We would drink in such supplies, by secret contact with God, that our outward life shall bear ample testimony to our private intercourse with heaven.

May the Holy Spirit graciously aid us in our meditations while we first notice that this figure describes Joseph’s character—he was all that Jacob styled him ; secondly, that this in itself was a great blessing, for it was used as such by Moses in after years; and thirdly, that it brings with it many other choice favors.

I. First, THIS DESCRIBES JOSEPH’S CHARACTER. He flourished near to God. He was an offshoot of the old tree, and he was rooted deep by a well which always watered him. From his childhood until he died, the main point in Joseph’s character was that he was in clear and constant fellowship with God, and therefore God blessed him greatly. He lived to God, and was God’s servant; he lived with God, and was God’s child. He looked up to heaven for daily teaching and comfort; and God was with him so as not only to bless him, but to bless others for his sake; as, for instance, the house of Potiphar first, and afterwards Pharaoh and all the land of Egypt, and all the famishing nations. In this respect his branches ran over the wall in scattering blessings far and wide, and all this was the result of living in constant intercourse with God. My dear hearer, you profess to be a Christian, but have you really had dealings with God? I know you have been baptized, and you come to the communion table; but have you pressed beyond the signs to the Lord himself? Is there a root in your religion, and has that root struck deep into spiritual truth; and have you received the life and power which come from the spiritual fountain? Can you say with David, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my

expectation is from him"? The first blessing in the Book of Psalms is, that the godly man should be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The great matter is, being rooted by the well; the drawing of supplies from the eternal storehouse of Christ Jesus the Lord, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. How can we fail to be fruitful if we draw our life and all its vigor from the Lord Jesus?

Because Joseph lived near to God he received and retained gracious principles. There is a great difference between religious principle and religious passion. Many persons are religious by starts and fits- according to their company, their feelings, or their whims. According to the influences under which they come, certain people become good, bad, or indifferent. But when a man lives in the presence of the Lord, he has fixed principles, which rule his heart, and guide his life. He fears God, not because others fear him, but because God is "to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." He believes revealed truth, not because others believe it, but because he is sure that the Lord has spoken it, and therefore he knows it to be true. If anybody denies the faith he stands up to it, for it is precious to his heart. His moral conduct and his spiritual life are upright, true, sincere, and reverent; not because of the prejudices of education, or the force of example, but because the Lord has placed within him a new heart and a right spirit. He does not resort to another man's religious cistern; for there is within him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." He discerns between truth and error; for he has learned the gospel for himself by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He follows after holiness because he walks with the God of holiness, and the law of the Lord is written upon the tablets of his heart. The gospel of the Lord Jesus he receives by the witness of the Spirit. It is true to him, whether others receive it or reject it: he could part with anything and everything sooner than quit his hold upon the everlasting truth of God. This is to be a tree by a well, to have a religion based upon principles, to live by vital contact with the Lord. Many nowadays belong to this denomination or to that by pure accident of birth or position. They have never weighed their opinions in the balances of Scripture; indeed, many have no idea what their principles are. We have Protestants nowadays who never protest against anything, and Nonconformists who conform to everything which is in fashion. All this is bad. Ignorance in reference to divine truth is a very fruitful evil. We need

an instructed people, if we are to have a fruitful people. Unless we get hold upon truth by the right hand of clear apprehension, and hold it as our heart's treasure, we shall neither know the joy of it in days of calm, nor be held by it in nights of storm. Whence came martyrs in times of persecution, but from those who were in living union with God? Whence shall come bold confessors in these apostatizing days, if not from among persons of like character? Unless we get men and women into the church who, like Joseph, take root in the deep truth of God's Word, we shall never see the church in full health and glory.

Joseph showed his character throughout the whole of his life. As a child his father loved him, as our translators say, "because he was the son of his old age." It would be better to understand the words as meaning, because he was a son of old age. He was old and wise in his ways. He was a youth of great thoughtfulness, and his thoughts were much with God. You may judge your waking thoughts by those which come to you in your dreams. Joseph had dreams at night from God, because in the day he thought of God. No doubt they were supernatural and prophetic dreams; but I now speak after the manner of men: a dream is often the reflection of the wakeful thought. Joseph as a youth dwelt very near to God, and hence he was forced to enter his protest against the evil conduct of his brothers. "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." Soon he became a marked young man: his brothers felt he was not one of themselves, and they hated him, called him a dreamer, and took the first occasion to get rid of him. Jacob's household was in a very sad condition-even the grossest vice was found among his sons-and young Joseph was a speckled bird among them. By their malice he was sold for a slave into Egypt; but no sooner is he there, than we read, "And the Lord was with Joseph." Potiphar bought him, but the Lord made all that he did to prosper. It is difficult for a slave to become the steward of a great man; but Joseph did so, and his master took no account of anything, but left it all absolutely in Joseph's hands, and God blessed the house for Joseph's sake. And then there came in his way that great temptation; and you remember his gracious answer, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" God was evidently with him, keeping him in the way of innocence: he could not grieve his God, for his God was his delight. By false accusation he was cast into prison; but we read that "the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Soon he became the under-jailer, and was helpful to

the prisoners. His branches were always running over the wall in the form of usefulness to others. The prison was brightened by his presence; and as soon as he was prepared for the position, a straight path was opened for him from the prison to the court of Pharaoh. In the hour of his elevation he did not forget God. When about to interpret the royal dreams, he said, "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." He is a young man greatly gifted, and he may miss preferment if he mentions his religion; but this does not daunt him: again and again he says, "God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do." On the throne his God is still with him, and guides him in all things, and he exclaims, "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." When he sees his aged father, their talk is concerning the Lord God. When he comes to die, he says to his brethren, "I die, but God will be with you." He gave commandment concerning his bones, that he should not be buried in Egypt, for he was no Egyptian, though he had been lord of the land, but he would be carried away to the land of promise in the day when Israel should quit the stranger's land. Always the Lord his God is the star of Joseph. This is his character: he is in the fear of God all the day long. He was a fruitful bough by a well, and that well was his God.

This abiding near to God made Joseph independent of externals. His resources were within, and therefore he was not to be injured by things without. His springs were deep, and therefore not affected by circumstances.

He was not dependent upon family surroundings. At home, the society of his father would nourish his early piety, but he was just as gracious in the house of Potiphar. The degrading idolatries of Egypt did not make him unfaithful to the unseen God. Some of you young people not only owe your religious impressions to your parents; but I fear that if you were removed from them you would have no religion of your own. Are my fears correct? It is an anxious time when a lad leaves his home to be apprenticed, or to take his first place. If he has nothing but borrowed religion, he will soon yield to ill company; but if he lives in God for himself, he will stand. If he has lived upon his parents as a mistletoe lives on the oak, it will be bad for him; but if he has root in himself, and has lived upon God, all will be well. Hereditary religion is hopeful when it is also personal religion, but not else. If you are not living in God on your own account, your religion may as well fail you at once; for it will ultimately do so.

Many professing Christians are, I fear, very much dependent upon revival excitement, and the currents of godly society, which are often sufficiently strong to bear with them those who have no living principle. If religion seems to prosper, if many press into the congregation, if large numbers throng the inquiry room, these people are very happy, and very earnest. But after the summer-tide is over, where are they? This is the great burden which every earnest evangelist has to bear: so many seem born for God in the heat of a revival who, nevertheless, die away when the warmth of zeal is gone. Oh, that you, my brethren, may be planted by a well, so that you may never be dried up by drought! Bless God for revivals, and never speak against them; but do not live upon them, nor cause your spiritual health to depend upon them. Those who grow upon hotbeds will not be far from dung. There are evil tendencies connected with fanaticism which are to be dreaded. Get down to the well, and let your roots drink up the fresh nourishment, which is essential to the sap of your life, and to the fruit of your usefulness. Touching the cool spring, you will know where you are when others are so carried away as not to know what they hear or do. Say to yourselves, each one of you, "I want Christ in my own heart. I want the love of God shed abroad in my own soul. I want not only to talk about heavenly things, but to know and experience them. I desire to be possessed by the Spirit of truth, and to know his power." Be not content to live by the casual shower, or by the artificial watering-pot of special means, or by the mechanical irrigation of routine; but send down the roots of your being into the deep things of God, till you tap the great deep of divine all-sufficiency.

Beloved friend, I pray you seek after a spiritual life which is not even dependent on outward ordinances. It is a great comfort to be able to hear the Word faithfully preached; and if you can hear it, and do not hear it, you miss a great blessing and incur grievous loss. But suppose you are placed where there is no preaching of the Word, then it will be a happy circumstance if your godliness can survive such a deprivation. If you were away on some cattle ranch in South America, far from all religious worship, it would be a grand thing to be able to go to your Bible, and to your knees, and draw near to God alone, and so grow strong enough to send your branches over the wall, by blessing others, and beginning to teach or preach for Christ. This is the true way in which vigorous life shows itself. I know that the Lord's Supper is a sacred ordinance, and I would have you come to the Lord's Table as often as you can, for he hath

said, "This do in remembrance of me"; but if it shall come to pass that you are where no Christian person is near with whom you could break bread, may you have grace to feed on Jesus himself! When the tokens of his flesh and blood are denied you, may you be driven to Jesus himself! Spiritual life loves the outward ordinances, but if it is deprived of them it survives their absence; for in very deed heavenly life draws its food from heaven. Get to God. Oh, to get to God through Jesus Christ! An hour's communion with him means renewed life. Surely, the cluster of Eshcol must have grown near waters which were ever running. If you would glorify God, live upon God.

I believe-and I am very sorry to have to say it-that a great many nominal Christians live very much upon the minister. I have seen it to be so beyond all question. I have noticed a church flourish and increase while a certain good man has lived and preached; but when that servant of God has departed, then they have grown cold, and have been thinned out and sadly scattered. The weaker sort were drawn and held together by the good man's preaching; and as they cannot hear him, they will hear no one else, and their seats are empty. May this calamity never happen to this congregation; and yet I fear it would be so with many. In the days of the Judges, the people seemed wonderfully good while the judge lived; but as soon as he was gone they wandered after idols. O my beloved people, may you become so indoctrinated with the truth that you will never leave it! Be it your resolve that you will never hear anything but the gospel. Love Christ so well that you will never follow any pretended shepherd, who would lead you away from him. Keep you to Christ, and him crucified, and live on the doctrines of grace when your present leader lies asleep in his grave. Keep to the great Lord of love, whoever the preacher may be. Let it be seen that you have struck your roots too deep, and are fed by supplies too permanent for you to be dependent upon any man, however much esteemed that man may be.

Above all, it is a great blessing to be so rooted and watered that you can live graciously and uprightly, despite personal interest. There was a time when it seemed the loss of everything for Joseph to keep close to God. A young man can get on well with elder brothers if he will please them by dropping into their habits; but if he opposes them, he will have a sorry time of it. "Joseph, if you want to be happy with Reuben, and Simeon, and Levi, you must hold your tongue when you see them making free in their morals, or you will bring a hornets' nest about your head." If you would be happy

at home, you must remember the old proverb, that when you are at Rome you must do as Rome does. This is the wisdom of this world; but Joseph scorns it. No, he cannot help it; he must abide with God and with holiness. What is the result? The Ishmaelites carry him away for a slave. Poor encouragement this for holy youth! In the house of Potiphar, compliance with his mistress seemed an easy way to honor and pleasure. But he could not yield to her base suggestion; he had rather bear the consequences of her hate. She falsely charges him; he comes under his master's anger, loses his place, and is put in prison; but he cannot help it, he must obey his God. Are you of this true kind? Many will gladly walk with Christ when he wears silver sandals and a golden girdle; but if he walks barefoot through the mire, they seek other company. Oh, for that godliness which will strengthen you to quit your situation, to lose your wealth, to sacrifice your credit, and to part with your friends sooner than grieve your Lord! Oh, that you may never be unstable as water; for, if so, you will not excel! Your bow will only abide in strength if, like Joseph, the arms of your hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. You must draw your soul's nourishment from secret fountains, and wait upon the Lord where no eye sees you, or you will soon prove barren and unfruitful. To follow your Savior whithersoever he goeth, you must daily derive your life from him.

I cannot close this first head without saying-while Joseph thus was placed in a position of very high independence of all outward things, he was very conscious of his entire dependence upon God. Take the well away, and where was the fruitful bough? Remove "the deep that lieth under," and then the resources even of so great a character as that of the prime-minister of Egypt would have been dried up. We can stand alone with God; but we fall without him: we can bear the brunt of the battle, without a friend or an armor-bearer; but if the Lord does not cover our head we are undone. Like Samson, we can slay the Philistines:

*"But if the Lord be once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone,
When new temptations spring and rise,
We find how great our weakness is."*

Dear young friends, while I would exhort you to think for yourselves, and judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves with a holy independence of others; yet never forget where your strength lieth, and never rely upon yourselves. Never resolve to do anything apart from the Lord; never say, "I am sufficient," but always, in conscious insufficiency, fall back upon that

grace which never faileth. Self is a mocker, pride is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. All your usefulness, and all your faithfulness, will come to an end unless you fix your entire dependence upon Jehovah, the beginning and the end of all that is good. Keep by the deep well of boundless love; draw from the fountain of all-sufficiency, and may the Lord bless you henceforth and for ever!

II. This brings me now to notice, under my second head, that THIS IS OF ITSELF A GREAT BLESSING. Moses, in my second text, mentions “the deep that coucheth beneath,” as having its own form of blessing. This was for Joseph’s race a blessing. It is a high favor to know the deep things of God, and to enjoy the far-down securities, enjoyments, and privileges of the children of heaven.

In deep union to God are to be found the very truth and life of godliness. As for outward religion, what is it? You may practice all the ordinances without fault, and yet you will be godless unless your spirit has had converse with the Lord. A good man is in Scripture said to be a godly man. He is a man of God-God’s man: he lives for God, he lives with God, he lives on God. If you do not believe in God, love God, glorify God, not all the outward forms on earth, nor rites that God has given, can make up a religion for you that is worth a single penny. You may be orthodox in creed, as I hope you will be; but unless you really grasp and apprehend the things of orthodoxy, and so come to the God of truth, and the Holy Spirit of truth, you have a set of words, and nothing more. A man may possess the catalogue of a library, and yet be without a book; and so may you know a list of doctrines, and yet be a stranger to truth. You may have in your hand a map of a fine estate, and a list of all the treasures in the mansion, and yet you may not have a place whereon to set your foot. A knowledge of the technicalities of theology is of small use unless you enjoy the truths to which they refer. You must know the Lord, and abide in Christ. Do not say, “I have joined the church, sir, and attend the prayer-meetings, and take my share among the workers.” Yes, I know; but true religion is more than this. It is repentance towards God. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. “Dear sir,” cries one, “I accept what you say; and dispute none of your teaching.” That may be; but this does not content me. If you receive the truth as my teaching, I am sorry. I desire you to receive it as the Word of God. Go to the Bible for yourself. Seek to be taught by the Spirit of God. Ask to have the truth of God written upon your heart by the Holy Ghost. You have not received the

truth rightly unless it comes to you with power as the Word of the living God.

When a man like Joseph can be compared to a fruitful tree by a well, because he is rooted in fellowship with God, he has the blessedness of drawing his supplies from secret, but real, sources. His life is hid, and the support of his life is hidden too. The world knoweth him not; but the secret of the Lord is with him. There is the tree, and there is the fruit, these can be seen by all; but none can see the roots which are the cause of the clusters, nor the deep that lieth under, from which those roots derive their supply. God's hidden ones are a wonder unto many. Oh, to dwell with him who is invisible, and so to become ourselves partakers of an unseen life! The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Oh, to have eternal life, and to be heirs of an eternal heritage! It is a great thing to cultivate the inner life, for it is the true life; but unless a man dwells with God in secret, he forgets the inward life: he is so taken up with washing the outside of the cup and the platter, that his inward part remains very wickedness. This will never do, for the Lord looks at the heart. We must see to the inward; and we shall fail to do so unless we abide near to God.

The supplies of such a man are inexhaustible. The well is not drawn dry, and the deep that lieth under is never emptied. Plants dependent upon irrigation may pine in the drought of summer; but a tree that strikes its roots into the well does not see when heat cometh, but its leaf is green. It can never exhaust the great fountains. It may drink on and on, and yet never diminish its supplies. "God all-sufficient" is a glorious name. Infinite mercy is a storehouse for a starving world. The Lord's own word is, "my grace is sufficient for thee."

The man who dwells near to God has supplies which can never be cut off. We have heard of cities which have been surrounded by armies, and were never captured by assault, but were compelled to surrender because the besiegers cut off the water-courses, broke down the aqueducts; and so subdued them by thirst. Jerusalem was never thus captured, for there were deep wells within the city itself which never ceased to flow. Ah, my brethren! he that hath a well of living water within him is beyond the enemy's power. We can go to God when we are not allowed to go to the service. The priest took away the boy's Bible. "Yes," said the child, "but you cannot take away those twelve chapters of John which I have learnt."

The malice of man may deny us a place of worship, but it cannot prevent our worshipping the Lord, wherever we may be. Every means of grace may be denied the believer, but the grace of the means will still come to him. God grant that neither sickness, nor travelling, nor watching at the bedside, may keep us away from the assembly of his people; but if ever it should so happen, may we then so dwell in God that the upper springs may flow freely, and feed the very roots of our spirit!

Supplies gained by nearness to God himself are constant. Grace is not intermittent. It is not a landspring, but a well. Joseph had grace as an old man, even as he had it as a youth. A religion that ebbs and flows is a poor thing. We should desire the constancy of the sun, and not the changing of the moon. We may have grace day by day, every day, and all the day. If yours be a spring from off the deep that lieth under, it will be so. I do not say that your root can always take in the same measure of water from the well of life; but I do say that it will always be there for you to take; and I think, also, that to a large extent you will be able to partake of it with constancy. Your root will be always in the well, and so you may always drink to the full. It is wonderful how trees will grow if planted close by abundant water. I hope to see, before long, a palm which was planted in my presence some years ago. It was one of a number of palms which make a long line in a friend's garden. They were all of one size when I saw them brought from the nursery, and the next year they all seemed pretty much upon an equality. But very soon this particular palm outstripped its fellows, and now it towers high above all the rest, till you might suppose it to be many years older. My very good friend, the owner of the garden, said to me, "You know why this palm has so far outgrown the rest. It has sent its roots down below, into that large reservoir, and so its life is powerful." The Arabs say that the palm tree loves to have its roots in the water and its head in the fire: it would have a flowing river below and the burning sun above. Ah, beloved! we also grow as the palm tree; and if we get our roots down into the divine fountains, and can sun ourselves in the love of the Lord, we shall grow rapidly and surely.

The supplies of the believer who dwells deep are pure as well as full. Grace through the means is apt to be diluted; but when we receive it from God alone it is grace indeed. The best of pipes are apt to make the water taste. All common watercourses mix earth with the water; but "the deep that lieth under" is out of reach of defilement. If you can draw from the pure well of gospel undefiled, you will do well. Among the Alps how often have I

wished to drink! and the guide has forbidden me, and told me to wait a little; and then we have come to a leaping fount, most cool and delicious; far better than the streams which, as they ran along, had gathered earth, and decay, and evil life. Did you ever know a stream in England that ran for half a mile without some one turning it into a sewer? And so it would seem at this time as if God's own truth could not be found in the teachings of the pulpit, pure and undefiled as given forth in Scripture by his Spirit. Do we not fear lest, with all our care, we should tincture the infallible revelation with our thoughts? O believer, go at once to thy God for teaching! Again I remind you of David's words—"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Draw your supplies at first hand. Do as he did who had been made ill with impure milk: he kept a cow of his own. Instead of expositors, read the Bible for yourself. In Bible light the Bible is best seen. If the human waterpot fails, it will not matter if you are "a fruitful bough by a well."

III. Lastly, I would remind you that THIS BRINGS WITH IT OTHER BLESSINGS. If you are by the well, sending your roots into its waters, you will obtain fruitfulness. A fruitful tree is one which is well sustained at the root. Dear friends, it is by no means wisdom to cry, "I will work hard, and try to bear fruit." Fruit is not produced by work. No vine toils to produce grapes. It buds, and blossoms, and bears fruit in the order of its nature. We have a great deal of fruitless working nowadays. Religion is pumped up. Devotion is too often mechanical; godliness is supplanted by artificial excitement; and love to God by perpetual fussiness. Zeal for God is counterfeited by "much ado about nothing." If the inner, secret life is in good order, precious fruit is brought forth both by sun and moon. The gardener never says, "It is time for me to go and work a hundredweight of grapes out of my vine." Oh dear, no! Beginning early in the year he spies a shoot, and by-and-by there is a tiny flower, and the leaves appear, and so on in regular order, and only at last can he hope to gather the rich cluster from the vine. There is no noise in the production of the vintage; you never heard a vine groaning, nor saw it sweating, nor noticed it straining a single shoot. If vines get their roots down into good soil, they bring forth fruit, as it were, naturally. May the Lord make us bring forth holiness through the force of the new nature! May he put into us immortal principles, and may he sustain them by his own personal power! and then, naturally and joyfully, in its season, we shall bring forth fruit to his praise and glory.

The next blessing that came with this was unselfishness. Joseph was a bough whose “branches ran over the wall.” He extended his influence beyond his own family. We shall bear but little fruit if our branches are kept within the narrow space of self and relatives. Cultivate godliness for the sole sake of yourself, and you will never be very godly; but abound in it for God’s sake, and for love of those whom Jesus has redeemed, and you will be godly indeed. Live to love; for to love is to live when the love is set upon God. You will go over the wall to your ungodly neighbor, to the Christless infidel, to the heathen and the castaway. You will extend your usefulness where none expected it to grow; you will be a blessing to many who were far off from you and your God. I heard of one whose last petition was, that God would bury his influence with him. An awful prayer! It was so far good that it evidenced a recognition of his life’s mistake, and some sort of repentance for it. But he was asking for that which could not be granted; for not even God himself ever kills a man’s influence. The world’s poet truly says, “The evil that men do lives after them.” Most surely the evil lives, even if the good expires. Yet, when we are dead and buried, if we have lived unto God, and lived upon God, our branches will run over the wall of the cemetery, and our voices will be heard from amid the silence of the sepulcher. Is it not written, “He being dead yet speaketh”?

A third blessing that comes with this is fixedness. A fruitful tree by a well, sending its roots down to the water, is well rooted, and cannot be torn from its place. It would not be fruitful if it were not stable. If a tree has no living root-hold, you may tear it up, if you please; but if it is living, and growing, and drawing up its nutriment from the depth, its roots will furnish it with mighty anchorage. Can you stir a man who has once received into his heart the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice? Not if he has found in it a refuge for despair. The logician may prove that the death of Christ did not mean substitution and propitiation. A fig for his logic: “we have received the atonement,” and know better. The doctrines of grace which I have preached to you have a hold upon the heart and intellect, like that of certain colors when the wool is dyed ingrain. Because these doctrines have not been sufficiently preached, our people are easily carried away with every wind of doctrine, Brethren, the old evangelical doctrine of Luther and Calvin had about it power to create enthusiasm. See how the Huguenots mustered to a sermon when it was death to hear a reformed preacher. Geneva sent forth men who could gather crowds in regions

crimsoned with the blood of their brethren. Why did the multitudes come together? Would any man jeopardize his life to hear a “modern-thought” sermon? My brethren, there is something in the old gospel worth hearing: there is an election of grace most precious, a redemption which really redeemed, and a work of grace within which ensures final perseverance and eternal glory. The wishwash of to-day’s preaching would have gained the preacher in “the desert” no congregation; but when untold treasures are displayed, saints will come to hear of them. That truth, which is a matter of life and death to you, will take hold of your heart and soul, and you will never part with it. I long to see a race of real men, who will know the truth, and believe it in real fashion: men who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved; palaces of God whose foundations are in the rock. Another privilege comes of personal nearness to God; such men enjoy safety. Hear how Jacob puts it: “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.” If you live near to God you will be the target of the ungodly, and the hatred of the world will cause you grief of heart. It cannot be avoided, for the seed of the serpent will nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman. Even to this day is Joseph sold into Egypt, and separated from his brethren.

*“No slacker grows the fight,
No feebler is the foe.”*

Keep close to God and his Word, and you will be counted a Nazarite among your brethren. But this shall not harm you; for it is added, “His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” Deriving his strength from God, Joseph lived above the rage of men. He who keepeth his people neither slumbers nor sleeps. Only live you upon God, let your expectations be from God only, and you cannot be overcome of adversaries. They that trust in princes will find them fickle; they that rely upon the multitude will find them lighter than vanity; but they that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. Wherefore strike deep, and draw your life from the well. Besides that, Joseph received enrichment. Notice how Moses puts it: he mentions quite a treasury of jewels. The best pearls come out of deep seas. He mentions the precious things of heaven, the precious fruit brought forth by the sun, the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, and the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush. All these blessings came upon the top of the head of him who was a

fruitful bough by a well. Many of you religious people know nothing about precious things. Many professors live on the mere skins and husks of divine truth; they have never tasted the sweet kernels yet. A little religion is a mournful thing: they that drink deep get down to the sweetness. Many people have religion enough to make them wretched; if they had seven times as much, they would be joyful. The restraints, and duties, and formalities of religion have in them none of the fat things full of marrow, nor of the wines on the lees well refined. The best wines in God's house are in the cellar. Those who never go downstairs have no idea of the secret sweetness. A deep experience is a precious experience. The Lord fills certain of his people with pain and grief, that they may know his choicer consolations. We are too apt to let our roots run along just under the surface, and so we get no firm rootage; but trouble comes, and then we grow downward, rooted in humility; then we pierce the treasures of darkness, and know the deep things of God. If you want a rich Christian, find a man who lives with God in secret, and goes deep into divine truth. A shallow believer is a poor and weak believer; but the strong Christian is the man who lives on God, and will not be put off with anything short of fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This benediction, with which we close our public service, should be the perpetual benediction of every day. Dear friends, I might add a thousand things, but I will not. I will only say this-do, I pray you, dive into the depths. You that are beginning with holy things, begin deep, and take sure root. See how soon buildings fall if they have insufficient foundations! Find your foundation in the rock. You that have long known the Lord, endeavor to know more and more of him. Send out more roots into yet deeper and richer ground. Get more nearly to the very heart of God. In an evil time like this, take firm hold. You cannot overcome the drift of an ill current, unless you let down your anchor. Yes, and at such a time you may be unusually careful, and let down four anchors from the stern, as well as the one in the proper place. We need to be anchored stem and stern in these days. We need to be held to Christ by hooks of steel. Heart, and head, and hand, and every other power had need take hold on the everlasting truth; for such are the winds that blow to-day, that we shall be carried about by them like thistle-down upon the hills, if we have nothing but our own strength to rely upon. God grant us to get closer to him than ever, and to keep there; and grant us yet further to use all our opportunities for usefulness, and all our life for fruitfulness to his glory! Amen.

THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD.

NO. 2114

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The burden of the word of the Lord.”-Malachi 1:1.

THE prophets of old were no triflers. They did not run about as idle tellers of tales, but they carried a burden. Those who at this time speak in the name of the Lord, if they are indeed sent of God, dare not sport with their ministry or play with their message. They have a burden to bear-”The burden of the word of the Lord”; and this burden puts it out of their power to indulge in levity of life. I am often astounded at the way in which some who profess to be the servants of God make light of their work: they jest about their sermons as if they were so many comedies or farces. I read of one who said, “I got on very well for a year or two in my pulpit, for my great-uncle had left me a large store of manuscripts, which I read to my congregation.” The Lord have mercy on his guilty soul! Did the Lord send him a sacred call to bring to light his uncle’s mouldy manuscripts? Something less than a divine call might have achieved that purpose. Another is able to get on well with his preaching because he pays so much a quarter to a bookseller, and is regularly supplied with manuscript sermons. They cost more or less according to the space within which they will not be sold to another clerical cripple. I have seen the things, and have felt sick at the sorry spectacle. What must God think of such prophets as these? In the old times, those whom God sent did not borrow their messages. They had their message directly from God himself, and that message was weighty-so weighty that they called it “the burden of the Lord.” He that does not find his ministry a burden now will find it a burden hereafter, which will sink him lower than the lowest hell. A ministry that never burdens the heart and the conscience in this life, will be like a millstone about a man’s neck in the world to come.

The servants of God mean business; they do not play at preaching, but they plead with men. They do not talk for talking's sake; but they persuade for Jesus' sake. They are not sent into the world to tickle men's ears, nor to make a display of elocution, nor to quote poetry: theirs is an errand of life or death to souls immortal. They have a something to say which so presses upon them, that they must say it. "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel I" They burn with an inward fire, and the flame must have vent; for the Word of the Lord is as fire in their bones, consuming them. The truth presses them into its service, and they cannot escape from it. If, indeed, they be the servants of God they must speak the things which they have seen and heard. The servants of God have no feathers in their caps, but burdens on their hearts.

Furthermore, the true servants of God have something to carry, something worth carrying. There is solid truth, precious truth in their message. It is not froth and foam, phrases and verbiage, stories and pretty things, poetry and oratory, and all that; but there is weight in it of matters which concern heaven and hell, time and eternity. If ever there were men in this world who ought to speak in earnest, they are the men. Those who speak for God must not speak lightly. If there is nothing in what a man has to say, then God never commissioned him, for God is no trifler. If there is no importance in their message-yea, if their message be not of the first and last importance-why do they profess to speak in the name of God? It is constructive blasphemy to father God with our nonsense. The true servant of God has no light weight to bear; he has eternal realities heaped upon him. He does not run merrily as one that has a feather-weight to carry, but he treads firmly and often slowly as he moves beneath "the burden of the word of the Lord."

Yet, do not let me be misunderstood at the beginning. God's true servants, who are burdened with his word, right willingly and cheerfully carry that burden. We would not be without it for all the world. Sometimes, do you know, we get tempted, when things do not go right, to run away from it; but we view it as a temptation not to be tolerated for an hour. When some of you do not behave yourselves, and matters in our church get a little out of order, I say to myself, "I wish I could give this up, and turn to an employment less responsible, and less wearing to the heart"; but then I think of Jonah, and what happened to him when he ran away to Tarshish; and I remember that whales are scarcer now than they were then, and I do not feel inclined to run that risk. I stick to my business, and keep to the

message of my God; for one might not be brought to land quite so safely as the runaway prophet was. Indeed, I could not cease to preach the glad tidings unless I ceased to breathe. God's servants would do nothing else but bear this burden, even if they were allowed to make a change. I had sooner be a preacher of the gospel than a possessor of the Indies. Remember how William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, says, "Poor Felix is shrivelled from a missionary to an ambassador." He was a missionary once, and he was employed by the government as an ambassador; his father thought it no promotion, but said, "Felix has shrivelled into an ambassador." It would be a descent indeed from bearing the burden of the Lord, if one were to be transformed into a member of Parliament, or a prime minister, or a king. We bear a burden, but we should be sorry indeed not to bear it.

The burden which the true preacher of God bears is for God, and on Christ's behalf, and for the good of men. He has a natural instinct which makes him care for the souls of others, and his anxiety is that none should perish, but that all should find salvation through Jesus Christ. Like the Christ who longed to save, so does the true Malachi, or messenger of God, go forth with this as his happy, joyful, cheerfully-borne burden-that men may turn unto God and live. Yet, it is a burden, for all that; and of that I am going to speak to you. Much practical truth will come before us while we speak of "the burden of the word of the Lord." Pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the meditation to our hearts.

I. And why is the word of the Lord a burden to him that speaketh it? Well, first, it is a burden BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. If what we preach is only of man, we may preach as we like, and there is no burden about it; but if this Book be inspired-if Jehovah be the only God, if Jesus Christ be God incarnate, if there be no salvation save through his precious blood-then there is a great solemnity about that which a minister of Christ is called upon to preach. It hence becomes a weighty matter with him. Modern thought is a trifle light as air; but ancient truth is more weighty than gold.

And, first, the word of the Lord becomes a burden; in the reception of it. I do not think that any man can ever preach the gospel aright until he has had it borne into his own soul with overwhelming energy. You cannot preach conviction of sin unless you have suffered it. You cannot preach repentance unless you have practiced it. You cannot preach faith unless

you have exercised it. You may talk about these things, but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proved in your own soul. It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he deals in secondhand experience. "Son of man, eat this roll": you must eat it before you can hand it out to others. True preaching is Artesian: it wells up from the great depths of the soul. If Christ has not made a well within us, there will be no outflow from us. We are not proper agents for conveying truth to others, if grace has not conveyed it to us. When we get God's word in our studies, we feel it to be a load which bows us to the ground. We are, at times, obliged to get up and walk to and fro beneath the terror of the threatenings of God's word; and often are we forced to bow our knee before the glory of some wonderful word of the Lord which beams with excessive grace. We say to ourselves, "These are wonderful truths: how they press upon our hearts!" They create great storms within us; they seem to tear us to pieces. The strong wind of the mighty Spirit blows through the messenger of God, and he himself is swayed to and fro in it as the trees of the forest in the tempest. Hence, even in the reception of the message of God, it is a burden.

The Word of God is a burden; in the delivery of it. Do you think it an easy thing to stand before the people and deliver a message which you believe you have received from God? If you so imagine, I wish you would try it. He that finds it easy work to preach, will find it hard work to give an account of his preaching at the last great day. One has carefully to look around, and think while he is preaching, "I must mind that I do not put this truth in such a way as to exaggerate it into a falsehood. I must not so encourage the weak that I dwarf the strong; nor so commend the strong as to grieve the weak. I must not so preach the grace of God as to give latitude to sin: I must not so denounce sin as to drive men to despair." Our path is often narrow as a razor's edge, and we keep on crying in our spirit, while we are speaking, "Lord, direct me! Lord, help me to deal wisely for thee with all these souls!" The anxieties which we feel in connection with our pulpit work are enough to make us old before our time. I have heard of one who thought he would give up his ministry because he had so small a chapel, into which he could not get more than two hundred people; but a good old man said to him, "You will find it quite hard enough to give a good account of two hundred at the last great day." It is an idle ambition to desire a large congregation, unless that desire is altogether for God's glory; for we only increase our responsibilities when we increase the area

of our influence. Still, some are responsible for not having a large congregation. If their dulness keeps people from hearing, they do not thereby escape from responsibility. To speak aright God's Word beneath the divine influence is, in the speaking as well as in the getting of the message, the burden of the Lord.

When we have preached, the gospel becomes a burden; in; after consideration. "Well, now, it is all done," says one. Is it? Is it all done? You, dear teacher, when you have taught your class to-day, have you done with your children? You have thought of them upon the Sabbath; will there be no care for them all the week? If your soul is towards your children or your congregation as it ought to be, you will bear them always on your heart. They will never be far away from you. The mother is gone from home. She is out to-day, seeing her sister: surely she is not caring about her babe; is she? Is SHE NOT? Why, wherever she is, the tender mother, if she does not bear her child outside her bosom, bears it inside her heart; her babe is always in her mind. "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" Can a soul-winner forget his charge? If God sends any of us to do good to our fellow-men, and to speak in his name, the souls of men will be a perpetual burden to us, and we shall constantly cry for their salvation, and perpetually, with entreaties and tears, go to God for them, and ask him to bless the message we have delivered.

Oh, that we may have, in all pulpits, ministers who bear the burden of the Lord in the study, in the pulpit, and when the discourse is finished! Once truly a minister you are always a minister; your burden clings to you. May you, my brethren and sisters, partakers in the holy service of our Lord Jesus Christ, each of you, in your measure, bear the burden of the Word of the Lord, and that continually.

II. I pass to a second point. It is not only a burden because it is so solemnly the Word of the Lord, and therefore weighty and overwhelming; but next, BECAUSE OF WHAT IT is. What is it that the true servant of God has to bear and to preach?

Well, first, it is the rebuke of sin. I have heard of hirelings who preach, but never think of rebuking sin. It is with them like as in the story of the old negro preacher, a very popular preacher, indeed among his coloured brothers. His master said, "I am afraid some of your people steal chickens, for I am always losing mine. I wish you would next Sunday give them a word about it." "Master," said the preacher, "it would throw such a damp

over the congregation if I were to say anything about stealing chickens.” So the black preacher avoided that subject. It seems to me that stealing chickens was the very thing that he ought to have preached about, if that was the sin his brethren were guilty of. If a man bears the burden of the Word of the Lord, he speaks most to his people upon the evil of which they are most guilty. Somebody once said to me, “Sir, you were very personal.” I answered, “Sir, I tried to be. Do not think that I am going to apologize for it. If I knew anything that would come home to your heart and conscience concerning sin, I would be sure to say that—just that very thing.” “And what if I should be offended?” “Well, I should be very sorry that you refused reproof, and should feel all the more sure that it was my duty to be very faithful with you. If after much love and prayer you refused the word, I could do no more; but I certainly should not speak with bated breath to please you; and you would despise me if I did.” I remember one in Oliver Cromwell’s day who complained to a preacher. He said, “The squire of the parish is very much offended by some remarks you made last Sabbath day about profane swearing.” “Well,” said the Puritan preacher, “is the squire in the habit of swearing?” It was admitted that he was, and that he therefore thought himself pointed out by the minister. The Puritan replied to the complaining tenant, “If your lord offends my Lord, I shall not fail to rebuke him for it; and if he is offended, let him be offended.” So must every true preacher be careless of man’s esteem, and speak faithfully; but this is a burden to one of a tender spirit. If there is any topic upon which we must of necessity dwell, it must be upon that sin which is most grieving to the Lord; for we must by no means leave an erring brother unwarned. This is not a work to be coveted. It is neither pleasant to the hearer, nor pleasant to the speaker; and yet to rebuke sin, and to rebuke it sharply, is part of the work of him whom God sends; and this makes the Word of the Lord his burden.

And, next, the Word of the Lord gives a rebuff to human pride. The doctrines of the gospel seem shaped on purpose, among other objects, to bring into contempt all human glory. Here is a man who is morally of a fine and noble nature, but we tell him that he is born in sin and shapen in iniquity: this is a stern duty. Here is a man of a grand righteous character in his own opinion, and we tell him that his righteousness is filthy rags: he will not smile on us for this. Here is a man that can go to heaven by his own efforts, so he thinks, and we tell him that he can do nothing of the sort—that he is dead in trespasses and sins: this will bring us no honor from him. He

hopes that, by strong resolves, he may change his own nature and make himself all that God would have him; but we tell him that his resolutions are so much empty wind, and will end in nothing: this is likely to earn us his hate. Behold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Man stands a convicted criminal, and if saved must owe his salvation entirely to the gratuitous mercy of God. Condemned and ruined, if he ever escapes from his ruin it must be through the work of the Spirit of God in him, and not by his own works. Thus, you see, human nature does not like our message. How it writhes in wrath, how it grinds its teeth against the doctrine which humbles man, crucifies his pride, and nails his glory to the gibbet! Hence, such preaching becomes the burden of the Lord.

And then the true preacher has to come into contact with the vanity of human intellect. We ask of man, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Thou sayest, "I know." What knowest thou, poor blind worm? Thou sayest, "I am a judge, and I can discern." What canst thou discern, thou that art in the dark, and alienated from God by thy wicked works? The things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes; and the wise and prudent are indignant at this act revealed of divine sovereignty. "Well," says one, "I quarrel with the Bible." Do you? The only real argument against the Bible is an unholy life. When a man argues against the Word of God, follow him home, and see if you cannot discover the reason of his enmity to the Word of the Lord. It lies in some form of sin. He whom God sends cares nothing at all about human wisdom, so as to fawn upon it and flatter it; for he knows that "the world by wisdom knew not God"; and that human wisdom is only another name for human folly. All the savants and the philosophers are simply those who make themselves to be wise, but are not so. Yet to face false science with "the foolishness of preaching," and to set up the cross in the teeth of learned self-sufficiency, is a burden from the Lord. The most heavy burden of the Word of the Lord, however, is that which concerns the future. If thou be sent of God, and if thou preachest what God has revealed in his Word, then thou sayest, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and thou dost not hesitate to say that the wrath of God abides on the rejectors of the Savior. Thou dost not hesitate to say-

*"There is a dreadful hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains."*

All the romance of the age runs against this. Everybody says, "Be quiet about the wrath to come, or you will have everybody down upon you." Be down upon me, then! I will not soften God's word to please anybody; and the Word of the Lord is very clear on this matter. If you receive not the Lord Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins. If you believe not in him, you must perish from his presence. There is a day coming when you will die; after this comes another day when you must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and all your actions shall be published, and you shall be judged for the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil; and then you shall receive the sentence of, "Come, ye blessed," or, "Depart, ye cursed." Do you think we like to preach this? Do you think that it is any pleasure to the servant of God to deliver these heavy tidings? Oh, no! we speak in the bitterness of our spirit, very often; but we speak because we dare not refrain. It is infinitely better that men should be told the truth than that they should be flattered by a lie into eternal ruin. He ought to have the commendation of all men, not who makes things pleasant, but who speaks things truly. Somebody is preaching of how to get people out of hell. I preach about how to keep them out of hell. Don't go there. Keep you clear of the fire which never can be quenched. Escape for your lives: look not behind you; stay not in all the plain, but haste to Christ, the mountain of salvation, and put your trust in him. This is it which is the burden of the Word of the Lord. We have grief of heart because of the dreadful future which men prepare for themselves, namely, "everlasting punishment." We are heavy at heart for the many who will not turn to God, but persist in destroying their own souls for ever. Oh, why will they die? The prospect of their future is a present misery to us.

III. Now, dear friends, I have in the third place to say that it is a burden not only because it is the Word of the Lord, and because of what it is, but BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BEARING IT TO YOU.

Suppose that we do not preach the gospel, and warn the wicked man, so that he turn not from his iniquity, what then? Hear this voice: "He shall perish, but his blood will I require at thine hand." What will my Lord say to me if I am unfaithful to you? "Where is the blood of those people who gathered at Newington Butts? Where is the blood of that crowd which came together to hear you speak, and you did not preach the gospel to them?" Oh, it were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not preach the gospel! "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" of Christ, for men perish where there is not the Word of God! I remember

Mr. Knill's portrait which was once in The Evangelical Magazine, that it had written at the bottom of it, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing: will you let them perish?" So is it with men that hear not the glad tidings; they die in sin. Worse still, men are perishing in this country: in the blaze of the light they sit in darkness. Oh, that we might go and find them, and tell them of the gospel! for, if we carry it not to them, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" What makes it more of a burden to me is, that men may die if they do hear the word of salvation; men may go from these pews quick into perdition. Those eyes that look on me to-night, oh, how intently and earnestly! O sirs, if you do not look to Christ, you will be lost, however well you may have attended to me. Now, you listen to each word I utter; but I pray you listen to the Word of God, the heavenly Father, who bids you repent and believe in his dear Son; for "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." So said the Savior. And this, I say, makes the burden of the message, lest some of you should not receive it. I cannot bear that one of you should die unforgiven. I look along these pews, and I remember some of you a good many years ago; you were then in a hopeful state, but you have not received Christ yet. Most faithful hearers you have been, but you have not been doers of the word. Do not think that I charge you too severely. Have you repented and believed? If not, woe is me that I should bear to you a message which will be a savor of death unto death unto you because you refuse it; for how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? When it has been freely proclaimed to us year after year, what will become of us if we reject it? Do not still refuse to come to Jesus. Do not make me a messenger of death to you. I implore you, receive the message of mercy, and be saved.

And, then, it becomes a great burden to me to preach the gospel when I think of what those lose who will not have it. That heaven above-what tongue can describe it? What painter can ever picture it-the heaven above, where all is love, and joy, and peace, and everlasting blessedness? What if you should be shut out? What if against you the door should be closed! There is no opening that door again, remember. Even though you stand and cry, "Lord, Lord!" yet will he not open it to you. May no one of us miss eternal felicity! May no one among us fall into eternal misery! But here lies the burden of the Lord-in the consequences of our ministry. I recollect walking out to preach nigh unto forty years ago, just when I began my witnessing for the Lord Jesus. As I trudged along with a

somewhat older brother, who was going to preach at another village station, our talk was about our work, and he said to me, "Does it not strike you as a very solemn thing that we two local preachers are going to do the Lord's work, and much may depend even upon the very hymns we give out, and the way in which we read them?" I thought of that, and I prayed—and often do pray—that I may have the right hymn, and the right chapter, as well as the right sermon. Well do I remember a great sinner coming into Exeter Hall, and I read the hymn beginning, "Jesu, lover of my soul," and that first line pierced him in the heart. He said to himself, "Does Jesus love my soul?" He wept because he had not loved the Savior in return; and he was brought to the Savior's feet just by that one line of a hymn. It does make it the burden of the Lord when you see life, death, and hell, and worlds to come, hanging, as it were, upon the breath of a mortal man, by whom God speaks to the souls of his fellows. This is serious burden-bearing. At least, I find it more and more so the longer I am engaged in it.

IV. But I pass on to notice one thing more now. It is often the burden of the Lord, because of THE WAY IN WHICH MEN TREAT THE WORD OF GOD. Upon this I will be very brief. Some trifle with it. I was reading last night an account of how people are said to behave who go to church. It was written by a canon. I dare say he knows. Certainly, some people who go to Nonconformist places are as bad. A servant was asked by her mistress about the sermon. She said it was a very good sermon. "Where was the text, Martha?" "Somewhere in the Bible, ma'am." "What was it about?" She did not recollect a word of it. One question after another is put to her; she tells her mistress that it was a very nice sermon, but she really does not know what it was all about. And the writer goes on to say that a large proportion of our people go off at a tangent while we are talking, and their minds are thinking about something else. I hope that it is not quite true of you to-night. A man once went to hear Mr. Whitefield. He was a shipbuilder, and he said, "Oh, that man! I never heard such a preacher as that before. When I have been to other places, I have built a ship from stem to stern—laid the keel, and put the mast in, and finished it all up, while the parson has been preaching; but this time I was not able to lay a timber. He took me right away." This pre-occupation of human minds makes it such a burden when we are in earnest to reach the heart and win the soul. Our people are sitting here in body, but they are far away in spirit. Yonder sits a good woman who is meditating as to how she shall leave her home to-morrow, long enough to get to the shop to buy those clothes for the

children, ready for the spring weather. A gentleman here to-night wonders where he has left that diamond ring which he took off when he washed his hands. Do not let that bother you any more. Sell the stone, and give the money away; so that it will never trouble you again. All sorts of cares come buzzing around your brains, when I am wanting them to be quite clear to consider holy subjects. Little pettifogging cares intrude, and the preacher may speak his very soul out, but it all goes for nothing. This makes our work the burden of the Lord.

Then there is another. It is the number of those who do hear with considerable attention, but they forget all that they hear. The sermon is all done with when they have done hearing it. The last drop of dew is dried up when they get home. Nothing remains of that which cost the preacher so much thought and prayer. And is it not a hard thing to go on "pegging away and pegging away," and have done nothing? The pre-occupied mind is a slate, and we write on it; and then a sponge goes over it all, and we have to write each word all over again. Few would choose to roll the stone of Sisyphus, which always fell backward as fast as he laboriously heaved it up the hill-side. We are willing to do even this for our Lord; but we are compelled to admit that it is burdensome toil. Poor, poor work with some of you. Ah! it is the burden of the Lord to deal with your souls.

Alas! there are some others that hear to ridicule. They pick out some mannerism, or mistake, or something outre about the speaker's language, and they carry this home, and report it as raw material for fun. The preacher is in anguish to save a soul, and they are thinking about how he pronounces a word. Here is a man endeavoring to pluck sinners from the eternal burnings, and these very sinners are all the while thinking about how he moves his legs, or how he lifts his hand, or how he pronounces a certain syllable. Oh, it is sickening work-soul-sickening work! It is the "burden of the word of the Lord," when our life or death message is received in that way. But when it is received rightly, then are we in the seventh heaven! Oh, well do I remember one night preaching three sermons, one after the other; and I think that I could have preached thirty, if time had held out. It was in a Welsh village, where I had gone into the chapel and simply meant to expound the Scripture, while another brother preached. He preached in Welsh, and when it was done, the question was put whether Mr. Spurgeon would not preach. I had not come prepared, but I did preach, and there was a melting time; and then we sang a hymn. I think we sang one verse seven or eight times over: the people were all on

fire. The sound seemed to make the shingles dance on the top of the chapel. When I had done, we asked those who were impressed to stop. They all stopped, and so I had to preach again; and a second time they all stopped, and I had to preach again. It got on to past eleven o'clock before they went away. Eighty-one came forward and joined the churches afterwards. It was but a few months before the terrible accident at Risca, and many of those converted that night perished in the pit. God had sent his Spirit on that glorious night to save them, that they might be ready when he should call them home. It was grand work to preach, for they sucked in the word as babes take in the milk. They took it into their hearts: it saved their souls. Would we had many such opportunities, and then the Word of the Lord would be no burden, but like the wings of a bird, to make us mount on high, and joy would fill every heart!

V. And now I must not detain you; but I want to say, in the fifth place, the Word of the Lord is the greatest burden to the true teacher's heart, because he remembers that HE WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT. They are all down, those fifty-two Sabbaths; and those week-night opportunities, they are all down in the heavenly record, and the writing will be forthcoming when required. There will come a time when it will be said, "Preacher, give an account of your stewardship "-; and at the same time a voice will be heard, "Hearers, give an account of your stewardship, too." What a mercy it will be if you and I together shall give in our accounts with joy, and not with grief! for a mournful account will be unprofitable for you. What sort of sermons shall I wish I had preached when I come to die? What sort of sermons will you wish that you had heard when you lie on your last beds? You will not wish that you had heard mere flimsy talk and clever speeches. Oh, no! you will say, as a dying man, "I bless God for weighty words, earnestly spoken, that were a blessing to my soul." I will say no more upon that, although it is the pressing point of the whole matter. Brethren, pray for the preacher. Brethren, pray for yourselves.

I have only these two or three practical words to say. We have to bear the burden of the Lord; but there was one, the Head of our confraternity, the great Lord of all true gospel preachers, who bore a far heavier burden. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Preacher, teacher, do you ever get weary? Look to him as he bows beneath his cross, take up your burden cheerfully, and follow after Jesus.

If this work be a burden, we also rejoice in One who can help us. There is One who can make the burden light, or strengthen the shoulder to bear the heavy yoke. Dear people, pray for us that this great Helper may enable us to bear the burden of his Word to your souls. Do not pray that it may not be a burden. Pray that it may be a burden that crushes your pastor to the very dust. God forbid that he should ever preach without its being a load to him! But pray that he may then be sustained under it; and for every true preacher of the gospel pray the same prayer. If the Lord be with us we shall not faint, but go from strength to strength.

Since it is a burden in itself, I ask you not to make it any heavier. Do not make it intolerable. Some add to it greatly and wantonly. Who are these? Well, I will tell you. Inconsistent professors. When people point to such and such a member of the church, and say, "That is your Christian!"-this makes our burden doubly oppressive. What a spoil it is to our testimony for Christ when outsiders can point to one and another, and say, "That is how those Christians act!" Do not plunge us in this sorrow. I do not know why I should be blamed for all the offenses of everybody that comes to hear me. Can I keep you all right? Are you like chessmen, that I can move at pleasure to any square on the board? I cannot be responsible for any one person; how can I be the guardian of all? Yet the preacher of God's truth is held responsible by many for matters over which he has no power; and this injustice makes his burden heavy.

And, next, do not make our burden heavier by your silence. There was a man of God who had been a very distinguished preacher, and when he lay dying he was much troubled in his mind. He had been greatly admired, and much followed. He was a fine preacher of the classical sort, and one said to him, "Well, my dear sir, you must look back upon your ministry with great comfort." "Oh, dear!" said he, "I cannot; I cannot. If I knew that even one soul had been led to Christ and eternal life by my preaching I should feel far happier; but I have never heard of one." What a sad, sad thing for a dying preacher! He died, and was buried, and there was a goodly company of people at the grave, for he was highly respected, and deservedly so. One who heard him make that statement was standing at the grave, and he noticed a gentleman in mourning, looking into the tomb, and sobbing with deep emotion. He said to him, "Did you know this gentleman who has been buried?" He replied, "I never spoke to him in my life." "Then what is it that so affects you?" He said, "Sir, I owe my eternal salvation to him." He had never told the minister this cheering news, and the good man's death-bed

was rendered dark by the silence of a soul that he had blessed. This was not right. A great many more may have found the Lord by his means, but he did not know of them, and was therefore in sore trouble. Do tell us when God blesses our word to you. Give all the glory to God, but give us the comfort of it. The Holy Spirit does the work, but if we are the means in his hands, do let us know it, and we will promise not to be proud. It is due to every preacher of Christ that if he has been blessed to the conversion of a soul he should be allowed to see the fruit of his labors; and when he does not see it, it adds very sadly to “the burden of the Word of the Lord.”

Do you not think that you add to my burden, too, if you do not aid me in the Lord’s work? What a lot of idle Christians we have—Christian people who might sing, like mendicants in the street,

*“And got no work to do,
And got no work to do!”*

What a shameful chorus, when the world is dying for lack of true workers! There is a Sunday-school; do you know it? “Oh, yes, we know there is one of those excellent institutions” connected with our place of worship. Did you ever visit it? Have you ever helped in it? There is an Evangelists’ Society, and young men go out to preach. “Oh, dear!” say you, “I never thought of that.” Why do you not go out to preach yourself? Some of you could, if you would. What are you at? There are districts where there are tracts to be distributed. Do you know anything about house-to-house visitation? I speak to some who do nothing whatever, unless it be a little grumbling. I wonder whether we shall ever have a day such as the bees celebrate in its due season. You may, perhaps, have seen them dismissing the unproductives. It is a remarkable sight. They say to themselves, “Here is a lot of drones, eating our honey, but never making any; let us turn them out.” There is a dreadful buzz, is there not? But out they go. I do not propose either to turn you out, or to make a buzz; but if ever those who do work for Christ should burn with a holy indignation against do-nothings, some of you will find the place too hot for you! I am sorrowfully afraid that it will thin my congregation, and lessen the number of church-members. I have but little to complain of among my people; but still, as there is a lazy corner in every village, there is the same in this community. You increase the burden of those who do work, if you are not working with them. But the greatest increase of the burden comes from those who do not receive the gospel at all. May there not be one such here tonight,

but may everyone now look to Jesus and live! I shall close by asking you to sing the gospel. Oh, that you may have it in your hearts! The final closing word is this-"There is life in a look at the Crucified One; There is life at this moment for thee; Then look, shiner-look unto him, and be saved-Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

THE DROUGHT OF NATURE, THE RAIN OF GRACE, AND THE LESSON THEREFROM.

NO. 2115

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 24TH, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOV. 10TH, 1889.

“And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.”-Jeremiah 14:3, 4, 22.

IT is my heart's desire and earnest prayer that many in this house may this morning say with the prophet, “O Lord our God, we will wait upon thee.” I shall not be satisfied to have delivered a discourse, nor for you to have heard it, and even approved of it, unless there shall come from it this delightful fruit, that those far off from God shall be drawn near to him; and shall say, in very deed and of a truth, “Therefore we will wait upon thee.” In God alone can men live happily; and if they would be recovered from

their fallen state, it is to the Lord their God that they must turn, Oh, that they would wait upon him!

In the last verse we have the word “therefore,” which shows that the speakers had come to this conclusion by an argument. In truth, they had been forced to their resolution by a very painful and personal argument, which God had set before them in the order of his providence. By their thirst, and by their failure to find water anywhere, the Lord had driven them to say, “Therefore we will wait upon thee.” I trust it will not be needful to urge us to conversion by sufferings as terrible. “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding.” Come willingly, since the argument for coming is clear and cogent. I should like you to go this morning mentally through the process by which the Israelites passed practically when they came to the gracious conclusion, “Therefore we will wait upon thee.” Let us begin at once with the argument, praying God to send it home to every heart by his good Spirit, that we may reach the desired conclusion.

I. First, consider that MAN IS A VERY DEPENDENT CREATURE. He is, in some respects, the most dependent creature that God has made; for the range of his wants is very wide, and at a thousand points he is dependent upon something outside of himself. All creation exists by the will of the Lord; and if his will should cease to send forth conserving power to maintain the created things in existence, they would all cease to be. This great world—the sun, the moon, the stars—would all dissolve; and, as a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it, they would be lost for ever. At the Lord’s will the universe would be gone, as yonder bubble which your child was blowing but a moment ago, which now has vanished, and left no trace behind. God alone is by his own power: all else is dependent upon him.

*“Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree:
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.”*

Man as a living creature, is peculiarly dependent upon God as to temporals. We see in the text that when the dews no longer fell, and the rains were withholden, then the unhappy inhabitants of Palestine suffered from drought, and that drought brought with it failure of the harvest, famine, disease, and death. To quote our common saying, the people died like flies.

They fell everywhere by thousands, fainting, famished, doomed. On what a feeble thread hangs human life! Water, though it be itself unstable, is needful to the establishment of human life, and without it man expires. Many an animal can bear thirst better than man. Other creatures carry their own garments with them; but we must be indebted to a plant, or to a sheep, for the covering of our nakedness. Many other creatures are endowed with sufficient physical force to win their food in fight; but we must produce our own food from the soil. Behold, how we come into the world, helpless and strengthless, utterly dependent upon others; and when our strength is developed, and our manhood is perfected, we only enter upon another phase of dependence upon our surroundings for our food; and hence, for our life, we are dependent upon drops of rain. We cannot produce food from the earth without the dew and the rain. However cleverly you have prepared your soil, however carefully you have selected your seed, all will fail without the rain of heaven. Even though your corn should spring up, yet will it refuse to come to the ear if the heavens be dry. Nor can you of yourself produce a single shower, or even a drop of dew. If God withholdeth the rain, what can the husbandman do? Call together the Parliament; collect a synod of scientists; convoke a conclave of princes; what can they do? In vain their acts, theories, and commands. When the skies are brass, the earth is iron; when God is angry, then the clouds scatter no blessings over our field, and earth yieldeth not her increase to the husbandman.

Yes, and life itself would vanish as the food of life ceased. It would be an instructive calculation if it could be accurately wrought out—to estimate how much bread-food there is at any time laid up upon the surface of the earth. If all harvests were to fail from this date; if there were no harvests in Australia during our winter, no harvests early in the year in India and the warm regions, if there were no harvests in America and in Europe, I have been informed that, by the time of our own harvest months, there would be upon the face of the earth no more food than would last us for six weeks. How dependent we are for each year's crop! for should there be universal failure, starvation would be closely within sight. God does, indeed, give us bread as we need it; even as, in the wilderness, he gave the manna; but we are every hour dependent upon his generous care. The bottles of heaven contain the juices of human life: if these were utterly stayed, none of us could endure the burning drought, and the consequent famine.

See, then, the absolute dependence upon God, not only of the Eastern nations, but of all peoples of our race. Whatever may be our trade or profession, we are all fed by the fruit of the field; and whatever may be said about laws of nature, the God of nature is not bound and limited by methods of procedure. He can operate exactly as he pleases, and fill our barns to the full, or stop the supplies of grain, by the simple method of giving or withholding rain. Our breath is in our nostrils: he taketh away that breath, and we die. Apart from his preserving, the whole race of man would be turned to dust, and cease from the land of the living.

In spiritual things this dependence is most evident. Brethren, if God shall bless us with his saving health, and with the visitation of his Spirit, we shall be as a field that God has blessed, and our lives shall be glad with a harvest to his praise. But apart from God what can we do? In this realm of spiritual things we are absolutely and wholly dependent upon God; and without his aid we are as a salt land, which is destitute of verdure. Salvation is of the Lord. Vain is all trust which builds not on him.

The priceless blessings of pardon and grace: how can we procure them apart from God in Christ Jesus? How can sin be removed, except by the Lord, who passes by iniquity? Who is he that can absolve, but he against whom the transgression was committed? The washing from all stain: whence can it come but from those dear hands that were pierced for us? When he shall wash us and our robes in his most precious blood, then only shall we be clean, and then all the glory shall be to him as the Lamb slain. Justification and acceptance: are not these of God? What can you and I do to justify ourselves, or to make ourselves acceptable with God? These are the gifts of the covenant of grace, and God can give them; but if he gives them not, we can never obtain them. These gifts it is his royal prerogative to bestow according to the counsel of his own will.

So is it with the life and the power of the Spirit of God, by which we are able to receive and enjoy the blessings of the covenant; the Holy Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where he listeth, and the order of his working is with the Lord alone. The new life whereby we receive the Lord Jesus: how can it come to us but from the living God himself? Can a dead soul quicken itself? Can a man steeped in sin liberate and purify himself? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" "Ye must be born again." But can a man cause himself to be born again? Is it imaginable that the new birth is caused by the person born? The change wrought is

mysterious, radical, abiding; who can work it upon himself? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. The new life must come from God! "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The new heart and the right spirit: whence come they? Can the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, beget within itself love of God and desire for fellowship with him? They cannot be self-created; they are the work of the same hands which made the heavens and the earth. The love of holiness, and the pursuit of it, and perseverance in that pursuit: come these any way but from him who hath wrought all our works in us? Every beginning of good, yea, every desire after it, is wrought in us by God, or else it is never in us at all. We are absolutely dependent upon God, not only for all spiritual gifts, but for the power to become partakers of them.

And, brethren, all the graces that are pleasing to the Lord, come they not to us from God our Savior? Is there a grain of faith in the world that God did not create? Is there a spark of holy love in any human bosom that God did not kindle? Is there any true hope in any heart which the God of hope did not implant? Is there anywhere anything that is holy, or lovely, or of good repute, which has not first come from God himself, and so entered into the heart of man? Sinner, you are absolutely dependent upon God for your possession of grace, and obtaining of salvation. You lie like the dry bones in the valley, which were very many and very dry; what can you do? By what power can dry bones live? The Lord's prophet, as an act of faith in God, bids you live; but God's prophet knows that you will not live by your own strength, nor by the power of his persuasion. No, his appeal is to a power beyond himself and you. He cries, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." He looks to the Holy Spirit to create life in you, and apart from that Spirit he has no hope of you.

Putting this case very broadly-and I cannot put it too broadly-I am not afraid of exaggerating, or going too far in it: I know that for the clouds, and the rain, and the harvest, men are absolutely dependent upon the God of providence; and I know, also, that for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and for the power which saves souls, we are altogether dependent upon the great God who creates all good things.

Here is the pity of it: against God, upon whom we are so dependent, we have sinned, and do sin. We are dependent upon him, and yet rebellious

against him. Shall the man who accepts from me his daily bread lift up his heel against me? Shall he who could not live without me, yet live to speak evil of me? Shall he abuse my goodness into a means of doing me damage? That were an atrocious thing, which could only spring from a black, ungrateful heart. Yes, every sinner who goes on in sin is acting thus ungratefully. Existing only by his infinite charity, he who continues to do evil is ungrateful in the highest degree to the Lord of love. This being the case, the dependence of guilty man upon the graciousness of divine sovereignty, and the sovereignty of divine grace is still further enhanced. Because man has broken God's command, and continues to rebel against him, he lies all the more absolutely at the disposal of a righteous God. The traitor has now no rights; he has forfeited them. He has no claims; he has outlawed himself. O ungodly man, you can make no appeal to God's justice; for if you do, he must award you eternal destruction. You cannot claim anything now of him as due to you, for your due is, to be driven into everlasting punishment. You are condemned before him in whose hands are the issues of life and death. You are as much in the hand of God as the prisoner condemned to die is in the hand of the royal power: indeed, you are far more absolutely so. If pardoned, it must be by the exercise of the sovereign prerogative which is vested in Jehovah, the Lord of all, who doeth as seemeth good in his sight. Provided it can be done justly, sovereignty may step in and rescue the guilty from his doom; but this is a matter which depends upon the will of the Lord alone. If you are executed, the condemnation is so well deserved, that not a word can be said against the severity which shall carry out the sentence. If God had left this sinful world to perish in its sin, none could have blamed him; it is but right that those should die who have provoked their God, and incurred the penalty which he threatened against sin. If the Lord, in the greatness of his love, chooses to save this man or that, he does no injury to any, but magnifies his mercy in those whom he redeems from deserved death. If the Lord enlightens an island, and leaves a continent in the dark, who shall accuse him? If he takes one of a city and two of a family, and brings them to himself, while the rest are suffered to have their own way, and wilfully continue in rebellion, who shall charge God with partiality, or say unto him, What doest thou? He can reply to all who object to his way of mercy, "May I not do as I will with mine own?" He layeth on no man more than is right, and what he chooses to forgive of his own bounty cannot be challenged. Whether you like the doctrine or not, it is true that, as sinners, you are absolutely dependent upon the sovereign mercy of God. I wish you

could see and feel this great truth; for it would tend to humble you, and prepare you to seek his favor. I pray the Holy Spirit to impress it upon everyone here who has not yet come to God in Christ Jesus. Thus much upon the first truth.

II. Our second remark is this: **MEN MAY BE REDUCED TO DIRE DISTRESS.** Men, being dependent upon God, may be reduced to dire distress if they disobey him, and incur his just displeasure.

Kindly follow me in the earlier verses of my text. Here we have great temporal distress: the people had no water! The highest ranks of society were made to feel the terrible pinch. The whole of the city was tormented with thirst, and the leading men instituted diligent search to find water. They sent to the great reservoirs which Solomon had constructed in his time—the upper and the lower pools; but they found no water. They searched again and again, but the waters had utterly failed, and they were driven to despair. They covered their heads as men who gave themselves up to die without hope. Terrible was the drought which Jehovah sent upon his land because of the sin of his people: it was as if the day of Elias had returned, wherein there was neither dew nor rain for three years and six months.

My dear hearers, there is a spiritual distress of which this drought is a figure. Behold, as in a parable, the state into which we have seen many brought when God has begun to deal with them: to such there cometh drought of life and famine of hope. My hearer, do you know what is meant by God's dealing with a man? Do you remember that passage in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where one pilgrim says to the other, "Let us fall into good discourse. Where shall we begin?" The other answers, "Where God began with us." Do you know what that means? Has God begun with you? If so, you will follow me with understanding when I say God makes the aroused and convicted man conscious of the greatest conceivable want, even of a drought in his own soul. These people were conscious that they wanted water; the case was worse than that, they were tormented with thirst. So does God come to men, and make them feel that they need the living water of his grace, and he sets them thirsting for it. They did not know their need before, but went on merrily enough, content with the pleasures of time and sense; but now, being quickened, they feel an intolerable hunger and thirst after higher and better things. They are tormented by an insatiable desire, which cannot and will not be set aside.

Have we not seen these thirsty ones? Have we not pitied them? Have we not pointed them to the one and only source of supply? Have we not in secret rejoiced over them as we have foreseen to what their anguish tended?

To proceed a little in detail with the words of my text: when the Lord causes sinners to feel the spiritual drought, pride is humbled. "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters." Generally, the nobility concern themselves little enough about water; but in great drought King Ahab and his chancellor, Obadiah, went forth themselves to find water. In this case the nobles sent their servants, nay, even their sons and daughters, to discover some source of supply. So God knows how to teach a man so that his lofty thoughts are humbled, and his pride is brought down to the dust. My lord, you will feel yourself a nobody should the Spirit deal with you in conviction. Not long ago, your excellency looked down from the highest seat in the synagogue, but now you sit down in the dust, and count everyone your superior. The philosopher grows into a little child, and gladly accepts the cup which aforesaid he sneered at. We heard you singing to your own honor and glory the other day; but now you have no song to sing, but you cover your lip and mutter, "Unclean, unclean, unclean!" When the Lord lays his hand on a man, he makes his beauty to consume away like the moth. From head to foot the man is moved: his soul within him melteth, and all his glory is rolled in the mire. Our noblest thoughts become lowly seekers after the water of life in the day of our distress.

But you observe that when humbled and made thirsty, these people went to secondary causes: they came to the pits, or reservoirs. Reservoirs in the East are sometimes great caverns in the natural rock, and at other times they are excavated by labor, or built up by skill, and then streams are turned into them, and they hold a great storage of water. Some of the children of the nobles thought they knew of caverns which others had not seen, hidden cisterns under ground, which had been forgotten; and they went forth to find them. They hurried to the place where they hoped for the priceless water; but we read not that they cried unto God, or sought mercy of Jehovah, who could right speedily have given them rain. They resorted to the secondary causes, but they turned not to the hand which smote them. Thus souls, when they are awakened, go to fifty things before they come to God. It is sad that, in superstition, or in scepticism, they look for living streams. They try reformation of manners-I have nothing to say

against it; but apart from God reformation always ends in disappointment. They seek consolation from an orthodox creed, for which I might have much to say; but if a belief in a creed be trusted in, it is as if a man sought to quench his thirst with a bottle, but did not care to see whether it held water or no. A creed is a pitcher, in which the water is held, but it is not the water itself. Some try forms and ceremonies in abundance, and to these they add self-denials and penances: they suffer anything sooner than come to God for his grace. Grace is a port to which no man steers until it is seen to be the only one into which he can enter.

O my heart, my heart, how is it that thou canst be so loath to go to thy Father and thy God? O ye that are wandering at this time from one creature-trust to another, I pray you cease your roaming, and come home to God, who alone can help you. There is no hope for you but in God, and the way to God is by his Son Christ Jesus. Why do you gad about so much? Straightforward to God is the surest, safest way-why do you not take it? God is our haven and our heaven; why are we so reluctant to seek him? O man, why wilt thou turn to saints, to angels, and even to devils, rather than to the Lord thy God? But I know thee, thy heart is set on idolatry, and this is the essence of idolatry-that thou seekest to the creature rather than to the Creator.

If you read on, you will find that when they went to these secondary supplies, they were disappointed: "They came to the pits, and found no water." They found mud, black, filthy mud; but no water. Once they saw the sparkling liquid in the cool cave; but it was all spent. When waters were to be found everywhere else, the cisterns were full; but when all else was dry, they were dried also. They stooped down, they searched in the darkness; they tried, at least, to get a cupful of the precious liquid; but it is written, "They found no water." Disappointed, "they returned with their vessels empty." The women with their water-pots upon their heads presented a sad sight as they entered the city-gate, and one after another all sighed, "Empty! Empty!" They thirsted to drink; but not a drop was found to cool their tongues. It is an awful thing to come home from sermon with the vessels empty; to rise from the communion-table, having found no living water, and return with vessels empty. To close the Bible, and sigh, "I find no comfort here, I must return with my vessel empty." When the ordinances, and the Word yield us no grace, things have come to an awful pass with us. Do you know what this disappointment means?

Now, upon this disappointment, there followed great confusion of mind; they became distracted; “they were ashamed and confounded.” On the back of that confusion came despair; “they covered their heads.” The Orientals cover their heads when in the deepest grief, as David did, when he went over the brook Kedron. It means, “I cannot face it. Do not look on me in my sorrow, nor expect me to look on you. I cover my head, for it is all over with me.” Thus have I met with many who, after going to many confidences, have been disappointed in all, and seem ready to lie down in despair, and put forth no more effort. They fear that God will never bless them, and they will never enter into life eternal; and so they sign their own deathwarrants. Shall I confess that I have been better pleased to see them in this condition than to hear their jovial songs at other times? It is by the gate of self-despair that men arrive at the divine hope? I would to God that many a Mr. Vain-confidence sitting here might be struck down to the ground, and be compelled to end his proud boastings, by going at once to Jesus only! Oh, that they might come to that holy and safe conclusion, of which I keep on thinking all the while I am preaching to you—the Scriptural and logical conclusion mentioned in my text—“Therefore we will wait upon thee.”

At last, when these people came to despair, it is very remarkable how everything about them seemed to be in unison with their misery. Listen to the third verse: “They covered their heads.” Did you hear the last words of the fourth verse? They were the very same: “They covered their heads.” Surely the second is the echo of the first. It is even so: earth has sympathy with man. Nature without reflects our inward feelings. When God makes us happy we “go forth with joy, and are led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands.” But when we are in despair, then all nature echoes our misery. “The ground is dismayed,” so it runs in the Hebrew; the very earth is frightened for want of rain, and opens its mouth, gasping for fear. “The ground is dismayed, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.” Have you ever been in such a state of mind that you knew your need of the water of life, but were not able to find it anywhere? If so, you have been unutterably miserable, and all creation has put on mourning to keep you company. Earth is responsive to man, whom the Creator made to be her lord. Nature rings her marriage peal to sound forth man’s happiness, or tolls her knells to mourn the funerals of his joys. If you have drawn down the blinds of your

heart, and your soul sits in the dark, then the heavens are darkened too; or if not, the very brightness of nature seems another form of blackness to you, and her joys mock your griefs, and cast salt into your wounds. When men are cast down, and their face is covered, then nature covers her face too, and all the universe is sad. Alas, for the day when the hand of the Lord is sore on the soul! Then our moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

III. I have brought you so far in the argument, now I must rush on to the conclusion. Man is a very dependent creature; man may be reduced to dire distress; and thirdly, MAN'S ONLY SURE RESORT IS HIS GOD. "God is a refuge for us." If I address myself to any here who are in such trouble as I have described, let me press upon them this thought-the only place of refuge for you is in God as he reveals himself in Christ Jesus. Hasten to him! Lay hold upon his strength! Hide under the wings of his care!

For, first, there is no help anywhere else. Read verse 22:-"Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" He saith not "the gods of the Gentiles": those who were 'gods' in better days are seen to be, in truth, nothing but vanities in the time of need. To make rain is a divine prerogative; hence the priests of the idols pretend to it for their false deities. The Rain-maker is found in every idolatrous country, but I think scarcely anybody believes in him now. What antics and tricks the Rain-makers go through to produce rain, but it does not come, neither can their gods create a cloud! And where can any of you go to get grace if you refuse to look to God alone? There is a rain-maker over there at the Ritualistic church, who can produce a shower on the child's heart, by which it becomes "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." But I trust you are not so foolish as to believe in him; and therefore you will not make a fruitless journey towards priestcraft. Where will you go? Come not to any of us poor gospellers, for in us you will find nothing: we are only fingers to point you to the Lord Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells. The long-descended priest of the church of Rome, who can, for a shilling, grant you absolution-will you look to him? No, you have still some wit remaining, and feel that to be absolved of man will not ease your conscience. Priests of Baal are of small account when a total drought and a terrible dearth are in the land. In the days of Elijah they cried aloud, and cut themselves with knives, and said, "O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear us!" but only the God that answered by fire could answer by water; and Baal could do neither the one nor the other.

Therefore we will leave Baal alone, and all the prophets of the grove, with their candles, and their crucifixes, and their incense, and their robes. I know where you are likely to go, and that is to your own frames and feelings, to your own resolves and doings. Alas for your folly! Oh, yes, you want to get peace, and so you take the pledge, and you vow that you will become a decent, sober body, and all that. What are these confidences but vanities of the heathen? The very best of duties that you and I can perform, if we put our trust in them, are only false confidences, refuges of lies, and they can yield us no help.

Nay, look; according to the text there is no help for us even in the usual means of grace if we forget the Lord. Read that second question: "Can the heavens give showers?" Showers come from the heavens, but the heavens cannot yield showers apart from God. The eastern sky, without rain, is blue, bright, beautiful; but after months of pitiless drought, when no tear of pity has stood in the eye of the heavens, the blue color becomes the ensign of melancholy; and if this continues month after month it becomes the color of despair. Until the Lord opens the windows of heaven to pour out the blessing, neither sun, nor moon, nor stars can help the need of man. If God does not help thee, O tried and anxious soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they be ordained of heaven; and preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of grace. Job truly saith, "If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him." If God himself save thee not, O man, all that can be done by men or angels throughout the ages can never help thee one single jot. Thou art lost, lost, lost, if a stronger arm than man's be not stretched out to help thee!

But with God is all power. There is the mercy: "Art not thou he, O Lord our God? for thou hast made all these things." See in how short a time he covers the heavens with clouds, and pours forth an abundance of rain till he makes the wilderness a pool, and the dry land springs of water. He can; he can! He can reach the extremity of human weakness and woe. What can he not do? Nothing is too hard for the Lord; and thou, poor sinner, dried up like the sand of the desert, God can, within an hour, ay, in a moment, make thy heart to be flooded with his grace. He is the Creator, making all things out of nothing; and he can create in thee at once the tender heart, the loving spirit, the believing mind, the sanctified nature. What though thou hast no grace this morning, no, not a drop of it; he can open streams in the desert. Thou canst not find within thyself, wherever thou lookest, any trace of love, or holy feeling, or aught that is good; yet he can give thee all, can

give thee all for nothing, can give it thee just now! If thou believest that he can, and wilt trust him, as he displays his love in the Lord Jesus, he will save thee. He can give thee the power to believe it, and lead thee now to cast thyself on him. He can, but it hangs upon his will. Doth he not say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”? A God without a will is no God at all; and if he has no will in the matter of salvation, then is he dethroned from his choicest empire, and man is set up above the God of grace himself. This cannot be.

Well, then, what follows from this? If God hath all this power, our wisdom is to wait upon him, since he alone can help. We draw this inference: “Therefore we will wait upon thee.” O my beloved hearer, if you have never been converted, I pray the Holy Spirit to not help thee, O tried and anxious soul, the sacraments are all in vain, though they be ordained of heaven; and preaching and reading, liturgy and song, are all in vain to bring the refreshing dew of grace. Job truly saith, “If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.” If God himself save thee not, O man, all that can be done by men or angels throughout the ages can never help thee one single jot. Thou art lost, lost, lost, if a stronger arm than man’s be not stretched out to help thee!

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Well, then, what follows from this? If God hath all this power, our wisdom is to wait upon him, since he alone can help. We draw this inference: "Therefore we will wait upon thee." O my beloved hearer, if you have never been converted, I pray the bring you to decision, that you may at once seek the Lord. Every road is closed but the way of sovereign grace. You have no merit, you have no strength; you never can have any merit, you never can have any strength of your own. God must save you, or you are lost to all eternity; but he can save you to glorify his own grace, and make his own mercy to be known, and to reveal his great power in turning hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He can save you. Submit yourself to him, then, and come to him and say, with the "therefore" of my text, "Therefore we will wait upon thee."

Do I hear somebody say, "How I would like to pray"? Yes, that is the way to come to God. Come to him by prayer in the name of Jesus. Do you want a prayer? This chapter is full of petitions, and there is one which I would point out to you. Here is a short one for you (verse 7), "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it." "Do thou it." "Lord, I cannot create grace in my own heart, any more than I can make rain to fall from the sky; but do thou it." "Lord, I cannot come to thee, come thou to me; do thou it." Is not that a wonderful prayer? There is more in it than you think: the more you consider it, the bigger you will see it to be. Three monosyllables: "Do thou it!" And then observe the argument: four words all of one syllable, "for thy name's sake." Not for my sake, but for Christ's sake, who is the manifestation of thy name. For thine own glory's sake, for thy glory is thy name. Lord, make men see what a sinner thou canst save by saving me! Lord, glorify thy mercy by forgiving me; for oh, if thou wilt save such a poor, unworthy wretch as I am, even heaven itself will ring with thy praises; and even in hell they will say, "See what God can do! He saved one who was ripe for the eternal fire, and he has placed the rebel among his children." "Do thou it for thy name's sake." Heartily do I commend this prayer to every soul here that is seeking the Lord. May the Spirit write it on your hearts! I cannot give you a better. "Do thou it for thy name's sake."

Well then, next, if you are really going to wait upon the Lord, you must do it through a Mediator. These guilty people of Jerusalem had Jeremiah to pray for them. Jeremiah with the weeping eye fitly typifies a greater than Jeremiah. Remember the Man of sorrows, the Acquaintance of grief! Jeremiah's Master must be your Intercessor. Beg him to be your Mediator. You cannot go in unto an absolute God; you need a Mediator. A Mediator is provided, he has presented an acceptable sacrifice, he will plead the causes of your soul. Trust in his blood instead of your tears. Let his death wash your life. Leave your case in the great Mediator's hands; for if you believe in him, he will undertake for you; and he never faileth. He will go into the Court of King's Bench for you, and be your Advocate, and win your suit. Come, trust yourself with Jesus; for he will save.

Let me advise you to make a full confession of sin. Read verse 20 "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness: for we have sinned against thee." Make a clean breast of it, unbosom the past, lay bare the present. Think not to cloak sin. To conceal sin is to ruin yourself; to confess it, is to find mercy. Place yourself among the guilty, for there mercy can fitly reach you.

When you have done this, east yourself down before your God, saying, "Therefore I will wait upon thee." Come through Christ, believing in the power of his precious blood, and you may draw nigh to God. Though you be loaded with sins enough to sink a world of sinners down to hell, yet if you will believe in the mercy of God through Christ Jesus, and cast yourself down at his feet, and lie there, he will never say "Depart." Jesus hath said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." If you perish, it is because you do not come; not because you come and he rejects you. O dear souls, I do not know some of you, others I do know; but whether known to me or not, I look at you now with loving eyes, and say, Come to my Lord. Does your heart say, "I will arise and go unto my Father"? Then am I glad. You have tried the citizens of this country, and they have sent you into the fields to feed swine; and husks are all that you have to feed upon. You have spent your money, and wasted your substance in riotous living; you can find no pleasure now, go where you may. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity! Quit the vanities, and seek the verities. Turn unto your God. Turn instantly! Hark back! Hark back! You have gone too far already in the evil way. A precipice is before you! One more step, ay, one more step, and you are over, and your eternal ruin is complete. Hark back as quickly as you can to the great God from whom you have departed! Come now, even now, for he invites you: "Come now,

and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." While he speaks in this manner, I hope you will answer to the call, and bow at his feet at once. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." May the Holy Spirit lay hold on you, that you may lay hold on Jesus! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

THE UNCHANGING GOD CHEERING JACOB IN HIS CHANGE OF DWELLING-PLACE.

NO. 2116

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 1ST, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”-Genesis 46:1-4.

NOTICE in this passage the two names which are mentioned. “Israel took his journey, and God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob.” “Jacob” was the name of his weakness; “Israel” was the title of his strength. “Jacob” was the name of his birth-nature; “Israel” was the name of his new and spiritual nature. When Israel set out to go down into Egypt and see his son Joseph, he started in great vigor and strength for an old man: faith made him full of force: hence we read, “Israel took his journey.” I see the old man revived, and stirred up to a high degree of hopeful energy. He traveled some few miles on the first day, and reached the well of Beer-sheba. It was the border town, where stood the well of the oak: after passing Beer-sheba he would be out of the land of promise, and on his way to Egypt; and at the remembrance of this fact the old trembling came over him, and he became Jacob, as aforetime. When he was to take

the decisive step, to leave Canaan and make his journey into Egypt, then he suddenly felt himself a Jacob, and began to halt upon his thigh; and the Lord in the visions of the night addressed him by the name which was most suitable to his condition, saying to him, "Jacob, Jacob." He did not call him "Israel"; but he came to him in his infirmity and trial, and suited his speech to his condition. The Lord met the weakness of his servant's faith, and sent him consolations fitted rather for Jacob than for Israel. Dear friends, I am afraid that the lives of many of the Lord's chosen people alternate between "Israel" and "Jacob." Sometimes we are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," and at another time we cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Like princes we prevail with God, and are true Israels; but perhaps ere the sun has gone down we limp with Jacob, and though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak. We are Jacob before we are Israel; and we are Jacob when we are Israel; but blessed be God, we are Israels with God when we cease to be Jacobs among men. The Lord hath chosen Jacob, and redeemed Jacob, and preserved Jacob; but his great aim is to make the Israel in him the dominant character. He shall be far more a prince with God than a supplanter among men.

Turning to the text, we have a lesson to learn from it. We find that Jacob, on his way down to Egypt, came to Beer-sheba, the border place, and this marked a distinct stage in his journey. He came to Beer-sheba, the place of many memories, where God had spoken to his father Abraham by the well. This was the place, I suppose, where Abraham was when the Lord said to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest; and offer him for a burnt offering." It was, therefore, a memorable spot in the history of his family, and it was just then a turning-point in his own career, and therefore it called for special waiting upon the Lord. He was to break new ground, and enter upon a way which he had not trodden heretofore; and so we read that he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Herein is wisdom. In commencing a new era let there be new devotion. It is well to begin everything with God, who is the Beginner of all things. When young people begin housekeeping they should consecrate an altar as soon as ever they have set up a tent. When you begin business this thought should be upon you—"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Therefore, wait upon him for guidance and help. In starting upon every journey, whether long or short, and entering upon every day, however common-place the day may be, it is always well to begin it with God. Remember the old and gracious proverb, that "prayer and provender hinder

no man's journey." The offering of sacrifices unto God did not hinder Jacob's journey; on the contrary, it was the making of him as a traveler; for now he began his journey outside of Canaan under the special convoy of the Lord his God. Now the angels of God took up their places around the wayfarers, and day and night they led the van and brought up the rear of the patriarchal caravan.

I suppose that Jacob, on this occasion, offered sacrifice for three reasons, at least. One was to purge his household of any sin that might lie upon it. He had a very strange family-this man Jacob. It was badly begun at the outset, of four mothers, and jealousies were sure to abound. Taking them all round, his many sons were a very sad lot to be the sons of such a man. His own account of them on his death-bed is most painful. Much sin, even of the blackest dye, had defiled that chosen family. The stories of Reuben, Levi, Simeon, Judah, and others, are very dark. The aged head of the clan seems to say, with broken-hearted penitence, "Before we go down into this Egypt, let us offer sacrifice whereby our grievous sin may be put away, lest we provoke the Lord on the road." It reminds us of father Job, when, after his children had fulfilled their days of feasting, he called them together, and offered sacrifice, lest they might have sinned in their hearts, and cursed God foolishly. How often have we cause to suspect some secret backsliding, some careless omission, some transgression unperceived! It is well to go again to the cleansing fountain for fresh washing, to fly anew to the great sacrifice of Christ, and renew our acquaintance with its cleansing power. O Lord, purify our households at this hour; let our families and our churches know anew the expiation for sin by which the conscience is purged from dead works, to serve the living and true God.

Do you not think that Jacob also offered this sacrifice for another reason? Did he not present it by way of thanksgiving? He is going down into Egypt, but it is to see Joseph: what a joy this meant Joseph is yet alive; he is going to look him in the face. Benjamin, of whom the old man had said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away "- Benjamin had come back safe and sound: this was no mean favor. Whereas he had said, "All these things are against me," now he perceives that all these things are for him; and so he offers sacrifice unto the Lord. Let us magnify the Lord whenever we are led to see the extraordinary light of his goodness in those places which looked unusually dark. When the cloud we so much dreaded has turned out to be big with mercies, and has scattered

showers of blessings upon our heads, let us bless the Lord, and bring our sacrifices of joy and praise unto his name.

Surely, these two alone would be right good reasons for offering sacrifice; but Jacob had this other—that he might enquire of the Lord as to his way. At the altar he hoped to receive the oracle. Poor old Jacob appears to have been in a great dilemma: he seems to have greatly questioned whether it was right for him to go down into Egypt; and, as I shall have to show you, it was a matter that was open to grave question, and could not have been safely decided unless the Lord had spoken. It was the custom with men, when they offered sacrifice, to use the occasion of the sacrifice as an opportunity for consulting the oracles of God, and learning the divine will. People went up to the temple of the Lord to enquire his mind: they went to ask direction from God's mouth, through his servants, who spoke in his name. I wish sometimes that God's people would be more careful to ask their way of God; I fear that they too often err by blundering on, and taking no heed to their way. When I get into a part of the country where I do not know the road, I ask my way of almost everybody I see; because I think that there will not be half the time spent in asking the way that will be wasted in going wrong. The Lord loves to see his children anxious to be right; for that anxiety is a great point in their right guidance. If he does not speak to us in a dream, nor by the Urim and Thummim, nor by the voice of a prophet, yet he secretly guides our minds. We are made careful: we are helped to weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary, and then our cool, calm judgment makes its decisions, and we choose the way which is most for God's glory. It is a safe and a pleasant thing to enquire in his temple; for God the Holy Ghost still directs the paths of his people, and leads them in the way everlasting.

So let us learn from Jacob, especially at the beginning of any fresh enterprise, to draw nigh unto God with special devotion. We cannot too often remember that great Sacrifice by which we live; neither can we too often present ourselves as living sacrifices unto the Lord.

But now, plunging into the center of the text, I notice, first, that Jacob had a fear. His fear was natural. But, secondly, his fear needed to be removed; for God said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." And, thirdly, his fear was removed most sweetly; and with confidence the venerable man went on his way.

I. First, then, JACOB'S FEAR WAS NATURAL. It was natural because he was an aged man-an aged man leaving the land of his birth. Old men do not like changes, and they specially fear changes of country and. custom. A young man runs all over the world, and little cares where he goes, for he has plenty of youth's quicksilver in him. He cries, "Sitting hens get no barley"; and so he pecks up a grain here, and a grain there, from Liverpool to New York, and from New York to San Francisco, and thence to New Zealand, the Cape and home again. The young man makes himself at home anywhere; but the old man loves the old house at home, and the fireside where his children have been wont to gather. Old trees strike their roots deep, and it is not easy to transplant them. It is neither pleasant nor safe to uproot an ancient elm: let it stay where it is. Solomon says concerning the old. man, that he is "afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way"; and it is very natural indeed, that the man should feel a great disturbance in his mind at the sight of high enterprises and untrodden ways. Was not Jacob one hundred and thirty years old, or thereabouts, at the time when he went down into Egypt? He had lived, in the pastures of Canaan with his flocks and herds, the life of a Bedouin shepherd, and his whole soul clung to the country; for "Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents." The oaks of Mamre, the plains of Esdrelon, the hills of Carmel, and the valleys of Succoth, were dear to him, and he started at the idea of emigrating to a land of canals. and watercourses, and he dreaded life among educated Egyptians and. pompous officers of Pharaoh. It was no slight change from Canaan to Egypt. Do you wonder that he was afraid?

His fear also, no doubt, arose, next, from the fact that he was going into an idolatrous country of which he knew very little, except that it was a place which teemed with the memorials of false deities; a land of religion so degraded, that cats and crocodiles were worshipped, and. even vegetables which grew in the gardens. An Egyptian must have been a living riddle to an unsophisticated shepherd from such a country as Palestine. Egypt had a repute for learning, and philosophy, and divination; and these, to an aged countryman, would seem mysterious and uncanny features in his venture. He loved not the change. The Canaanites were bad enough; but he had grown accustomed to them, and they had a healthy fear of him: these Egyptians, what might they not do? He was encouraged because Joseph was there, and was lord over all Egypt: even that was a very romantic affair, and the whole business was surrounded with mystery.

Finally, the associations of Egypt were trying. It had cost the good old man many bitter pangs to send his sons down into that country to buy corn. Egypt had an ugly name for him. It was like sending them to Botany Bay, or Norfolk Island. Somehow, it was not a country that he had any liking for, and so Jacob's heart was in his mouth; and he trembled to think that in his old age he should be going away from where he had lived, and especially to be going, not to the ancient country whence his family had originally come forth, but to Egypt, a place which was of ill savor to his fathers, a country whose associations were rather trying than hopeful.

Abraham went down into Egypt, and he met with trouble there, and brought away from it one named Hagar, who was a great trial in his household. In fact, it was the mischievous event in his life. And Isaac had thought of going there, but the Lord appeared unto him, and said, "Go not down into Egypt"; so that a country where his grandfather fared ill, and where his father was warned not to go, must have seemed to the anxious patriarch to be a place to be avoided rather than sought. He shook his head many times, and though he had said so bravely, "Joseph is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die," the journey wore the aspect of great risk and tremendous difficulty, with a question hanging over it like a black cloud, "After all, would it be a right step?" Taking all things into consideration, he was filled with a very natural, and I think I may add, a very proper fear. Would not you have trembled had you been in his position?

Moreover, besides that, he had some intimation, probably, that this was to be a land of pre-eminent trial for his race; for had not God said to Abraham that his seed should be strangers in a strange land, and that they should be afflicted for four hundred years? The old man, with prescient eye, began to suspect that this was to be the land which caused Abraham the horror of great darkness, which was set forth before him as the fiery furnace and the smoking lamp; and so he was afraid to go down into Egypt. And though Joseph was there, and Joseph was lord over all the land, I should not wonder if the old man was nervous, and said, "Joseph may not always be lord over the land: he may fall from his position. As far as I can find out, they put him in prison once; why should they not put him in prison again? I fear we shall run a great risk." When we once get into the vein of distrust and foreboding, we can always find fresh relays of doubt and fear: at least, I can. How quick we are at inventing objects of fear! We see in the clouds what was never there, but only in our own eyes. We see things which may be-things that never will be. We are fretted at possibilities, and ready to

faint at peradventures. Those dreadful things may be; and what if they were to be? What then, and what then?

Then I have no doubt he felt that the change would involve himself and his family in new temptations. They had behaved badly enough among the simple pastoral people: what would they do in the midst of the vices of Egypt? I must confess that I often feel great diffidence in recommending people to make changes in life; especially in quitting the country to go to the great City. Change has its perils. You begin to know your temptations by now, and you are somewhat prepared to withstand them; but you know not what may happen to you in another sphere, with other surroundings, and other influences. All things considered, I would rather carry my old burden; for it begins to fit my back, and my back has grown somewhat used to it. But what about a new burden? It might be more heavy, and it might try me in fresh places, and cause fresh wounds. For myself, I am not anxious to make any changes, for I have read the words of Solomon the wise: "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." When God commands a man to follow an untried path, he may go rightly and wisely, even as the young swallows fly in their appointed time, though they have never traversed the continents before. But he who wanders out of sheer wantonness, may find that he has gone from bad to worse, and may come to wish himself back again to that which he despised. If Jacob trembled at making so great a change, it was not without reason. All the habits of the family would be rudely shaken, and a new mode of life would be forced upon them. He could not have guessed that there would be a Goshen for the shepherds, and he must have dreaded leaving a quiet pastoral life for the refinements of Egyptian society, and the blandishments of Egyptian idolatry.

I need say no more on that point: Jacob was always anxious, and in his old age more so than ever. The sketch I have given may be the picture of some friend now present; and if it be so, I will hope that in my discourse he may hear cheering voices from the Lord God to allay his fears. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, make it so!

II. But, in the second place, God was not of a mind that his servant should be the slave of dread: HIS FEAR WAS TO BE REMOVED. Therefore, the Lord appeared to Jacob in the night visions, not to tell him of new empires, not to reveal to him the destinies of princes, but simply to say to him, "Fear not." It appears to God to be an important matter to chase away fear, even

though it be troubling only one person, and that person an aged man. The Lord broke the eternal silence, to drive away the anxieties of a single individual. He said to him, "Jacob, Jacob"; and then he added, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Are you very fearful and timorous at this time, dear brother? It is not the Lord's will that you should remain so: he would deliver you from this bondage.

The Lord would drive away your fears because, in the first place, fear makes you unhappy. It is an unhappy thing for a father when he comes home from business and finds his child in distress of mind. He likes to see him run cheerfully to meet him, and smile and sing a welcome. Our heavenly Father would have his people rejoice in him. Do you want any proof of it? Does he not command you, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"? The Lord puts it thus, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." The Spirit made the prophet exclaim, "Happy art thou, O Israel." God takes it ill if his people find no joy in him. He is our portion, and it is sad if we are not delighted with such an inheritance.

But, next, the Lord would not have his people vexed with fear, because it is sadly weakening in its effects. Jacob had a difficult task enough, to go down into Egypt and bear witness for the true God in that region, and he needed more rather than less strength. In the midst of Canaan, his path had been a very difficult one, to stand fast for God in the midst of that wicked and perverse generation. He had sadly failed even in that lesser task, for his family had grossly transgressed and fallen into the ways of the world around them. In Egypt his work would be more severe; for he would have the wisdom of the Egyptians to battle with, a wisdom proudly conservative of errors which had become hoary with antiquity. He must not go down to such a battle-field with his hands hanging down and his knees feeble.

Before we begin a new enterprise, fear may be seasonable: we ought to be cautious as to whether our way is right in the sight of God; and therefore Jacob had that fear. But when we once begin, and intend going through with an enterprise, we must say farewell to fear, for fear will be fatal to success. Go straight ahead. Believe in God, and carry the work through. To fear in the day of battle will be mischievous to the last degree. Then shall it be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. When the standard of our confidence falls in the dust, who shall gird himself for the battle? Therefore the Lord, that his servant Jacob might be fit for what was before him, bade him be of good courage, and said to him, "Fear not."

I am sure that the Lord wished his servant Jacob to cease from every kind of fear, because otherwise, it would look as if he was quarrelling with the divine will. He is to go down into Egypt by divine command; but if he is afraid to go, it would appear that he judged that the Lord had put him upon an ill business. When God judged it right for him to go, he must rest assured that it was right. Hesitate, my dear friend, while you are not sure that it is God's will; but when once you are certain that it is according to the Lord's mind, it will be unfaithfulness to God to have any kind of fear. Steam straight ahead, for that way lies your haven. Go on in a direct line, like an arrow shot from a mighty bow, which seeks nothing but the target. Say with one of old, "Shall such a man as I flee?" If God be with you, who can be against you? Flight when God supports would be not only disastrous, but treacherous. It is not to be dreamed of for a moment. You have no armor for your back: face the foe; yes, face him, though he were ten thousand strong. You are able to overcome the armies of the aliens. God being with you, the day is yours. If you treat the Lord as you should, you will become incapable of fear. You will, like young Nelson, ask, "What is fear?" You cannot see any. "The Lord is my strength; of whom shall I be afraid?" The Lord of hosts is with us, therefore will not we fear.

Perhaps I might as well apply the subject now, and say—Are you beginning to preach, my dear friend, in a new place, and are you afraid? Do new faces startle you? Set yourself to get rid of this fear of man. The Lord forbids it. Are you going across the sea directly, and are you afraid of the journey and the foreign land? Hasten to the Lord, and ask him to drive all this fear far from you. Are you undertaking some new service in the church, and are you trembling at the responsibility? Ory to the Lord at once to strengthen your weak hands and confirm your feeble knees; for, at this moment, though the Lord does not appear to you in vision, yet he speaks to you out of this grand old Book, and by the mouth of his servant, saying unto you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Surely, a "fear not" from the mouth of the Lord will make you bold as a lion.

III. And now I shall need to show you how HIS FEAR WAS REMOVED MOST SWEETLY. Who can cheer the heart so effectually as the Lord our God? Fears must depart when the Lord forbids them.

First, the Lord removed his fears by showing that he knew him by his name. He said "Jacob, Jacob." "Oh," says one, "if the Lord were to speak to me by my name I should not be afraid any longer." I am not sure of that,

for you might be even more fearful than you now are. But dost thou think that God does not know thy name? Dost thou dream that if thou hast sought his face and cried to him for mercy he does not know thy name? Why beloved, he knows all things. He knows thy secret thoughts. He knows the way that thou hast taken, and the way that thou art about to take. He knows thee infinitely better than thou knowest thyself. Rest in the fact that thy heavenly Father knows what thou hast need of. O poor troubled one, you that are cast down on account of sin, remember that the Lord knew this patriarch by his weak and sinful name of Jacob, as well as by his bright and princely name of Israel. He knew him by his worse name as well as by his better. God knows you by your old name, for he knows your old nature; and he knows your new name and your new nature. He calls thee to-night, and tells thee: "I know thee; I know thee; I know all about thee. Thy name is graven on the palms of my hands. Dream not that I have forgotten thee. If thou canst not spell out thine own case, I can read it. If thou dost not know thine own griefs so as to interpret them to another, I understand all thy sorrows, thy burdens, and thy failures. I know thy despondencies and thy despairs. I know thee, Jacob." Wherefore, since the Lord knows us altogether, let us trust him, and he will make even our weaknesses to magnify the power of his grace.

Next, the Lord told him that he was on communion terms with God. The Lord said to him, "Jacob, Jacob," and he answered, "Here am I." God had to call out to Adam, "Adam, where art thou?" But Jacob could say, "Here am I." Oh, it is a blessed thing to be on such terms with God that you can truly say, "Here am I, my Lord: I have nothing to hide. I stand forth before thy presence, and have no desire to conceal myself from thine eye, neither have I anything to reserve from thy notice. Tell me what I am to do; for I am willing and eager to do it. Take me, and make what thou wilt of me; for I am thine, and rejoice to be so. Break me up, and melt me, and pour me out into thy mould, if so thou dost see fit; for 'Here am I.'"¹ He that has given up selfhood, and is willing that God should do whatever he wills with him, is on communing terms with God. The barrier is removed, and the Lord God Almighty can dwell with us, and even give us the desires of our heart. But then it follows-if you are on such happy terms with God, be not afraid. Now that you may speak with God, and he will deign to speak with you, why should you be the prey of apprehensions? Why should Jacob be afraid of Pharaoh if he is no longer afraid of Jehovah? If you are at peace with God, who is he that shall harm you? The stones of the field shall be in

league with you, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. Hushed is the thunder, and pointless is the shaft of the lightning, when once a man is right with God. Even if the laws of nature should crush his mortal frame, they would but release his joyful spirit, and admit him the sooner to the joys above. Wherefore ye have nothing to be afraid of, O ye who walk with God! If the Lord is your friend, who is he that can harm you? AU is well. The stars in their courses fight for you, and the angels of God watch over you. To the friends of God all nature is friendly. Heaven and earth, and sea and land, all welcome the man on whom their Creator smiles.

Next, the Lord removed his servant's fear by declaring himself to be the God of the covenant. "I am God," said he, "the God of thy father." He manifests himself as the same God as ever: as much the God of Jacob, the son, as of Isaac, the father. The Lord will be to us what he has been to his people aforetime. He has pledged himself to us as to our fathers. He has promised to us, even to us, the blessing, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee." My dear friends and brethren, can you say, "This God is our God for ever and ever"? Is Jehovah the God of this generation as of the former? Some of you do not desire to have Jehovah for your God. Then you cannot have the blessing that comes from his being your God. But you that can say, "My God, my Father, thou shalt be my guide," you have no cause to fear. If God is your God, the chief thing is secured, and all the rest will be right. When we have God we have all things. To be in order with the Most High is to be right with all the forces of the universe, both in nature and in providence. If the Lord be yours all things are yours. As he is the God of eternity, "things present and things to come are yours" in him. Oh, how sweet to fly to our covenant God when the tempest is lowering! Where my father found a most secure abode, there I also dwell.

Next, the Lord said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation." The promise of a great blessing is the dismissal of all fear. Jacob's house cannot be destroyed if God is going to multiply them into a great nation. If the apparent evil will work together for our good, why do we dread it? Beloved sufferer, do not be afraid of the cancer which is preying upon you. It is a terrible disease; but if the Lord is going to make your long illness a saving blessing to your family, you may resign yourself to the lingering pain, and no longer shrink from it with horror. Do not be afraid of that bereavement in the family. It will be a grievous loss to all concerned, but the righteous are taken away from evil to come, and out of their graves springs a blessing, even as the grass grows

on the hillock in the churchyard. Many a keen affliction brings with it God's sevenfold favor, though we cannot see it. As the Lord said to Jacob, "Fear not to go into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation," so he says to us, "Fear not affliction; for so shall you receive the greater benediction." Brethren, fear not the night, but watch for its stars; fear not the fall of the leaf, but look for the ripe fruits. You shall see more of God's goodness as you see more of man's evil. We read of the apostles that they "feared as they entered into the cloud"; yet in that cloud they saw their Lord transfigured. Wherefore be not you afraid, lest you be found trembling at that which should cause you joy.

Then the Lord added that which is the richest comfort of all: "I will go down with thee into Egypt." What cause of fear can remain when we have the promise of the Lord's presence with us? The child is not afraid to go to bed in the dark, if his mother will go with him into the chamber. The child does not want a candle if his mother will be at his side; her eyes are bright lights to him. If God be with us we are not in the dark; his presence causes even the night to be light about us. If we can have our Lord's presence, we have no choice of country or company. Egypt, with Jehovah, is as Canaan. Even Hades and the land of death-shade have nothing to make us fear evil, if the Comforter sustains us. "For thou art with me," is the joyful song of the pilgrim when he passes through the valley of the shadow of death. Wherefore, let us dismiss our fears. We will go down into loneliness, poverty, sickness, sorrow, and the grave, if the Lord will be with us.

The Lord goes on to say, "And I will also surely bring thee up again"-which meant that Jacob should not lose his inheritance in Canaan, nor be for ever in banishment in a strange land. Jacob's heart dwelt in the Canaan which the Lord had bestowed on him, and had entailed upon his seed by a covenant of salt; but Jacob's going down into Egypt was not to alter that deed of gift. Jacob would not have accepted Egypt, with all its treasures, in exchange for the land that God had promised to himself and to his seed; but no such change was proposed: the chosen seed would leave Egypt in due course, and come back to its old quarters, and so the Lord said, "I will surely bring thee up again." Go down as we may, the Lord will bring us up again. Dear friend, you may lose husband, or wife, or father, or child, or property, or health, or even life; but you shall rise out of every loss, and you shall never lose your share in the sure mercies of David. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Esau might sell the heritage for a mess of pottage, but Jesus would not sell his

portion for all Egypt's glories; nor shall he be called on to make the exchange. Blessed be God, we shall never be driven down so low that we cannot rise again, for the Lord saith of every member of the chosen family, "I will surely bring thee up again."

One more fear Jacob had, perhaps, experienced. He had some fear of dying; but that was all removed when the Lord said, "And Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." "Oh," the good old father thought, "Joseph is to close my eyes; then death has lost its sting." Did you ever think of dying in that light? Let me read it to you with a word changed, and another name inserted: "And Jesus shall put his hand upon your eyes." We may never die; the Lord may personally appear, and then we shall not all sleep; but if he does not come, and we are called upon to die, Jesus will put his fingers on our eyes, and we shall sleep in peace. Death is a covenant blessing to a child of God; for "so he giveth his beloved sleep." That last sleep comes from the finger of that hand which was nailed to the cross for us. And Jesus, thy Joseph whom thou lovest, whose bloody coat thou hast seen with tears, he is yet alive, and he is King over all that land whereto thou goest, for the keys of death swing at his girdle. He is the Prince of all realms, and he it is that shall put his hand upon thy eyes and seal them for the moment in darkness, to open them for thee, when thou shalt say, "I am satisfied, for behold I awake in thy likeness."

By this time, every fear ought to be removed from us, even as it was from Jacob. We may now set up our banners and go forward. Put away the sackbut, and sound the silver trumpet. Let the vanguard advance, and follow the leader through the wilderness, or through the sea. If Jehovah leads the way, let no man's heart tremble. Let the weakest among us be strong: for thus saith the Lord, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Rejoice and be glad. AU is well.

*"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well.*

*'Tis well when joys arise,
'Tis well when sorrows flow,
'Tis well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.*

*'Tis well when on the mount
We feast on dying love;
And 'tis as well, in God's account,
When we the furnace prove."*

The pillar of fire by night, and the pillar of cloud by day, we see at all times. Thus Jehovah leads the way in every march through the desert. With glad footstep follow. Behold, he saith to thee, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with thee, and I will surely bring thee up again."

Surely, this passage is very applicable to all who are removing from one place to another. "Fear not to go down into Egypt. I will go down with thee into Egypt." Take your journey in peace.

This also may be used by those who are in perplexity as to what they should do. Wait upon God for direction, and when you get your marching orders, go straight ahead, cheered by this gracious assurance, "I will go down with thee into Egypt."

Any of you that are entering upon a new business, upon new trials, new labors, new spheres, accept with joy the promise that the presence of God will be with you. God leading, we fear nothing.

Lastly, to you that are about to die, here is living consolation. There may be some here who will never see another earthly Sabbath, for God has some better thing in store for them, namely, to see the heavenly Sabbath sooner than they think. Fear not to go down into the Egypt of the grave, for the Lord will go down with you into the sepulcher. Jesus has been there: fear not to go where he went. Whenever I am called in to see any of our dying church-members, I find them, without exception, calm and willing to depart. When I come out of the dying chamber I invariably feel that my faith has been greatly strengthened. The way in which they meet the approach of the great enemy, calmly and triumphantly, makes me rest joyfully confident in the gospel which I preach. Our dear friends sing and even shout joyously in death. One brother, who passed away not long ago, even made me laugh by the joyous things he told me in his own quaint way. I could not help laughing for joy when he talked about heaven as if he had been there. There is a dear brother, not many doors from this spot, who will probably soon pass away; but he speaks about his departure as calmly as if he were only going to the seaside for a holiday. Our Lord's love has changed the very aspect of death's face. My dear brother and co-pastor

said to me one day, “O brother, our people die well, do they not?” That they do. They give us proof of the truth which we preach by the way in which it sustains them in their last hours. Without the slightest fear, or perturbation of mind, they march onward to the Jordan singing with the stream in view. I know no happier people in my acquaintance than a certain suffering few, who are within measurable distance of the celestial city. And so it ought to be.

But what is to become of you who have no faith? What is to become of you who have no God to go to? O soul, if thou hast no God, thou art indeed miserable. God bring thee at once to himself, through Jesus Christ his Son! Amen.

THE FATHER'S LOVE TO HIS DYING SON.

NO. 2117

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
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*“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life,
that I might take it again.” -John 17.*

OUR Lord Jesus here speaks of himself in his complex personality as God and Man, the Mediator between God and men. As such, he comes to us first at Bethlehem, “wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.” We behold him a babe, a child, a man, a worker, a sufferer, a witness for the truth, and a victim condemned to die upon the tree. We behold him dead in the grave, and risen again as the Interposer between God and man. In that capacity we shall think of him during this discourse. It is the voice of the Man Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, which says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” The Father feels boundless love to him who, for us men, and for our redemption, came down from heaven, and took upon himself our nature, and being found in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,” or, to use his own words, “Therefore doth my Father love me.”

At this time we shall not keep strictly to the text, but shall introduce other truths related to it. The run of our discourse will be somewhat as follows:- First, consider the Father's love to Jesus because of his death and

resurrection; secondly, consider the Father's complacency in us on that account. Then, thirdly, consider our love to Jesus on this account; and, fourthly, consider our consequent fellowship with the Father.

I. First, CONSIDER THE FATHER'S LOVE TO CHRIST JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. This love was exceeding sweet to Jesus. Persecuted by men, and sometimes depressed in his own spirit, he comforts himself with this, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." To be well-pleasing to the Father was everything with our Lord Jesus Christ. In heaviest toll, in darkest slander, in deepest perplexity, if his Father only said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Jesus was refreshed with meat which others knew not of. Beloved, let us be like our Lord Jesus in this-let the love of the Father to us be our comfort, our joy, our strength, our hope, our heaven. What more can men or angels have than the love of God? Let that love be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, and even the celestial city cannot afford me a more pure and substantial delight. O my God, thy love is precious beyond all estimate! "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

But to come back to our Lord. The Father took the greatest delight in his Son as laying down his life, first, because of the delight of Jesus in his Father's plans. Exceeding high are the thoughts of God in reference to his dealings with the sinful sons of men. Jehovah could with a word make Creatures that should be perpetually innocent of sin; he could also make creatures which he foreknew would choose evil ways, and depart into rebellion; but a simple act of creation would not produce the character of elect man. A weapon may be struck from the anvil at a blow; but a Damascus blade needs special annealing, to produce the temper needed in a champion's sword. The chosen were to be a race who had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and so knew good and evil by actual practice; especially knew the result of evil in their own persons; for they would even die spiritually, but would be restored from death, and hell, and sin, and would be made haters of transgression, lovers of righteousness. Though left to their own free agency, yet when the work of grace was complete in them, they would be of a character to which sin would be impossible, since they would so deeply abhor it. These persons would be raised to the peerage of the divine kingdom, and bear the name and dignity of sons of God, being in very deed brothers in blood to him who is one with God. They were to be brothers of the Son of God by birth,

and yet never to be the subjects of pride. It will be infinitely safe for the Lord to entrust us with all the privileges, and royalties, and liberties of his own household. For this end it was needful that the chosen from among men should undergo a marvellous process, much more complex and intricate than that which follows the fiat of power: we must in Jesus die, and be made alive again in him.

Beloved, it was needful, in order to the completion of the plan of grace, that God himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, should take manhood into eternal union with Godhead. The Son agreed to do this, and was born of the Virgin. But when he took manhood into union with himself, he took therewith all that belonged to manhood. Now, sin having attached itself to manhood, the Christ, in becoming man, took our sin upon himself,, as it is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He could not be actually guilty-God forbid the thought!-but he became legally amenable to the penalty due for our transgression. He was willing even to make this stoop of condescension. When the divine plan was proposed to him, this was his answer: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God!" Do you wonder that the Father loved him, when he saw in him such sympathetic union with himself? It was the Son's highest pleasure to become subservient to the sacred plan of glorious grace, in which, to ages to come, Jehovah would show forth the glory of his nature, the splendor of his eternal purpose. All the plan was acceptable to Jesus; and he was eager to carry it out at his own expense. Though he knew that the work involved his death upon the shameful tree, yet he felt so one with the Father that he cried, "I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is within my heart."

When he actually appeared as a child he went up to the temple, and amazed his human parents with the words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Such a Son as this, so intent upon the Father's plan, is it wonderful that we read, "Therefore doth my Father love me"?

But his Father also loved him for the constancy and perseverance with which he pursued his life-work, making it his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. He underwent many rehearsals of his passion before it actually came. When he said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit: " he was passing through a baptism of soul-trouble. The shadow of his death fell on him often, ere he actually carried the cross. But his face was

steadfastly set to go unto Jerusalem. The plaudits of the people never made him turn aside, and aspire to be a king; their denunciations never made him tremble, and seek shelter in obscurity. His was a spirit constant to its high intent, To the last he was firm as a rock. The manhood in him shuddered at death-it had not been true manhood if it had not; but, overcoming his natural horror, he took the cup, and drank it to its dregs, with "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." He did say, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; and he therein warranted us in saying that there was no other way of accomplishing the divine purpose, except by his death. Redemption could not be accomplished except by the Substitute bearing the penalty and dying, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The Lord Jesus from the beginning knew what it all meant, for he often told his disciples what would surely happen to him. He did not go to a suffering of which he was not aware. He was not, as one said, like a man who went in among machinery to set it right, and was caught in a great wheel which was too strong for him, and so was dragged to death. My brethren, our Lord knew all about the strength of that great wheel: he foretasted all the woe which the accomplishment of his Father's purpose would cost him; but he went forward, resolutely laying down his life, that he might take it again; therefore his Father loved him, as well he might. Victim by intent! Redeemer by resolve! Be thou glorified for ever! Let me put to you a little picture. No doubt our Queen has a strong affection for her sons. She loves them as her children; but if it should so befall, that one of the princes was found upon the sea-coast in the hour of storm, endeavoring to save men from a wreck; and if the prince, when others stood back, bravely ventured his life to rescue the perishing, would not his royal mother love him for his humanity? If he threw himself into the surf in his eagerness to save; if, foreseeing the consequences, he persevered in giving his own life that he might bring poor perishing men to shore-would not his mother feel that she loved him anew for his heroism? I think so. Would not any of us love with renewed affection a dear son who had displayed a sacred self-denial for the good of men? Now turn your thought, reverently, to the great Father of spirits, who loves his Son as his Son, but yet loves him specially, because, out of pure, unselfish love, he laid down his life without debate. Marvel not that he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me."

The chief source of this peculiar love was his actual death as the perfecting of his obedience. He had become a servant, and he served to the end. In all his life no single disobedience ever occurred: the great Father's will was

the rule absolute. Now comes in the last clause of the obedience: he must lay down his life, for so has God appointed; and even unto this last he fails not, but willingly yields up the ghost. Jesus went to the garden and the bloody sweat; to the high priest's hall and the false accusing; to Pilate's hall and the scourging; to Herod and the setting at nought; to the cross with its nails, its scorn, its darkness, its fever, its death-agony-he went to it all as a lamb goes willingly to the slaughter. On the way to death he was careful to obey: he would not die until every Scripture had been accomplished. His last words, "I thirst," were spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. He carefully observed the Father's will in all things-in the detail as well as in the gross; and to prove that he obeyed even to the end, he said, "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." The Father is infinitely delighted with the perfect obedience of the Son. He is a holy God, and he sees in Jesus holiness perfected by patience, and therefore he calls him "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth."

Remember, also, that the death of our Lord Jesus was not only the perfection of obedience, but the vindication of God's righteous law. Some would have a God without law, that he might be love alone. This might suit anarchists, and the like; let them, like the heathen, have a god of their own making. Is it not well spoken by the Psalmist, "They that make them are like unto them"? A lawless man fashions for himself a lawless god. But he who knows that society cannot exist unless there be law, and unless law be sanctioned with reward and punishment, delights to see that this is, also, the mind of God. God has the deepest concern for order and law. There was no anger in God against men, as men; for while they abode in purity, he communed with them; but the thrice-holy God must hate evil in every form, and he must abhor it even in his most favored creatures. If the Lord should forgive sinners without demanding a penalty, he would weaken the foundations of moral government. In his magisterial capacity the Judge of all the earth perceived that he could by no means spare the guilty. It would not have been an act of mercy to the race of men if God had winked at human sin in any case. It would have been in conflict with the fundamental law of the universe. Every rank of angels, and intelligent beings in all worlds, would have been affected-affected mischievously-had it been proved that Jehovah had in any case set aside his own perfect law, and allowed the breach of it to go unpunished. It is not a case of Private offense against an individual, it is rebellion against the highest authority. Sin must be punished, therefore; and Jesus came to do honor to the broken

law. He was innocent; but he voluntarily submitted himself as the Representative for men, to suffer so that God could righteously forgive. The law must be magnified, and made honorable, and when the Lawmaker himself died under the penalty of the law, then a sufficient vindication was given to the vital principle of moral government. The law became more illustrious in righteousness by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ than if every guilty son of Adam had been cast into hell because of his transgressions. His sufferings were unto the law of God a full justification for the free pardon of guilty men: and as the Father looks at the Son, and sees him lay down his life that he might take it again, he is well content in justice to forgive, and in righteousness to justify, the sinner. Truly said the Lord Jesus, "Therefore doth my Father love me."

Beloved, my heart delights in the thought that he who is a consuming fire against all sin, yet, when he looks on Christ, sees such a vindication given to his law, that he can justly sheathe his sword, and smile on those whom once he was bound to smite.

Once more, I think we may say that the Father loves the Son in his death and resurrection, because he herein manifested his supreme love to men. We may say of our Lord Jesus, "Yea, he loved the people. All his saints are in his hand." The love of Jesus to his chosen is no new thing; no idea that sprang up yesterday, to perish to-morrow. Long ages ago, when the mountains were not brought forth, and the ancient hills had not lifted their heads, the saints had a dwelling-place in the heart of God. He saw us in the glass of his foreknowledge, and loved us according to the predestination of his will. From of old the Father loved us so as to give us his Son, and the Son loved us so as to give his life a ransom for us; and because of this love to one chosen object there was a fresh display of love to each other. I said, in the opening of my discourse, that the Father always loved the Son as God, but in our text we have a love of him as Man and God in one wondrous personality, in which are blended the two natures of holy God and perfect Man. The Mediator loved us so that he died for us, a sacrifice unto God, presented by infinite love in our room, and place, and stead; and he says, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life."

Only this word more-the resurrection is mentioned as ensuring the result, and as therefore being another opportunity for love to break forth. Jesus says, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again." If that prince, of whom I spoke just now, had leaped from the side of a vessel to save a

drowning man, it would have been a grand action; but if he sank never to rise again, his memory would have been enshrined in the grief of the Queen's heart; but he would not have been able to say, "Therefore does my mother love me." Jesus sinks into the dark wave, but he rises again. I see him make the great plunge into the abyss; but he cries, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." He lifts his head above the black billows, he strikes out for the shore, he lands in safety with those whom he has rescued. How the Lord must delight in the risen Jesus, and in all that follows upon his victory over the grave! Now is death defeated by the death of the Well-beloved. Now is a new life ensured for dead sinners. Now is the clearance of all the once condemned published both to hell and heaven. Say who is he that has passed the iron gate, descended into the abodes of death, and then returned triumphant to the upper air. Who is this, ye angel-watchers, at the gates of glory? Who is this kingly Conqueror? "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle, has laid down his life, and taken it again. He has done it as readily and effectually as once he laid down his garments, and anon girt them about him again, after that he had washed the feet of his disciples. Having redeemed and cleansed us by his blood, he puts on again the human body, which for a while, he had cast aside. Jesus is glorified in all whom he has saved by his death and rising; but his greatest glory is that the Father loves him. Sweet are the songs of the saved on earth, and blessed are the anthems of the redeemed in heaven; but to Jesus, the best reward which is possible lies in this word—"Therefore doth my Father love me." Before me, in this divine love, I see a great deep, which I may not attempt to explore: I have but brushed the surface as with a swallow's wing.

II. Secondly, CONSIDER THE FATHER'S COMPLACENCY IN US ON ACCOUNT OF HIS DELIGHT IN HIS SON. Beloved, the Father loves his Son so much that his love overflows its banks, and covers all of us whom the Lord Jesus has taken to be his own. The Father's love is like a great beacon-light kindled in honor of the Well-beloved, but shedding its radiance far and wide to enlighten those who sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. Let us contemplate this fact so fraught with blessing to all believers.

First, as our Lord Jesus is Alan, the Father places his work to man's account. The Lord had made man in his own image; he had created him a

remarkable being of united matter and spirit; but man made a revolt from him, so that “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth.” When the Lord looks upon our race at this moment, he cannot take satisfaction in creatures who have made themselves so vile. Our nature is prone to evil, and it cannot but be abhorrent unto the thrice-holy Jehovah. Yet is not man blotted out from the list of beings, for there is one Man, true man, born of a woman, made under the law, a partaker of flesh and blood, who is in himself so well-pleasing to the Lord, that he makes up for all the displeasure felt towards the rest of our race. This Man was so obedient, so self-sacrificing, so pure, so devout, so gentle, so everything that is admirable, that when the Father considers him, the virtues of that one Man’s life and death endear to him the race; so that for his sake he forgets the sins of men, and is well pleased to accept all who are united to him. “By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” The savor of this one Man’s sacrifice has sweetened all the offerings of his fellows. It was a Man who, for the sake of the divine glory, sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and died upon the cross; and therefore is the Lord well pleased, even with guilty men for whom Jesus stood as the second Adam, and for whom he has won acceptance before the throne.

Next, remember that the Lord Jesus has so glorified the Father, that his great achievements are made to redound to our benefit. All the works of God’s hands praise him; all the deeds of his providence extol him; but redemption brings him his highest honors. In the person of the Redeemer, Jehovah is best made known.

*“God, in the person of his Son,
Has all his mightiest works outdone.”*

When the Father hears dishonor put upon the divine name by blasphemers, or false teachers; when he sees the drunkenness and lust, the pride and cruelty of men; he is grieved at his heart: but on the other hand, all the dishonor is covered and put away by the glory of the character and work of the Man, Christ Jesus. I cannot utter my own thoughts on this point; much less can I think adequately upon such a theme. It is as if the millions of the redeemed were so many evil lamps all pouring forth darkness, and death-shade, and filling the universe with blackness; and then, on the other side, this one blessed lamp of God stood alone, pouring forth light; and the sacred light was so powerful that it banished all the darkness of the myriad nightmakers, and created eternal and unclouded day. I will change the

figure, and say that all of us were as the Dead Sea, full of foul waters, reeking with deadly odours, and the life of Jesus, poured out for us, has turned that lake of death into a pure and sparkling sea of life. The purity of Jesus suffices to purify all the multitudes of the human race who put their trust in him. God loves his Son because he getteth a glory from him which cancels the dishonor wrought by all the sins of men.

Note, again, that as God has great complacency in his Son, it runs over to us, because we are one with Jesus. I say not this of you all; for some of you have nothing to do with Christ at this present; but of as many as believe in Jesus, I may say, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The Father's love to his Son extends to all the members of his Son's mystical body. What though we should be only comparable to the soles of our Lord's feet, and are still in the mire, yet, if we are in the body, we share with the Head in all its glories. You know the old proverb, "Love me, love my dog"; and certainly the Lord Jesus Christ might well say, "Love me, love the least of my people." The Father, like David, loves every lame Mephibosheth of the household, for the sake of his Jonathan. Brethren, as many of us as are joined unto the Lord by a living faith are one with Jesus, by eternal union one. When he died, we died; when he rose, we rose; we were condemned and justified in him; and now that the Father loves him, we also are beloved in him. What a blessed thing it is that the Father loves One who has such an intimate relation to us as to be our Representative and Head! Meditate upon this overflow of the Father's love to the elect whom he has given to his Son. He so loved the Chief Beloved, that, for his sake, we are accepted, beloved, perfected, and at last glorified. This is true of myriads of men; myriads! You speak of great congregations; but all that ever assemble here are a mere handful. Look at the countless congregation redeemed by our Lord's death: "a multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Remember the multitudes who have died in infancy, redeemed by precious blood from all the consequences of the fall. Consider the multitudes of converts in the latter days, when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous:" how many, human arithmetic fails to tell.

Now, call to mind the number and the variety of sins which have been committed by the redeemed company. All those sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. The love of God in Christ Jesus sees no iniquity in

Jacob, for the atonement has put away all manner of offenses. The love of the Father to Jesus has made us comely in his comeliness, despite the multitude of deformities which were found in us. O sea of love, in which so vast a host of sins was swallowed up! How greatly doth the Father love the Son when, for his dear sake, he covers all the myriad causes of displeasure, and makes us precious in his sight!

Then remember that, while Jesus has redeemed so many, and cleansed them from so many sins, he has done more; for by the Father's love to him they are made partakers of very many most costly blessings. Could you calculate the wealth of benefits wherewith the Lord daily loadeth his redeemed? Covenant mercies, who shall weigh them? Yet they all come through the Father's love of Jesus.

Above all, reflect that we have eternal life through our Lord's death. God so loves Jesus that, because of his temporary death, he has given endless life to all the redeemed. Jesus died once, and therefore we live for ever. Because the Father's love to him can never die, and he ever lives, we shall live also. His passing sorrow brings us eternal glory. Because of Christ's death, millions and millions of years hence we shall still be the children of God, and shall be with Jesus where he is, beholding the glory which the Father has given him. Admire the measureless merit of the Lord Jesus! Meditate with reverence upon the overflowing torrents of the Father's love to his Son! Because of his death he is unspeakably beloved, and we are beloved in him. Here it were well to pause. No tongue can ever tell out this matchless story. We are "accepted in the Beloved." How greatly beloved must he have been to cover such base things as we are with divine acceptance! Think it over! Think it over! In heaven you will need no fuller or loftier subject of meditation than the love of the Father to the Only-begotten, enwrapping in its folds the whole family of love. "Therefore doth my Father love me." Oh, how he must love Jesus, since for his sake he loves multitudes of sinners, and loves them all the way from the door of hell to the gate of heaven! By the bliss eternal, by the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand, by the glory without bounds, we may form some idea of the love of the Father to him who laid down his life that he might take it again.

III. In the third place, CONSIDER OUR LOVE TO THE LORD JESUS ON THIS ACCOUNT. Beloved, his death is the great fact for which we love our Lord Jesus. The individual love of each believer wells up when he can say, "He

loved me, and gave himself for me.” This, also, is the crowning evidence of God’s love to believers in general, for “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.” His laying down his life is the central display of his love, and the chief cause of our affection. We love him for the holiness of his character, for the tenderness of his heart, for the excellence of his teaching; and, indeed, we love him for everything about his blessed person and work; but, if the secret must be told, our hearts were chiefly won when our Beloved put on the crimson vesture, and stood before us decked with wounds, and pale in death. Then did we sing of him—”White and ruddy is my Beloved.” Oh, the beauties of our King when he stands beneath the purple canopy of sacrifice! Then is our heart won and held in joyful captivity when we can say, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” That text often thrills my heart wherein we read, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Calvary reveals the great fountain of our love. The cross is the pole whereon is uplifted the banner of love, both his and ours. We love him because he first loved us, and Golgotha is the window through which his love looketh.

The connection of our text enhances our Lord’s love. It stands connected with the Good Shepherd. It is he that lays down his life; he giveth it for the sheep. Will a man die for sheep? Yes, that may be. But could the Son of God die for such base creatures as we are? We were, of ourselves, by no means so great a treasure to Christ as a sheep is to a man; and yet he thought far more of us than shepherds do of their flocks. We were by nature only as so many foxes, or serpents, or creeping things; but yet the Lord Christ, having set his love upon us, would not rest till he had laid down his life for us. Alas! we were as ungrateful as we were unworthy. We even opposed the efforts of our Savior. We acted more like goats than sheep, for we butted with our horns against our Shepherd. We were stray sheep, and did not return at his call: we did not follow him, but we went farther and farther away. We were lame as to returning; but “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” We are sheep, too, that still go astray very grievously. Woe is me that this should be true of me! After having been brought back on his shoulders, after having been pastured by his care, yet still we go astray! We are sheep that were lost; we are sheep that would lose themselves again, if they could; sheep that make a very poor return to him that shepherds us. “Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?” is a question which might often awake sad

memories in our hearts. Beloved, let us love our Lord more! Surely, we cannot help it, as we perceive our own undesert, and the greatness of his love whereby he laid down his life for us.

Bethink you well that the Lord laid down his life of his own free will, and under no constraint whatever. If you or I were to die for other people, we should be only doing a little sooner what we shall be obliged to do one day; for death is the debt of nature which, sooner or later, all must pay. If a man yields his life for another, he only anticipates by a short season the time when he must lose it. But Jesus needed not to die at all, so far as he himself was concerned. "Messiah was cut off, but not for himself." What love is this! He wills to die. He saith of his life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Herein is love indeed, free love, deliberate, and resolute. I see the bullocks going to the altar of the temple; poor, dumb, driven cattle, they know not that they are to be a sacrifice: they cannot throw into their deaths the merit of devout intent. Behold our Lord going to the slaughter as a sheep for patience, but not like a sheep for knowledge and purpose: he knew what that slaughter meant, and why he must endure it. "Lama sabachthani!" was in its meaning known to him before he uttered the cry. He foresaw the death of the cross: he was made a curse for us, knowing what the curse meant, and calmly resolving to bear it. For this deliberation of love he has our inexpressible gratitude and love. Do we not each one love him?

We should love him, for Jesus laid down his life for each one of his people. This love in general is a delightful theme; but how tender and touching it becomes when each one sees his own participation in it, and cries, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"! Love delights in personal pronouns, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Love is most of all excited and called forth by a personal sense of gracious gifts received. It is a heart-moving song when we can sing, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." Remember that, to save one single soul, our Lord would have had to die, and yet to save all men in the world he could have done no more; and if there had been as many worlds of sinners as there are grains of sand upon the sea-shore, his one death would have been a sufficient vindication of the law on account of them all. We can imagine no limit to the value of Christ's atoning sacrifice; its object could not have been attained by anything less than the laying down of his life. He died for his flock, and for each one of his sheep in particular; so that we may each

one say to-day, “He loved me, and gave himself for me”; and each one know that for himself, with special intent, the Lord Jesus bore the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion. Therefore we must, each one of us, love him to our heart’s utmost capacity.

Indulge yourself with a sight of his love as it hangs bleeding on the tree. It may be, poor soul! this morning, thou art bowed down with trouble because of sin, and yet thou art a child of God: see, then, how Jesus loves! Do what thou didst at first, when, in thy soul’s dark hour, thou didst look to Jesus. Look to his cross. Look wholly to the slain Jesus. “His blood hath made peace,

*And brought us release;
And now the old bondage
for ever must cease.
Who trust in his might
He leads into light;
Nor can any enemy
break on his right.”*

Blessed, for ever blessed, be thy dear name, O Jesus! There is none like it in heaven, nor in the heaven of heavens. How shall we praise him? Our tears of gratitude come to our rescue; if we cannot speak his praises, we will weep them.

IV. I shall conclude by saying, CONSIDER WHAT A FELLOWSHIP IS OPENED UP BETWEEN THE SAVED ONES AND THE FATHER. The Father loveth the Son, and we love him also, after our measure. Brethren, we are agreed with the great God with whom once we were at enmity. Since we have seen our Lord lay down his life for us, we love him; how can we do otherwise? For the same reason the Father loves him. The very strongest love is confirmed when a common object of affection becomes a rivet between the two parties. Two hearts may be one in married love; but their union is intensified when a baby’s cry is heard in the house. Seldom are they parted by divorce who have blended their love in watching over a company of little children.

Beloved, when the Father looks on Jesus, he sees One who is altogether lovely to him, and when we look on Jesus in our poor, half-blinded manner, we also are charmed by his beauties. No enmity can remain between a soul and God when love to Jesus becomes the masterpassion of the life. By his cross, our Lord has slain the enmity. His death has cast a bond around the

divided ones, and has reconciled us to God. The thrice-glorious Jehovah agrees with the blood-washed sinner in glorifying his Son. In the blood of Jesus we are made clean, and therefore we love him: the Father sees Jesus pouring out his heart's blood to make us clean, and he loves him on that account: thus the two who were apart are agreed in one. Henceforth we desire to honor Christ, and we are grieved if he is not magnified. Whenever you hear a sermon which praises the Lord Jesus, do not your hearts dance like David before the ark? But if your Lord is dishonored, do you not feel indignant? Could you not bear anything sooner than hear your Lord defamed? In the congregation when his atonement has been decried, have you not found yourself on the move? And if you did not move, but kept your seat, you bit your lip? You love him, and you cannot permit him to be thrust into a second place. If it were in your power, you would set him upon a glorious high throne, and make every knee bow before him. That is what the Father is doing, and will yet do: thus the Father and you are one towards Jesus.

You have also an intense desire to become like your Lord; have you not? Ever since he bought you with his blood, and you knew it, you have longed to be conformed to his image. This, also, is the Father's design, for he desires his Well-beloved to be the "firstborn among many brethren." He loves our Lord Jesus so much that he has predestinated us to be conformed to his image. There cannot be another divine Son, but the Father would have many human sons who shall be like the firstborn. If you have ever stood in the middle of a hall of mirrors, you have seen yourself repeated on all sides; even so shall heaven be full of lovely reflections of him who is altogether lovely; for every blood-washed one shall wear the likeness of the Lord from heaven. The Father can never have too much of his dear Son. He would have him live in ten thousand times ten thousand beloved ones; and as this, also, would be your highest joy, you have in this desire a wonderful bond of union between you and the Father.

I think I hear you say, "Now I perceive that the Father himself loved men, for he gave the Son he loved so well to die for them, and loved him for dying on their behalf." This is an instructive discovery. When Abraham called Isaac to go up to Mount Moriah to be offered up as a sacrifice, Isaac could have resisted his father's will; but he did not. They went both of them together to the place of the offering. Abraham loved Isaac when he bound him; yes, he loved him all the more for consenting to be bound. Not only did Abraham the father offer his son, but Isaac the son voluntarily

surrendered himself; and his father deeply loved him for that self-surrender. Jesus, the greater Isaac, did actually give up his life in our stead, to achieve his Father's purpose, vindicate his Father's law, and save the people whom his Father had given him. Therefore doth the Father love him, and we love him, and we love the Father who freely delivered him up for us all. Thus love completes its circle, and God and man are made one by Christ's work, even as they are one in his person.

If anyone here has, by believing contemplation, found his way through the process described in my sermon, he is no longer an enemy to God, nor even a stranger to the Most High; for the death of Jesus has drawn him nigh. If you have followed me in this track, not merely with an attentive ear, but with a willing heart, you are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. You love Jesus because he died, and God loves him for the same reason; you two have linked hands over the great sacrifice. What a joy is this! I feel as if I could find no better conclusion than the glowing verse of William Williams

*“To thee, my God, my Savior,
Praise be for ever new;
Let people come to praise thee
In numbers like the dew;*

*Oh, that in every meadow
The grass were harps of gold,
To sing to him for coming
To ransom hosts untold!”*

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS,-Kind Providence has brought me safely here; and I am resting, and endeavoring to gather new stores. Very greatly am I cheered by news from the Tabernacle, of the very remarkable blessing resting upon the special services under Messrs. Fullerton and Smith. The Lord be praised for using these beloved workers! May the members of the church see to it, that the good seed is watered!

Having enjoyed the friendship of many of my readers for more than thirty years, I feel bound to send them my affectionate greetings, and to thank them for their long-continued attention to my ministry. I would beg an

interest in their daily prayers, for myself and for the work. May the Lord our God arise speedily, for the vindication of his own truth!

Yours in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Nov. 28, 1889.

THE PLANTER OF THE EAR MUST HEAR.

NO. 2118

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 15TH, 1889,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 31ST, 1889.

*“He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye,
shall he not see?”-Psalm 94:9.*

THE character of a man hinges upon his relation to God. You may know what manner of man he is, and what are his communications, if you find out how he stands towards God. With the many God is a mere name: a word to be pronounced more or less reverently; but nothing more. He is not a force operating upon their daily lives. His glory is no motive of action, no object of desire, no joy of their heart. “God is not in all their thoughts”; and in consequence their lives are not conformed to his holy law. Blessed be the Most High, there are a few to whom God is everything: the first and last, the center and circumference of their being. To them the Lord is the great trust and treasure of their spirit; he is the rock of their confidence, the well-spring of their delight. Such men as they delight in God, will seek after holiness, and aim at perfection. God has shined upon them, and their faces will be bright. God dwells within them, and as from a kindled lamp light will stream forth.

Among the ungodly there are many whose lives prove that they know nothing about God. Indeed, their ignorance of God is their support in their present behavior. They comfort themselves with the notion, “The Lord

shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.” To them God is out of the world as to observation or practical interference. They do not care whether he sees them or not; for their belief is, that if he does see he cares nothing what men may think or do. He is too far off to be concerned about human affairs. He will neither grow angry with the sin of the wicked, nor take pleasure in the holiness of the godly. Of this practical atheism I am going to speak at this time, pleading against that frame of mind by the argument of the text. “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?” May the Holy Spirit help me in my endeavor, and may all my hearers believe in the living, hearing, seeing Jehovah!

I. Our first observation will be, THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT HEAR OR SEE IS PERNICIOUS. In judging it, we will follow the line of the psalm which now lies open before us.

We perceive that men who talked in this godless fashion were proud. Hence the prayer, “Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.” The man who thinks that God is not in the world, or is not at all concerned in its affairs, thinks that he is, himself, about the greatest person in existence. There may be some other poor creatures about; but he is, in many respects, the most deserving of esteem. He who thinks little of God, thinks much of himself. “Who is the Lord,” saith he, “that I should obey his voice?” Who talks like this but Pharaoh, the king, the potent one, accustomed to have his own will in everything? Those speak exceeding proudly who have no knowledge of the Most High. Measuring themselves by others like themselves, they are not wise. The worm exalts itself above its meaner fellow worms, and dreams not of the great Eternal One who filleth all things. Pride is very apt to grow great when knowledge is small, and reverence is absent. Proud language usually goes with profane talk and blasphemous ideas; for it comes of the same kindred. “How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?” If there be no God, or no God to care about, then straightway men delight in uttering things which make the blood of the godly to curdle. They render no praise to God; since they seek all glory for themselves. Because of their own conceit, they question his wisdom, cavil at his Word, doubt his justice, impugn the sentences of his bar, and speak evil of him even as they list. Give a man of proud heart a fluent tongue, and opportunity enough to speak of God, and then take away from him the idea that God hears him, and there is no telling to what lengths of profanity he

will hasten. His tongue is set on fire of hell, and it burns with a fury inconceivable. If you have ever been forced to hear or read the expressions of renowned infidels, you can form some idea of how completely Satan works his will with godless men. Take God away, and the brakes are taken off, and the train dashes down hill at terrific speed. "Their tongue walketh through the earth," saith David. No bounds can be set to the evil perambulations of an atheistic tongue. Not even heaven itself is free from the assaults of its pride: "They set their mouth against the heavens." They slander God himself, because they imagine that he does not hear.

Nor is this the end of the mischief. When the fear of God is taken away from men, they frequently proceed to persecute his servants. The prophet complains, "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage." As they hate God, so they manifest their hate against his people. If they cannot get at the leader, if they cannot smite the shepherd, they will at least worry the flock. Read the long and cruel story of human malice against the church of God: it mingles with the record of every nation: it is an awful history, written in tears and gore. The sacramental host of God's elect has left behind it in its marches a trail of blood and ashes, filling up, in the persons of the persecuted, that which was behind of the sufferings of the Lord; for all that grief was meant for him if his enemies could but have poured it on his head. At times it has seemed as if God had given up his people, and caused the rod of the wicked to rest upon his heritage. No wonder that it was so with them; for thus it pleased him to deal with his Only-begotten Son. He delivered him up to the world to do with him as it listed. The Father did not interpose, though they spat in his face, though they scourged him, though they blindfolded him and buffeted him, and made nothing of him. Yea, though they nailed him to the accursed tree, and stood to gloat their cruel eyes upon his agonies, the great God did not interfere to save the Beloved of his soul. A greater force than almighty power held omnipotence itself in check, that it should not lift its finger to rescue the Lord's anointed. If he was to save others, he could not be saved himself. Though he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet Jehovah left his own Son to die in the hands of the ungodly. You know the reason why; but, apart from that, it was a strange procedure. The Lord may deal thus with his own church and his own cause, till his people cry, "How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger!" The truth may appear to be wounded, slain, dead, and even buried. But yet, as Jesus rose again, so shall his true church and cause rise again,

though they be laid in the grave, and the stone is sealed, and the watch is set. Truth, though entombed, must rise again; for her Lord arose, and God is with his cause as he was with his Son. But, beloved, when men think that there is no God, and speak evil of the Most High, we need not wonder that they take liberty to persecute the chosen of God. There is no telling to what lengths of cruelty men will go when unhindered by a sense of God's presence. The psalm says, "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless." Take God away, and what a place this world would be! Without religion our earth would soon become a huge Aceldama, a field of blood. Ah, dear friends! men little know what they owe to the presence of God's people even in a city like this. There is no reason but religion why London should not become like Paris during the Reign of Terror. If it were not that God has respect to the faithful that dwell in the midst of the city, he might give it over to the ungodly; and no greater plague could come upon it. When men say, "Doth God see? Doth God know?" then they seek every man his own; and, if they can, they turn like tigers upon each other; society is torn to pieces, and the weak are devoured. If the Lord had not left us a remnant who fear his name, we had been as Sedoma, and had been made like unto Gomorrah. There is no telling how far the evil one may be let loose to excite men to evil; but, in any case, the chosen means of the devil will be the spread of atheistic principles among the masses. A world without God is a world without fear, without law, without order, without hope.

Note well, that if we were persuaded that God did not hear, and did not see, there would be an end of worship. Would there not? Could you worship a deaf God? I must confess that such a being would not be God to me. If he could not hear, and hear all things, I should see at once a limit to his nature; and a being of limited nature is not God, since God is, and must be, of necessity, infinite, to be God at all. Though it is hard to conceive what infinity must be, we must predicate it of Godhead; and, if it be gone, Godhead is gone with it, and there is an end of belief in God. The idea of a deaf God is absurd. Does not Jehovah see me? then he does not see all things—he is blind to something. Could you worship a blind God? If you could, you are on a par with those to whom you talk of sending missionaries; for their gods "have eyes, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not"; and they that make them are like unto them. He is an idolater, and not a worshipper of the living and true God, who worships a being of whom he entertains the notion that he cannot hear or see. There is

clearly an end of worship when there is an end of belief in a hearing and observing God.

Nor is this all it seems to me that there is, to a large extent, an end of the moral sense. If there be no God to punish sin, then every man will do as seemeth right in his own eyes; and why should he not? By what consideration will he be hindered? If there be no reward for righteousness, and righteousness involves self-denial, why should he deny himself? If there is to be no punishment for sin, and sin is pleasurable, why should he not seize the pleasure? Take away all thought that God sees and hears, and you have removed the underlying basis upon which morality itself is to be built up. A godless world is a lawless world. Anarchy comes in when the fear of God goes out; and all the mischiefs that you can imagine, and much more, rush in like a flood. Without God, or even with a god that does not see and does not hear, where is the hope of the despairing? To-night she will go home with a broken heart, for, alas! her last friend is dead. She will cover her face and sit astonished in her sorrow; and now what can she do? Poor woman, with no helper upon earth, where will you look? If she can bow by the side of that poor bed, and cast her care on God, that loves and cares for her, she will rise out of the deep of her distress. But if there be none in heaven to note her misery, the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, is taken away. What now remains? And he that is full of disease, and near to die, upon whom the physician has looked down as he lies in the hospital, and has shaken his head, and he knows that his doom is sealed, and that he will never quit that bed except to exchange it for the grave-if he has no God, how will he turn his face to the wall in the gall of bitterness, and moan in anguish never to be assuaged. But if God sees and hears, the widow is not without a helper, and the dying man, in all his agony, is not without a hope. O cruel unbelief, put not out our one sun, take not from the mourner his one consolation. Let me lose myself, but not my God, who is more than life to me. Yes, if you can, you may blot the glory out of heaven, and silence every angel's harp, and quench in endless night the sevenfold lustre of the celestial light; but leave me my God, and I shall have all heaven back again in him, and somewhat more. Oh, yes, a God that hears and sees-we must have him, or else we are orphaned indeed!

If God does not see and hear, we are shipwrecked upon the rock of blank atheism. I do not care a bit what men believe in, whether it be pantheism, or agnosticism, or theism; if they have no personal God that hears and sees, they have, in fact, no God at all. "There is a power that makes for

righteousness,” said one; but if that power is insensible, and never communicates with man, and never notices him, there is nothing in the forced admission of any use to him who makes it or hears it. It is big talk, such as men call “bosh,” and nothing more. Though it be veiled in the language of philosophy, the scientific jargon which makes God into insensible force is covert atheism. I must have a God that hears and sees, and comes into the arena of my daily life, and helps me because he loves me, or else I have no God. My God dwells with me, and works for me, or else I have no God. Fine words, pretty phrases, and magnificent definitions, are so many wind-bags, and go for nothing: there cannot be a deaf God, nor a blind God, nor an insensible God. If any of you so believe, go you to Bedlam, and find there your fit associates. As for us, we know that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is the living God, and his memorial is that he heareth prayer.

So much for that first point.

II. But, secondly, THE NOTION THAT GOD CANNOT SEE AND HEAR IS AN ABSURD NOTION. According to our text, it is proved to be unreasonable. “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?” Think of that argument for a little. Here is a creature which has ears, and can hear. The God who created that being, can he not hear? Has he given to his creature more than he has himself? Has he made a creature which excels himself in essential faculties? Has he bestowed a sense which he himself never had? How can it be? The God that makes a man with ears to hear, must possess hearing himself.

The very idea of hearing seems to me to necessitate that he who conceived the idea, was himself able to hear. He could not have borrowed the idea, for there was no other being but himself in the beginning: whence took he the thought, but from his own being? That the mind of man should be reached by the gate of the ear, by an impression upon an auditory nerve, is a wonderful conception. If you do not think so, because you are so used to it, I would like you to tell me whether you could invent a sixth sense. You have hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, seeing. Will you invent another? You have not the power to invent another sense; and the idea of any sense which now exists must have been equally a feat of boundless wisdom, impossible to a being who could not hear and see.

He that invented the idea, also planned the way by which hearing would become possible. What an intellect was that which forged the link between

matter and mind, so that the movements of particles of air, and the impression made by these upon the drum of the ear should turn into impressions upon mind and heart! God must have every power in perfection, or he could not have contrived and constructed such an admirable instrument as the ear. I should not think the time ill-spent if I were able to give you a lecture upon the human ear. We know far less about it than we do concerning the eye; and my own knowledge of it is so scant that I can only glance at the subject. That outer portion which we commonly call the ear, is only the vestibule of curious, intricate, winding passages, which communicate with chambers of bone and vaults of ivory. Curtains are stretched along these passages, membranes which tremble as the head of a drum, or vibrate like a tambourine. Between two of these parchment curtains a chain of very small bones is extended. Have you never heard of the stirrup-bone? Rows of fine threads, or nerves, convey the motion, or the sound, into the brain, and there the soul sits waiting for the news. It is all wonderful. Nor must I forget to remind you that the ear is "planted." The important parts-the real ear-are so deeply seated in the head, as to be beyond a mere external inspection. The lobe of the ear is like a leaf above ground, but the hearing organ is "planted" in the skull; it is placed very near the brain, and operates on both sides of it, so as to keep the whole mind in communication with sounds from every quarter. The ear is set deep, and its chambers-some filled with air, and some filled with liquid-are thus protected from much harm, which might otherwise come to them from the outer world.

Au aurist who explained to you the mechanism of the ear should make you feel that an undevout aurist is mad. The infinite wisdom of God is seen in this gate of sense; and it is there in far greater measure than we can perceive. And can you believe that this marvellous instrument for hearing was made by a deaf God, or a dead God, or an impersonal power; or that it came into existence through "a fortuitous concourse of atoms"? I know not the precise terms in which they now attempt to describe creation without a Creator, design without a designer; but I can only say that those who believe in ears created by an unhearing force or being, have more faith than I can muster. Nay, I venture to say that their faith has overleaped itself, has climbed to the top of the ladder and gone down on the other side; so that, instead of being great faith, it has rotted into gross credulity. To fly from the difficulties of faith to the impossibilities of unbelief, is a singular infatuation. I prefer to believe in a personal, intelligent First Cause.

But even if you had an ear made-and I suppose that it would be no very great difficulty to fashion, in wax or some other substance, an exact resemblance to an ear-could you produce hearing then? God alone gives the life which hears. That particular point in which motion is translated into audible sound-where is that? That thing which hears-I mean not the vibrating parchment, nor the telephonic nerves, but that living something which is informed by the nerves, and reads their message-where and what is that something? The surgeon searches with his knife, but he declares that he cannot find it. No, he cannot find it: it has fled before his instrument of search. But this much is sure-once gone he cannot restore it. He could not make it at the first, nor renew it when once departed. Not the whole troop of surgeons and physicians of all the hospitals could suffice to create a soul. There is a spiritual something-the true man, and this it is which God makes. Do you know yourself? Could you put your finger on yourself? Oh, no; that mystic being, that strange, half Godlike existence, the soul, is not within the range of our senses. He that made the soul, has he no soul? Can he not hear? O sirs, the argument is plain enough It needs no elaboration. It carries conviction at first sight.

To imagine that the Creator of life does not see and hear is absurd; and yet the devil tempts gracious people, the best of people, at times to think that the Lord does not observe them in their trials. "Oh," say they, "God is too great, surely, to hear me, a poor sinful woman, or a frail, ignorant man. His greatness must prevent his hearing me." Yet, surely, you would not think the Lord deaf because you are unworthy. You would not attribute to him a greatness which would really involve littleness. If you make him so great that he is deaf, or so grand that he is blind, you have dishonored him. "No," say you, "but, surely, God does not see and hear everything. Look at my great sorrow; why does he allow it to grow and deepen? What keen miseries are caused by my thoughts! As George Herbert puts it, 'My thoughts are all a case of knives.' " Just so; and yet the Lord knows and permits it all in love to your soul. He does not forget you; but, "like as a father pitieth his children," so doth he pity you. Do not be led astray by the idea that you are passed over and forgotten by your God. "He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names"; and he knows you, also, specially and individually. I marked a floweret in the center of a beech-wood in the New Forest. Surrounded by the princely trees of the wood, it smiled from the sod a modest beauty. I thought to myself, "When do you see the sun? Does his light and glory ever cheer you?" I tarried in

that forest, and watched the sunbeams smiling through the interlacing branches of the trees; and while I lingered I marked how, ever and anon, the sun found out a way to pour his golden glory direct into the center of that flower, which glowed and smiled as heaven thus communed with its littleness. Rest assured that God, who is our sun, thinks of the least of us. We are not neglected weeds of the moorland. The Lord sees us. We do not waste our sweetness on the desert air; for God is there. Those valleys among the mountains virgin of the foot of man, are trodden by the great Husbandman. Those are his holy places, his private gardens, his secret haunts; and the flowers which bloom in them are as plants of a royal garden, which make glad the heart of the King. So too, ye hidden ones, your God does not forget you; nay, though you may be tempted to think that he does not hear and see everything, for men are so vile, and error is so rampant, and he puts up with their provocations; yet he considers all. I have been inclined to cry out myself, as the Psalmist did, “Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.” That the Lord letteth evil doctrine have so long a day is a great disquietude to a lover of truth. Ah! but the Lord hears every blasphemy, and marks it, and the day will come, as surely as he lives, when he will lift his right hand to smite down the edifices of error, and they shall be before him as a bowing wall and a tottering fence. “The way of the wicked he turneth upside down.” “Trust ye in the Lord for ever.” In the cloudy and dark day look for the light. He does see: he does hear: he must work for truth and righteousness. Shall he that made the ear not hear? Shall he that formed the eye not see? Be not guilty of so absurd a thought as to fancy that these evil days are not watched over of the Lord.

III. But now, thirdly and briefly, THAT GOD HEARS HIS OWN MUST BE ESPECIALLY CERTAIN, from the very argument of the text. “Why?” say you. Why, because they have new and spiritual ears, and they have God-given spiritual eyes; and he that planted the spiritual ear, shall he not hear? and he that formed the spiritual eye, shall he not see? It has come to pass, my brethren, that now when God speaks by his Spirit we hear him, blessed be his name! Time was when his threatenings spoke to us as with noise of thunder; but we would not hear them. Now we are humbled in the dust by his anger. He has given us ears which are joined to hearts of flesh. When he speaks by way of invitation, and says, “Seek ye my face,” we answer, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” Do you imagine that if God has given us the grace to hear his voice, he will not hear us when we lift up our voices to him?

Rather let us each one say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints." Did he give you a new ear only that you might hear him chide you? Did he intend never to regard your answer to his rebukes? Does he convince you of sin without intending to grant you a Savior? Does he bring you to hear the law and to confess sin, and ask for pardon; and can he not, will he not, hear you? Has he made you to hear of judgment to torment you before your time? Will he shut his ears to your humble prayers? I will not believe it. He that gave you those spiritual ears meant to say something worth your hearing, and he meant to hear you when you cried to him. He has spoken, and some of us are to-night full of ecstasy at what we have heard him say. Has he not said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me"? If you hear him speak, he will hear you speak. Oh, that you would sit at his feet and ask him to speak on; and then you may be sure that he has inclined his ear unto you!

He has created in the minds of some of you a sense of need, and will he not pity you? Perhaps you have not reached any farther than to know your wants and dangers; but he gave you this knowledge. You are hungry and thirsty; you had not these spiritual appetites once; he gave them to you. Why? Wherefore? You were not hungry for mercy; you were not thirsty for righteousness till his Spirit came and gave you life, and with that life the soul-hunger. Will he not satisfy the hunger he creates? Will he not fulfill the desire he has implanted? I never heard of such cruelty as for a man to gather together five hundred poor people from the street who had learned to draw tight their hunger-belts and bear privation, and on a sudden to excite a ravenous hunger in them, and then turn them adrift, and say, "Go your ways; I have made you feel your necessities most terribly; but I have nothing else for you. I have shown you your true condition; I have made you know what destitution you feel. Be off with you!" God will not treat you thus. It is not like him. He that planted holy longings, and hungry pinings, and spiritual appetites, must intend to supply them. He that has made you hear the voice of your need, will hear it himself. He is far quicker of hearing than you can be, and your wants appeal to his heart before your heart is awake to them. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" He that gives spiritual life will live himself to sustain that life.

In addition to this, he makes us long after holiness; will he not work it in us? I might say of myself and many dear brothers and sisters here, that we habitually desire to be holy, and to be wholly free from sin. We cannot

endure evil. A preacher once declared that when Paul cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he was not a Christian. That shows how very little that preacher knew about the matter. No man but a true believer would have such anguish on account of sin. Just in proportion as he became a Christian of the highest order, would he cry out in an agony when he found evil thoughts and tendencies within his nature. It is when we begin to loathe sin, and any leaning towards sin, and when we grow wretched because of a single evil thought, that we have grown in grace, and are far advanced, and are reaching towards that other verse, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory." A true believer must hate sin with an intense hatred; and when the Lord has given him to do so, he may be sure that the same Lord will give deliverance from the power of evil. He who makes you hate sin will answer to that detestation, and deliver you from that which you so greatly loathe. Does he make you pine after holiness, and will he deny you holiness? Do you hear his voice of command, and will he not hear your prayer for help to obey? Does your child pine to be good, and can you help him to be good, and will you not do so? To the ear which God has enabled to hear his call the Lord will lend his own ear to hear prayer. Surely, the very holiness of God that puts into us a desire to be holy is a guarantee to us that he will help us to be holy. He that makes us long for purity will work it in us. It may be, he will put us in the furnace; but by some means he will purify us as silver is refined. He that planted the desire after holiness is himself holy, and will work holiness in his people.

Do you not sometimes sit down and indulge a day-dream of what you had wished to be? Do you not wake up, and put down your foot, and say, "This is what I resolve to be, God helping me. I will endeavor to live nearer to my Lord, and to be more like my Lord Jesus." Then you feel a fire burning upon the altar of your heart. You feel that you must put forth all your energies in the divine life, and press forward after the highest degrees of grace. Be encouraged by this condition of desire, for your Lord will not deny it to you. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" He that planted in your heart the desire after this high ideal will hear you as you cry to him for aid in the sacred enterprise. The Creator answers to that which he has created: "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him."

Do you pray, brothers and sisters? I know you do; but do you really believe that God hears you? I cannot help thinking that a great mass of prayers are poured into a vacuum. I cannot shake off the thought that

brethren seem often to be praying into the eternal emptinesses, pleading with an infinite nothing. They say the proper words, but they mean little or nothing by them. Does God hear prayer? Do you answer, "Yes"? Then let us pray as if we truly believed that he did. When we have done praying, let us expect him to answer us. When we go into the bank with our cheques, we hand them in, take up the money, and are gone. Do we deal thus at the Bank of Faith? Do we plead the promise? If so, the Lord counts out the money; but do we take it up? I fear we leave it on the counter. The Lord might say, "Is that man gone? Gone without what he came for? He pleaded my promise, and has he gone away content without my reply?" Is it your habit to go to the throne of mercy and ask for the mere sake of asking? Do you grind at a mill for the mere pleasure of grinding? Surely he that asketh receiveth; and if he does not, he should enquire the reason why. A little time before prayer, to prepare the petition, would much help towards reality in prayer. A little time after prayer, to consider when and how the blessing is to be used when the Lord sends it, would be a further aid to faith. Sometimes the angels come to our letter-boxes and cannot put in the answers because the boxes are fastened down by unbelief. We are not prepared to receive what God is prepared to give. Let us pray, believing that as surely as God has given us an ear he has an ear himself, and will hear our pleadings. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?"

Brethren, we are at this time greatly concerned about the Master's kingdom. Some of us have no other trouble comparable to our anxiety about the cause of God and truth. We mourn as we see the evil leaven leavening the whole lump. Do you not think that the great Head of the church is as much concerned about it as we are? It is his own kingdom; it is, therefore, more upon his mind than it can be upon ours. It is God's own truth which is denied: it is his own Son that is dishonored. The glorious doctrine of the atonement-when we hear it scoffed at we burn with indignation, and our heart breaks with grief. Does not the Lord's heart also burn with indignation when the precious blood is trampled on? Is he indifferent to all this apostasy and heresy? Depend upon it, he is not; for "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?" and he that has sworn to glorify his Son, will he for ever stand still when that Son is dishonored, even in his own church?

IV. I have done when I say just this one thing more: A BELIEF THAT GOD HEARS AND SEES HAS A VERY BENEFICIAL TENDENCY UPON THOSE WHO FIRMLY HOLD IT. It works good in a thousand ways. Time would fail me to

recount a tithe of them. It may suffice to take a thought or two, and turn the matter over in our minds. If we feel that God sees and hears, what an incentive it is to do right, and to be valiant for the truth! Soldiers will play the man in the presence of their prince. If our Lord looks on, what will we not do and dare? The same sense of his presence will act as a check to any and every deed of sin. We cannot indulge the thought of evil when the Lord himself hears that thought. Does the Lord look on, and shall I sin in his divine presence? Shall I grieve Jesus when the Beloved of my soul is himself close to me, and watches, with regretful eye, each sinful movement? The solemn conviction that God hears is a check to evil, and a stimulus for good.

It acts grandly as a preservative against the desire of applause and the fear of man. He who knows assuredly that God hears him, will speak the truth though all the world should listen, or though no one but God should hear him. It was a beautiful word which was spoken by a soldier to an open-air preacher not long ago. A friend who was preaching in the street, had gathered a considerable audience; but as a troop of soldiers went by, with colors and martial music, the people were dispersed, and the preacher was left almost alone. A soldier, who for some reason was marching outside the ranks, called to him, "Go on, sir: God loves to hear you praising his Son Jesus." True; most true. God delights in the glories of Christ. What a grand audience you have if the Lord hearkens and hears you praising his Son! Do the despisers grind their teeth when they hear Jesus preached? Never mind. Let them wear out their hearts in wrath; they cannot rob Jesus of a beam of brightness. Keep on praising your Lord and Savior; for if men who have ears to hear will not hear, yet be sure your heavenly Father will not fail to listen. We do not want applause from men, since God hears us. If the Queen were by, and a soldier performed a deed of valor, and a person were to say to him, "You did well, and you may be proud that Corporal Brown and Sergeant Smith saw you and approved of what you did." "Oh," says he, "I care nothing for corporals and other petty officers; Her Majesty herself looked at me, and said, 'Well done.' She will, with her own hands, put the Victoria Cross upon me in due time. That is the reward I seek."

If God sees me, it is a small matter who may or who may not see and approve. We need to grow thus healthily independent of human judgment; for he who fawns for smiles, or trembles at frowns, will never lead a noble life for long.

The assurance that God sees and hears, is a wonderful care-killer. Why should I be anxious? My heavenly Father knoweth that I have need of these things. What if I am in trouble? This my Father knows. Brethren, if the Lord knows our soul in adversity, and if his eye is ever upon us, are we not safe? Know that you serve one whose eyes are upon the righteous, and whose ears are open to their cry, and you will live above care.

And, oh, how this will tend to promote your fellowship with God! When your heart sings, "He leadeth me; he heareth me; he knoweth the way that I take"; then are you filled with a sense of fellowship with the Eternal God. How we love him who heareth us always! Since he is always seeing us, we learn to see him. "Thou God seest me is a word which brightens up our sad hearts till we also see God. We pass through the trouble, and toil, and temptation, and turmoil, of this mortal life with serene spirit, since it is written, "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord is there." Suffering is no mean thing, if we suffer in full submission to the will of him that heareth and seeth us. If he is but with us, all question is ended. We cheerfully say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." As long as his father was captain of the ship, his little son never knew a fear; for he was sure his father could steer the vessel safely to the haven. Be of good cheer, our Father who sees and hears us, is in the midst of his people, and not so much as one of them shall perish. If the Lord were away, or asleep, or deaf, we might be in a trembling mood; but while his ear and eye are open to us, we cannot tolerate mistrust. A little altering the quaint poet's lines, we may say-

*"Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it; he doth steer,
Even when the bark seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of his art,
He cannot hide his eyes, much less his heart."*

Go, speak with the wise Planter of the ear; for he will surely hear.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED READERS,-From afar I greet you with hearty salutations. I am resting with the earnest desire that I may gain health and refreshment of mind for future service. I knew right well several well-beloved and useful brethren, who were weary and worn, but, humanly speaking, would have soon been restored if they could have rested. They kept on painfully for a

while, and then died. Friends from all quarters have pointed to these beacons, and have bidden me take warning; and I feel that I am right in doing so. I hope to do more by attempting less.

You will be glad to know that the Special Services at the Tabernacle have been, in a memorable manner, attended with the divine blessing. May the printed sermons, in the absence of the Preacher, have an equally remarkable share in the sacred benediction!

It is in answer to many requests that this particular sermon has been selected. May it be as much enjoyed by the reader in the perusal, as by the preacher in its delivery! With it comes my hearty love in Christ Jesus to each one of the great host who, week by week, drink in the Word of God through the Yours very heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Mentone, Dec. 7, 1889.

MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE: AN INSTRUCTIVE SCENE.

NO. 2119

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 22ND, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24TH, 1889.

“Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”-John 20:10-16.

I WANTED to speak to-night to believers who have lost the joyful presence of their Lord, and who are saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” But when I thought of that matter, I said to myself, Many will be in the congregation who have never yet found him, and therefore do not know his sweetness by experience, and yet they may be longing to find

him. Is it possible to benefit two classes at once? “Well, well,” I said to myself, “I can speak to the saint, for she who figures in the text was Mary; but I can also, at the same time, talk to the sinner; for she was Magdalene, and that name has somehow become connected with penitent sinners.” I pray, at the beginning, that, if there be one here who has long been a Mary, and has followed Christ lovingly, and if there be another here who is more like what is commonly, but erroneously, known as a Magdalene, both the Mary and the Magdalene may find direction and consolation in my discourse.

I shall have no other preface but these remarks; for we have before us a long text to be handled in a short time, and I would not perform my task slightly. We will advance by a series of observations.

I. Our first observation shall be this: A SOUL SEEKING JESUS HAS WAYS OF ITS OWN.

Read carefully the tenth verse: “Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary,” Mary had her own way of proceeding. Mary was seeking Christ more intensely and affectionately than even the choicest of the apostles. They were more able to wait for events than her eagerness would allow her to do. John was able to go home, because he had seen and believed. Peter went home all the more readily because a cloud darkened his sky. Mary was of another order from either of these: she loved, and longed to see him whom she loved. Whether he be dead or alive, she would find him. When you are seeking the Lord, it brings out your individuality. Every truly anxious soul must seek the Lord in his own way. Each case is peculiar: each seeker feels himself to be one by himself. There are not two Mary Magdalenes; and Mary differs from John and Peter.

One part of her way was this—that she would stay at the sepulcher after others had gone to their own homes. So have I seen the lover of the Lord lingering at the mercy-seat when the prayers of others were ended, and remaining in the use of the means of grace when others had enjoyed a full sufficiency of them. The meeting is very early in the morning, but Mary must be there; and if the meeting be at a distance, she trudges over the miles. One saint is noted for Bible-reading, and nothing will attract her from it. Another abounds in private prayer, and is mighty on her knees. Another feels bound to go where Christ Jesus is earnestly talked about, and therefore he spends many an hour with the Lord’s people. Perhaps Peter and John had other necessary business to attend to, and their duty called

them away from the tomb; but Mary stood there still, hoping to hear something about her Lord, and, at least, to know where they had laid his body. It is a blessed thing when the heart becomes so resolved to find Christ that it cannot be happy without him, cannot even live without him. When you are resolved to wait at the posts of wisdom's doors until the Incarnate Wisdom appears to you, you will not have to wait long.

Mary had ways of her own beside, for she stood there "weeping." I do not read that, upon this occasion, either Peter or John shed a single tear. They may have done so, but the Holy Spirit has not recorded the fact; yet he has recorded it of this earnest seeker that she "stood without at the sepulcher weeping." She wept as if her heart would break. Where was her Lord? What had they done with that sacred body? She had seen it wrapped in spices and fine linen, and laid in the tomb of Joseph; where was it now? The tomb was evidently quite empty of all but the cerements; where was the body? What new indignities had the cruel ones put upon it? That dear mangled body-to what malicious treatment was it now exposed? She stood, in deep emotion, sorrowing as love alone can sorrow when its beloved object is in peril. It is a great thing, dear soul, when you cannot find Christ, to weep your eyes out till you can. When you cannot live without him for very heart-break; when all the joy of life is gone; when existence becomes only another name for grieving after an absent love, and that love the Lord Jesus; then you are not far off from the happy hour of finding him. Tears may be as the dew of the morning, the sure prophets of the rising sun. At any rate, many search for Jesus with tears in their eyes.

Mary did something more, which was according to her own mode of action-"she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher." They that would find Christ must stoop to look for him. They must not merely wait for him, but look for him on their knees. I have known some people pretend to wait for the Lord, and they have kept up the pretense to their sod's ruin! for they never looked to him by faith. I have known some weep much, but they would not open their eyes to look to Jesus and be saved. True seekers look for Jesus in the Scriptures; they search for him in the hearing of the Word; they cry after him in their private room. This is well. If you would be saved, seek Jesus, and he will find you. Cry evermore, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat." No heart has ever yet earnestly looked after Jesus but what before long he has been seen. If there be this waiting, this weeping, this stooping, this

looking, there will be an appearing in mercy, and a recognition in joy. Mary, who looks for Jesus, shall see him.

Note this peculiarity: that she looked in the wrong place. She looked into the sepulcher for the living and risen Jesus. Earnest, true-hearted, zealous, Mary was; but she labored under a mistake. Well might the angels say, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." Thus have I known true penitents seek the Lord where he cannot be found. They have expected to undergo a sort of inward purgatory, and they have sought for Jesus in their own feelings. He is not there. They have imagined that they must be carried away with despair before they might lay hold upon the Savior. Yet the Lord is not in the wind of feeling, nor in the fire of despair: his presence is known by his still small voice. They have not looked with a simple, childlike trust to Jesus; but have gone about to this, and that, and the other thing, and all in vain. They have sought for Jesus among forms and ceremonies, but in vain. Possibly they have gone to human priests, or sages: these are as dead as the tombs. Priestcraft and philosophy are no places for the living Christ to be found in.

Yet I am glad that Mary looked into the tomb; for, though she looked in the wrong place, it was a good thing to be looking for Jesus after any fashion. Better blunder in seeking Christ than be so wise as to go away from him. I mean, better to be a sincere, but foolish, seeker after Jesus, and fall into a hundred errors of doctrine, than to be highly cultured, and all the while to be looking to self, or to the world, and forgetting the Lord Jesus. Poor seekers! you are in trouble, I see it by your tears. There is hope for you, for you have eyes, and are looking out for something better than you can find in yourselves, or in your fellow-men. I am sure of you, for you will not run away home; you stay near the place where Jesus was last seen. You are not rolling-stones, but you abide in earnest hearing, in apostolic doctrine, and in prayers. Your constancy and your eagerness are cheering signs that grace is beginning its work in your hearts. Comfort is on the way to you, I can see the light of it reflected in those tears which glisten in your eyes. God grant that we may not be disappointed in you, for his name's sake!

II. But now, going a little further on, I would observe, secondly, that A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAKES SMALL ACCOUNT OF ANYTHING ELSE.

Mary, when she looked down, saw the angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. At any other

time, if Mary Magdalene had seen two angels, she would have been astounded, so as to lose her balance, through reverent fear. A vision of angels to a holy woman—there is something overpowering in it. A vision of angels, even to the ungodly soldiers that watched the grave of Christ, had made them faint, and become as dead men; but if you read the passage attentively, you will see that Mary talked to these angels as if they had been good men whom she had met before. She was not abashed by them. When they say to her, “Woman, why weepest thou?” she answers them, very plainly, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” She is not frightened at spirits and angels. Neither is a soul that is in earnest after Christ to be put away from its search by any sort of diversion. The true enquirer would ask of angels, or of the most eminent saints, concerning the Lord Jesus. It will be only too glad to ask of anybody, or to answer a question from anybody, if it may thus hope to find Jesus. Did you never note the all-subduing power of a great desire? When God makes the heart tender, and sets it longing after Jesus, it forgets its own feebleness, and ceases to be alarmed by that which once distressed it. A longing soul would break through angels and through devils, through heaven and through earth, to reach Jesus. We must have him. We must behold the Well-beloved. Our soul is all on fire for him, it cannot be restrained, it will burn its way to him as the flame makes its way across the prairie. We want Jesus, and we will not be content with anything short of him.

Notice, too, as confirmatory of what I have said, that when a soul is seeking Christ, nothing but Christ’s own Word will satisfy it. This holy woman was not content with what the angels said. Though they said to her, “Woman, why weepest thou?” those shining ones do not appear to have comforted her at all. She went on weeping. She told them why she wept, but she did not, therefore, cease her tears. And, believe me, if the angels of heaven cannot content a heart which is seeking after Jesus, you may depend upon it that the angels of the churches cannot do so. We may preach as best we can, but the words of man will never satisfy the cravings of the heart. The seeker needs Jesus: Jesus only, but Jesus certainly. You read the best of books, and heard the most faithful of testimonies when you were seeking, and yet you came away, and cried, “Alas! I have not found him; I have not found him; and I cannot be content till I do so!” Beloved, never sit down short of Christ; for short of Christ is short of salvation. Whatever you hear, never be content with hearing: long to find him of

whom you hear. However sweetly the story is told, the mere hearing of the truth must never be enough for you. You want for your salvation a personal Christ, to be heard by your own heart, and received by your own faith; and I entreat you never rest until this is your happy possession. Find HIM-him whom your soul loveth-him in whom alone your soul may trust. Let not voices from heaven, if you could hear them, much less the voices of godly men and women on earth, ever content you, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is all in all.

Furthermore, a soul seeking Jesus is glad to confess him. It was awe-inspiring to behold angels arrayed in white; it was a rare boon for the Magdalene to gaze upon, those shining ones sitting in solemn state at the head and the foot of the spot where Jesus had once laid! But it did not so overpower Mary as to prevent her open acknowledgment of her Lord. When she spoke to Peter and John, in the second verse, she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher;" but when she addressed the angels, she said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." It might not be necessary to say, "my Lord" to the two apostles, who knew exactly what she was; but she had not seen those angels before, and she would not let them go without their knowing that Jesus was her Lord, her very own; and so she puts it, "They have taken away my Lord." I like that amazingly. Are you a seeking saint? Whether you see him or do not see him, he is still yours; and you must hold to it that he is still your own. "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" and if I do not just now behold the smilings of his face, yet he is my Lord. I have given myself up to him; and, if he does not own me as his servant, I will still claim him as my Master. Come what may, if I walk in darkness, I will cleave to him the more closely, for I will not wander from him. Whither should I go? If all heaven does not shine upon me, I shall still look up that way. I have fallen into a fog, and can scarcely see my way beyond my hand; but yet I am my Lord's for all that, and I am not ashamed to declare it. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." His I am, and him I serve. My ear has been bored to the door-post, and I am his happy bondman for ever. Come death, come life, come darkness of soul, or joy of spirit; whatever happens, I am my Lord's. Such holy constancy will be rewarded.

In the true seeker, the one cry of the soul is Christ, none but Christ, Christ alone. Mary looks beyond all others. Angels may come, and angels may go; but she neither seeks nor fears them. She blushes not to confess her Lord before the white-robed spirits; but she seeks Him, and must find Him. O

child of God, keep you to the one object of your search! O sinner, when once you feel your need of Jesus, bend all your desires towards him, and seek him alone! If all your search is after Jesus, you shall find him. Let not a heaven of angels suffice to take you off from searching for your Lord and his salvation. O child of God, when you have lost the light of your Lord's face, feel that you must have it back again, or die in the dark; and when you thus feel, he will return to you. He never set a soul longing for himself, and himself only, without gratifying the longing which he had created. Hunger and thirst after the Lord Jesus are blessed; for he who created them will satisfy them. Oh, that the Lord would cause us to faint and pine after himself more and more, and then visit us with that which is our soul's only fullness, namely, his precious, priceless self!

III. Thus have we handled the second point sufficiently. Let us now make a third observation: A SOUL SEEKING JESUS MAY HAVE HIM VERY NEAR, AND NOT KNOW IT.

Read, "When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw JESUS standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." He was behind her while she stood looking into the sepulcher; and though she did not perceive it, his presence operated upon her. She had been speaking to the angels, and answering their question; and suddenly she was conscious that someone was standing just behind her. How came she thus to feel? Some think that, as Mark describes the angels as standing up, the Lord had, at that moment, come behind Mary, and the holy angels, perceiving their Lord, rose up to do him honor. They had been sitting in contemplation at the place of his sepulcher, but as soon as they caught sight of their Lord, they stood up, as if to do his bidding. From their movements Mary concluded that someone was passing behind her. It may have been so; for assuredly the angelic guards would have paid him instant reverence; but, on the other hand, rising is scarcely so much a method of saluting a superior in the East as it is in the West. Let us suggest something else. You have been sitting at your table, writing, and a friend has come behind you with noiseless tread, but yet on a sudden you have been aware of a presence. Before you had heard or seen you were impressed-what if I say overshadowed? Was it not so with Mary Magdalene and the Savior? I am not superstitious if I assert that something very similar happens to me when Jesus is near. Many a believer will tell you that he has, at times, when he has been in prayer, or hearing the Word, or meditating, felt as if he could be sure that the Lord stood near him. There could, of course, be no palpable impression upon the flesh; for

now, after the flesh, know we him no more; but yet his presence has impressed our souls. There are influences of mind on mind which are beyond the recognition of science. The great spirit of our Lord has means of making itself spiritually known to our spirits- means which flesh and blood know nothing of, and which lips could not describe. I have discerned the special presence of my Lord with me by a consciousness as sure as that by which I know that I live. Jesus has been as real to me, at my side in this pulpit, as though I had beheld him with my eyes. I appeal to the experience of many of you. Have you not been moved by a mysterious influence, which has overawed, inspired, and impressed you beyond description? A divine, majestic, delightful, and hallowing presence has been near you; and you have turned to look at a something which was so distinct that you would not have been surprised had it been visible to you. Mary did not discover at first that it was the Lord, but she felt his powerful influence, and then "she turned herself back, and saw Jesus."

The next thing to be noted was, that she saw Jesus standing. The word is better rendered "beholdeth," as in the Revised Version. It does not merely mean that she saw him; but his presence fixed her gaze. She steadily observed him. She could not take her eyes off; she beheld him intently; for she seemed to say, "I must have seen that face before. Can it be he? It is wonderfully like; but the thought cannot be entertained." But she stood, and beheld Jesus with steadfast gaze. Thus would we hold our meditations fixed upon his person. This may be so; and yet we may not know that the Lord is with us, though we are conscious of more than human company. In the case of a seeking sinner, Jesus has really come to him, and has been comforting him, and yet he did not know that it was Jesus; but dreamed that he was far away. His soul felt so tender, so melted, so ready to yield, so near to God, that he was sure some holy power was ruling him; but he knew not that it was Jesus. Occasionally, you and I have known such secret touches of heart and conscience, with bright hope, and burning love, that we have wondered at ourselves, and yet we have not dared to believe that it was the Lord himself who was thus at work upon us. And yet it was even so. We were looking for Jesus by his own light. Our hearts burned, and yet we did not perceive whence came the fire. Jesus may be very near, and yet we may fear that he has gone from us in anger.

What was it, do you think, that prevented her seeing and knowing her Lord? Shall we say that her unbelief and sorrow dimmed her eyes? Was it that, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, her eyes were holden? Very

possibly. Was it her tears that blinded her to the divine vision? Not so likely; for tears full often cleanse the spiritual vision. Weeping for an absent Christ has often made us quit a sin which aforetime had prevented fellowship with Jesus. What was it, then? I think it was that the sight was not what she expected. She was longing to see Jesus; but, may be, she only hoped to see him wrapped in grave-clothes; and so, you notice, that the evangelist puts it, "She saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." If she had seen him lying down, with the image of death upon his face, she would have known him; but to see Jesus standing, was far more than she could have hoped for. She had seen his lifeless body taken down by Joseph and Nicodemus, and she had helped to wrap him in spices and fine linen; but to see him standing, alive, was more than she could have dreamed of. The rapture was too great for her to expect or believe; and we marvel not that it is written "she knew not that it was Jesus."

Beloved, our conceptions of our Lord are so poor and low, that if he were to come to us in even a moderated degree of his glory, we should fail to apprehend that it was really he. John knew him, he had laid his head in his bosom, but he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." So overpoweringly beyond all that John could have expected, was the vision of the Lord in his glory. It is true the Lord Jesus did not manifest himself in that manner to Mary; but still, the particular posture of standing was beyond what she looked for, and therefore he was not perceived. It may be, that the Lord Jesus is truly appearing to some sinner here; but as the appearance is not what he expected, he is unable to hope that it is his Savior. You are told simply to trust him; and this is hardly what you looked for: you thought that you would suffer an experience of amazing sorrow. You looked for an affair which could be put into a biography. Tell me, did you not? But you will not have anything of the sort. You hear a voice which cries, "Only trust him, only trust him." Obey that voice, and enter into immediate rest. You thought that you would be driven to the verge of madness, and then be relieved with a joy which would make you dance; but instead thereof, you are led quietly to trust. So long as you are truly saved, what matters it? The Lord Jesus is present wherever there is humble faith in him, for that plant never grows except where he sets his pierced foot. Believe, and then know that it is Jesus.

And you, dear brother, who have lost the presence of Christ a while, perhaps you expect him to come to-night, and carry you away in a sacred transport; instead of which, it may be he will calm you, and fill you with

repose, or he may even rebuke you, and send you out to work and suffer for him. May you have the discernment, however your Lord may come, to know that it is the Lord! Though he comes not in the way in which you looked for him, yet be not so purblind as to mistake him for another. Yet if you should even think that your risen Lord is the gardener, you might not be so very wrong. If, under that misapprehension, you should ask him to dress the garden of your heart, and pluck up your weeds, and water your plants, it would be well with you. Still, he may be near you, and yet you may not know him. Take comfort from this fact; and though you mourn your own dulness of apprehension, do not utterly condemn yourself.

Under her misapprehension, Mary did not catch the tone of our Lord's voice when he asked her why she wept. Our Lord quoted the question of the angel, as if to show that he would gladly support the word which his servant had spoken. Happy messenger, whose words can be repeated by his Master! But yet Mary's ear was heavy, and she perceived not her Lord. Ah me! we also may be in such a state that we do not discern the blessed Lover of our souls, though he speaketh in the language of consolation! We would have ventured to predict that never would Mary Magdalene have forgotten that dear voice; but she did so; and what wonder if we do the same?

In a word, she was so far from discovering her Lord that she took him to be her foe rather than her Friend. She imagined that the gardener had borne the body away. Was he so unwilling to have a corpse within the region of his gardening that he had put it in a corner, that no one might perceive it? She humbles herself to him, and offers to carry away the form to which she feared he had such an objection. "Tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." He to whom she spoke had not taken away her treasure: he had brought it to her; yea, he was himself that treasure! Beloved, you and I also have reckoned our best Friend to be our enemy; so foolish are we, and so soon mistaken. In the darkness of our souls we judge unrighteously, and complain of our Lord whom alone we ought to praise. He knows our ignorance, and he forgives.

IV. Upon my fourth observation Twill be very brief-A SOUL SEEKING JESUS WILL DO ANYTHING TO FIND HIM.

Mary Magdalene was still seeking; and when she saw one standing before her, whom she thought to be the gardener, what did she do? Why, she enquired of that gardener where she might find him whom she loved. She

was willing to learn from anyone. If you are in earnest to find the Lord Jesus, you will not be particular about where you go, or of whom you learn. No matter whether the preacher is a doctor of divinity or a converted coal-heaver, so long as he preaches Christ, you will be glad to learn from him. She supposed him to be the gardener; but yet she said to him, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him." Many have been happy to learn of Jesus from fishermen and cobblers. Does my friend object to my hearing an illiterate man? Ah, sir! when I am seeking eternal salvation, I care little about the philosopher, I want the experimental Christian. For him I feel a deep respect; and, even if I know him to be only a gardener, I speak to him reverently as "Sir." When a man is not truly seeking the Lord, he wants short sermons, and these of a high literary order, or else adorned with attractive rhetoric; but when he is, with his whole heart, seeking for the Savior, he is not so concerned about polite phrases, and ecclesiastical correctness; but he looks eagerly for a practical direction how he may come to Jesus; and he will take that from any man or woman, be their station what it may. Let him be a chimneysweep, if he will lead me to Jesus, I will follow. So it was with this holy woman; she desired to find the Lord, and she was altogether absorbed in that one pursuit. She speaks as if everybody was equally intent upon the one theme; for instead of mentioning the name Jesus, she says, "If thou hast borne him hence." Why, Mary, what art thou talking about? "About him," saith she. But who is this of whom thou speakest? Ah, friends! to her there was but one "him" in all the world, just then! Oh, to be thus absorbed!

Such was the desire of Magdalene to find the Lord Jesus, that she feared no ghastly sight. Let her know where the body is laid, and she will be there. That body, which had bled so much from its five wounds, must have been a heart-breaking sight to a tender-hearted woman; but she is not dismayed. Let the body be how it may, it is the flesh and blood of her dear Lord, and she must pay it homage. Wounds or no wounds, she would behold it. A wounded Christ is altogether lovely in the eyes of his redeemed. His blood, flowing for me, clothes him with a royal crimson robe in my eyes. I fear nothing, so long as I may but come to him. Dear hearts, if you long for salvation, you will not find fault with those who preach the doctrine of the cross, the wounds, the blood! You will not kick at the doctrine of a crucified Savior, your Substitute condemned at the bar of justice. You want Jesus who died. You must behold him for yourself by faith, and no

ridicule of the vain, or sneer of the proud, or cavil of the doubting, can make him uncomely in your eyes.

Notice that she dreads no heavy burden. She says, "I will take him away." Why, Mary, you could not bear away so great a load! You would fall beneath the weight of a man's corpse! You are not strong enough for the sad task! Ah! but she thought that she could bear the blessed burden, and she meant to try! She would have accomplished it. Faith laughs at impossibility, and cries, "it shall be done"; but love actually performs the deed. A heart that is burning with love has about it a seven-fold energy, whose capacity it would be hard to calculate. It would seem a grim and terrible task for a woman, at early morning, to be carrying from its grave the corpse of one who had been hanged upon a tree; but she offers herself for the deed, and is even eager for it. To a soul that would fain find Christ, nothing is too hot or too heavy, nothing is too cold or too sickening. We would do anything, refuse nothing, and suffer everything, if we might but clasp him in our arms, our Jesus and our all.

Yet was she wedded to her old mistake: she continued to seek the living among the dead, for she looked again into the sepulcher. Thus have I seen seeking souls cling to their original mistake, and follow up those erroneous but natural hopes which are surely doomed to disappointment. How do I know that Mary began to look again into that sepulcher? Observe that, in the sixteenth verse we read, "She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni!" That is the second time she turned herself. The first time she turned, and looked at Jesus, whom she supposed to be the gardener. Now, if she had to turn again to see him, she must, in the meanwhile, have faced in the old direction, and must, therefore, have been peering again into the empty tomb. That is the difficulty which we have with poor seekers when they are in their fits. We persuade them from looking to themselves and their feelings, but they are soon back again at that unprofitable work. We tell them, "He is not here, for he is risen. Look not to your own dead self, with its feelings and resolvings, for Jesus is not there." For a while they yield to us, and try to look to the Lord; but they do not know him, and so their eyes insensibly return to the old place, looking again into the sepulcher of self, to find a living hope in the things of death. Still, even this mistaken persistency shows how anxious they are, and how desperately they are set upon finding salvation. Though they make serious mistakes, and even repeat them, yet they cannot give over; for nothing short of Christ will content them.

V. And that brings us to our fifth point: A SEEKING SOUL MAY FIND JESUS THROUGH ONE WORD.

We might be wise to clip our sermons down, and make them much shorter. Long discourses have often missed the mark; but our Lord's one word gave Mary all she sought. He said to her, "Mary"; and at once she knew him, and cried, "Rabboni." Only one word! Jesus can preach a perfect sermon in one word. O dear friends, when you cannot say much to an anxious enquirer, say a single word. Who knows what that one word may do? When you cannot repeat a sermon, quote a verse. "A verse may hit him whom a sermon flies." Do not think that strength lies in length: it is often the reverse.

Though Mary came to herself by one word, that one word was from Jesus himself. He and the angels together had not comforted her with a sentence, but one word from his heart went to her heart. That one word of love from his lip, "Mary," brought that other word of reverence from her lip, "Rabboni." Dear friends, beseech the Lord to speak in his own all-powerful way at this time. In the meeting for prayer you prayed for me that I might speak, and I hope the Lord heard you; but now go yet further, and cry, "Speak, Lord! Speak thyself! The angel of the church has spoken, and thou hast sealed his message, but now, we entreat thee, go further, and do thou speak one word thyself, by thine own Spirit!"

That one word was the Magdalene's own name. It was as though he had said, "I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine." Words, when they are spoken with a general bearing, may prove feeble. When the angel said, "Woman," and Jesus himself said, "Woman," that name belonged to a large class of individuals; and Mary did not take it to herself. But when our Lord said, "Mary," there was but one Mary present, and therefore it came home to her without fail. This is what is needed: an assured, personal application of the Word. This our Lord grants when the message comes right home to you, as if you were the only one present: the preacher looks at you, speaks to you, and gives such personal details, that you are sure that not the preacher, but the preacher's God, is speaking to you. Then it is that you find the Lord, and know of a surety that it is he.

That word from the Master's lips, that word your own name, that word shall wake the echoes of your heart by arousing happy memories, and recalling hours of sweet delight. When a soul knows that Jesus knows its name, it soon begins to know Jesus for itself. Who but he could have said,

“Mary” with that emphatic accent, with that peculiar intonation? Who but he could have brought all her life to remembrance, not so much by the word itself as by the meaning which he threw into it, and the vivid flash of his eye which went with it? One glance of his eye darted the light of God into her spirit. “Mary!” was the Open Sesame of her heart and mind. Oh, now she has him! Lord, speak in this fashion to some seeker who is here looking for thee! Lord, speak to John and Peter, to Jane and Sarah! Let the message come to many hearers from thine own lips, to thine own glory!

VI. The last head is this—A SEEKING SOUL WILL RESPOND WITH REVERENCE TO THE WORD OF JESUS. Mary said at once, “Rabboni.” This is a Hebrew word, signifying “Master,” or, as Parkhurst says, having a Chaldee particle within it, which makes it to mean “My Master,” or, as I have heard some say, “Great Master.” At any rate, she meant that he was her Lord and Teacher. He knew her heart, he understood her inmost soul, and therefore she owned him Lord. He had called her by her name, and she owned that all-controlling voice. He was her Master, since he could so divinely know and move her heart. Even thus may we each one say, “My God, my Savior, convinced by thy knowledge of me, and overpowered by thy condescension towards me, I feel that thou hast the sole right to my love, my trust, my obedience! Thou art within and about me, nearer to me than hands and feet, nearer to me than even the blood that flows from my heart; and therefore I joyfully submit my whole being to thee, to be ruled and instructed by thee as my sole Lord and Rabbi!”

In addition to this, she feels that she knows him. He is no stranger to her. Had he been a stranger, he might have said “Mary” many times; but because he was the Good Shepherd that knows his sheep, and calls them by name, therefore Mary, as one of his sheep, responded to his call. Mary knew him: do you know the Master? Beloved, do you know the Lord Jesus? To know him is life eternal! Have you this life? Not to know him is an ignorance dark as death. I do not say, do you know about him? But do you know HIM? Has the Lord ever spoken to you? Has he ever worded it with you? Has he spoken one almighty syllable which has thrilled your very soul? If so, you will at once take him to be your Teacher, and yield your intellect to his instruction. Henceforth you will only want to know what he chooses to reveal; but what he reveals will satisfy your reason at once. Henceforth opposing philosophies will go to the wind, and you will learn of him. Henceforth your own thoughts and speculations will seem as the chaff of the threshing-floor, compared with the words which he teaches, which

are full of weight and divine authority, even of light and power eternal. To-night, from my very heart, I call Jesus “Rabboni.” I will have no Rabbi but Christ; no Master but my Lord Jesus. By all his knowledge of me, and all his revelation of himself to me, I take him to be to me my Teacher and Lord. “Rabboni” means also “Master” by way of authority. Mary confessed herself the follower of Jesus. Where he led the way, she was resolved to follow, even as our hymn puts it-

*“I am thine, and thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And, in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek thy praise.”*

From that time, even if it had not been so with her before, Mary Magdalene was one of those of whom it could be said, “They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Happy man and happy woman, who will keep close to every footstep of the Lord. If you are seeking him at this hour, pray that, at this moment, he may speak the revealing word, so that you may henceforth feel that a change has come over you, the like of which you have never known. May you experience a sacred twist which shall affect your whole character! May Jesus touch your heart so that your whole body, soul, and spirit shall never forget that touch in time or in eternity! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

I hope my readers may have as much enjoyment in reading this sermon, as fell to my lot when preaching and revising it. At this present time I have lost my voice; but I feel specially thankful that this unusual inconvenience has happened to me only when it does not hinder me in the Lord’s work. Still, I would beg the prayers of my loving readers, that I may soon be able to speak, so as to be heard in the great congregation.

I take this opportunity, on this sermon for the Sunday before Christmas, to send my sincere Christian salutations to all, in every place, who read this discourse. The God of all grace bless you and your household with the mercies which come of our Lord’s first advent, and with a happy expectation of the high privileges which await believers at his second and more glorious appearing!

C. H. S. MENTONE, DEC. 14, 1889.

THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS; OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH.

NO. 2120

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 29TH, 1889,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPT. 5TH, 1889.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.”-John 10:27-30.

OUR Savior did not hesitate to preach the deeper doctrines of the gospel to the most miscellaneous assembly. When he began to preach where he was brought up, they all gathered with admiration about him, until he preached the doctrine of election; and then, straightway, they were so maddened that they would have destroyed him. They could not bear to hear of the widows of Israel passed by, and the woman of Sarepta chosen; nor of a heathen leper healed, while the many lepers of their own race were left to die. Election seems to heat the blood and fire the wrath of many. Not that they care to be chosen of God themselves; but, like the dog in the manger, they would keep other people out of the privilege. Not even to prevent these displays of bad temper did our Lord keep back the discriminating truths of the Word. Here, when addressing the Jews, he did

not hesitate to speak, even to a rude rabble, concerning that glorious doctrine. He says, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." He does not lower the standard of doctrine; but he holds his ground, and carries the war into the enemy's camp. The notion that certain truths are not fit to be preached to a general assembly, but are to be kept for the special gathering of the saints, is, I believe, horribly mischievous. Christ has not commanded us to keep a part of our teaching *sub rosa*; reserved from the common folk, and set aside for the priests alone. He is for openly proclaiming all truth. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." There is no truth that we need be ashamed of, and there is no truth that will do any harm. We grant you that every truth can be twisted; but even this would be a less evil than the concealment of it. Whatever the doctrine may be, ungodly men can pervert it according to their own lusts; and if we have to stop preaching a doctrine because of the possibility of perverting it, we shall never preach anything at all, for every truth may be perverted, and made to be the mother of infinite mischief. Our Savior did not teach his disciples to keep certain things for the instructed few who were able to receive them; but he bade us publish all the great truths, since they are necessary for conviction, for conversion, for edification, for sanctification, and for the perfecting of the people of God. Even to his brutish opponents he exhibited but little reserve. He flashed in the faces of his adversaries this grand, but humbling truth, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." Your unbelief is just an evidence that you were not chosen, that you have not been called by the Spirit of God, and that you are still in your sins.

The Jews had said to him, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." They professed that they wanted to know more certainly concerning him. This was a vain pretense, for he had told them all they needed to know, and they had not believed him. Therefore he answered them to a large degree by making them know more about themselves. Sometimes the point in which a man is deficient is not as to the gospel, but as to his own need of it. He may know all of Christ that is needful for his salvation, but he may not know enough about himself and his own lost condition; and therefore he is not in the way in which Christ becomes precious to him, because he is ignorant of his deep and terrible need. So the Savior began to talk to them, not so much about himself as about his people, and what they were to be. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

I pray God, the Holy Ghost, to bless the word to many, that they may learn more about the work of Christ in their hearts, and more about their need of it, and thus may be led to seek Jesus, and find him to-night as their Savior and their Shepherd.

There are two things in my text which will suffice for our meditation. First, here is a description given of the Lord's people. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." And then, secondly, there is a privilege secured to them, namely, their everlasting, unquestionable safety. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

I. First, and all that I can say will be but little, considering the largeness of the subject, let us notice THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. They are first described by a specialty of possession: "My sheep." All men are not sheep, for some are foxes, or ravening wolves, and others are compared to dogs and lions. All persons who might be called sheep are not Christ's sheep. All do not belong to his flock. All are not gathered into his fold. There is a speciality of possession. There may be many sheep, but the Savior speaks of "My sheep," those whom he chose of old, those who were given him of the Father, those who have been bought with his blood, redeemed from among men, and in due time have been ransomed by his power, for he has bought them back from the hand of the enemy, and therefore claims them to be his own. "The Lord's portion is his people." Other lords have their portion, and Christ takes his portion. His people are the lot of his inheritance. He speaks of "my sheep" as a peculiar heritage, whom, as a shepherd, he claims for his own. Of these he is the sole Owner. He is not merely their Keeper, but their Possessor. We read of the hireling shepherd, "whose own the sheep are not"; but in the case of our good Shepherd, "he putteth forth his own sheep."

There is a speciality of character about them. They are "my sheep." They are dependent, timid, trembling, obedient, teachable; they are made sheep by his own Spirit. They have received a nature which is not that of the doggish world, nor that of the swinish multitude, nor that of the wolfish persecutor; but that of men indwelt of the Spirit of God, who are therefore clean, gentle, loving, gracious. He calls them "My sheep," for they have a special relation to himself: they are like Jesus. Being his sheep, he has

become their Guardian as well as their Proprietor, and they look up to him as such. They are sheep to him, and he is a shepherd to them.

We may judge ourselves to-night by considering whether towards Christ we are his sheep. Do we acknowledge ourselves as belonging to him, spirit, soul, and body? Do we regard ourselves as being, in relation to him, no wiser, no stronger, than sheep to a shepherd? I know some who are certainly no sheep of Christ's flock, for they will be led by nobody in heaven, or on earth; but must have their own sweet way. They are critics of the Bible, not disciples of it. They might be very good dogs, but they are very queer sheep. They would make very respectable wolves, for they are great in destructive criticism; but they certainly are not sheep; and their temper and spirit are such that they would disdain the character, if they understood it. "What! to go where I am led? To lie down where I am bidden to lie down? Not to choose my own way? Just to see nothing, and know nothing; but to have my eyes in his head, and my wisdom in his mind? To be shepherded by another mind than my own? Is it so? Am I to be nothing but a sheep to the Lord Jesus?" Yes, it is even so; and hence the modern wise man is indignant, and proudly repudiates the character of a sheep. As for us, we accept all that the name implies. O brethren, we can play the man before other people, but when we come before our Lord, as the sheep is a mere animal in comparison with its shepherd, we feel ourselves to be less than that. How often have we cried with David, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee"! O my Lord, in thy presence I sink as low as low can be, and thou becomest very high, yea, all in all to me, the Shepherd of my weak, vacillating, trembling spirit! There is a speciality, then, about these people in the description. I have only time to hint at it.

A chief mark of Christ's people is attention. "My sheep hear." They can hear, because they have had spiritual ears given them. Once the Shepherd might have spoken all day long, and they would not have heard him; but it is not so now. Even from the cross our Lord's plaintive cries were all unheard by them; but now he has given them spiritual capacity and perception, and they can hear, and they do hear what his dying love would make them know and understand. Their Lord has spoken to them. They have heard his voice, and have known it to be his; they still hear it, and they distinguish between his voice and other voices. "A stranger will they not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers." They now so hear that voice as to hear it in a true way; and joyfully to own it by obeying it.

Do you not say, sometimes, to a child that is disobedient, “Did you not hear me speak, child?” So Christ may say to many who hear with the outward ear, but who will not yield obedience, that they have not heard him; for indeed they have not hearkened with the inner ear. Their ear does not reach down to their heart; and thus, for spiritual purposes, it is no ear at all. It is an awful thing when the ear is a closed-up passage, shut against the voice of the Savior. You can tell the sheep of Christ by their being marked in the ear. “My sheep hear my voice.” They may not hear a good deal that other people hear; they may even be glad to be deaf to it. There are many calls exceedingly musical to carnal ears, which have no charms for them. They try to be deaf to some voices from which they could gather nothing but temptation; but they hear Christ’s voice. They are all there when he speaks: their soul sits at the door to hear his softest whisper. They try to hear: they charge themselves to take heed that they lose no sound from heaven. They do hear; but they long to hear yet more completely, and to be more obedient to that voice which rings through the chambers of their soul. Oh, what a hearing we have sometimes given to Christ! I have heard him with my body, my soul, my spirit; at least, I have thought so; but whether in the body, or out of the body, I could not tell. If in the body, every pore has been an ear for my Lord’s sweet voice. As though my blood were tingling from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, so has my spirit been wholly and entirely affected by the charming tones of the voice of the Well-beloved, Oh, that he would speak to-night! Can you not hear him? Beloved, is he not now calling us? Do you not rejoice to hear him?

*No music’s like his charming voice,
Nor half so sweet can be.*

So, you see, a noteworthy speciality of the elect ones lies in their attention to Jesus, their Shepherd. He calls in vain to others; but his sheep hear his voice.

Another mark of the Lord’s people is intimacy. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.” “I know them.” Yes, the Lord discerns them. He singles them out, for “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” Sometimes we do not know them; but he says, “I know them.” In cloudy times they do not know themselves; but he says, “I know them.” When a child of God does not know whether he is a child of God or not, his Father knows his own children, and the great Shepherd knows his own sheep. His is a discernment which never fails. The hypocrite cannot get into the true fold

of Christ. He may get into the visible fold; but not into the real spiritual fold of Christ; for Christ does not know him, and bids him depart. This is the very seal upon the foundation—"The Lord knoweth them that are his." His eyes discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not; his is a knowledge of quick and certain discernment.

But this might make us tremble if we did not know that the expression, "I know them," means a knowledge of approbation. "I know them," says the Shepherd; "I take a delight in them. I know their secret sighs and mournings. I hear their private prayers. I know their praises in the silence of their hearts. I know their consecration, and their aspirations after perfect service. I know their longings and their lovings. I know how they delight in me. I know how they trust my promise. I know how they look to my atoning blood. I know how in their inmost souls they rejoice in my name. I know them, and approve their secret thoughts." O sweet word, understood in that sense! And this is one part of the character of the Lord's people—that he did foreknow them in his sovereign grace; and now he personally knows them by taking a delight in them.

This divine complacency leads to a very intense observation of them. "He knoweth the way that I take." "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." He has an eye upon them, and marks their paths. His ears are open to their cry, and he hears their petitions. Though there be all the world for his omniscience to consider, yet he looks upon each one of his saints as much as if there were only that one person in the universe, Oh, to think of this! "I know them," sounds like music in this sense. He that knows the stars, and knows the infinite multitude of living creatures in the universe, has a special and peculiar knowledge of his own chosen. "I know them," says he; and he intends thereby an intense observation. Now, beloved, just try a little here, to see whether you come into this number—"I know them." Does the Lord know you as his own? Has he had personal intercourse with you, and you with him? Or will he have to say to you at the last, "I never knew you"? Why, some of you have made him know you! You have gone to him in such trials, and in such troubles, and you have cried to him in such bitterness and anguish, that, if he asks your name, you can say-

*“Once a sinner near despair
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard, and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me!”*

When thou didst help me in great need, when thou didst pass by my great sin, then didst thou know me, O my Lord! “Dost thou ask me who I am? Ah, my Lord! thou knowest my name.” Just as some men know right well the importunate beggar who is often at their door, so does the Lord for certain know some of you, for you go every day begging at his gate, and you receive a constant alms at his hand. Besides that, you go every day thanking him for the mercies you receive. He knows your name: the name of one who is drowned in debt to his infinite bounty. He can never forget your groans and cries; and day by day your praises are a memorial to him. By his love, and pity, and compassion, he is sure to remember you. Sooner can a woman forget her sucking-child than your God forget you.

Well, here are things well worth the noting-speciality, attention, and intimacy. Are these yours?

But here is one more: actual obedience. How does he put it? “I know them, and they follow me.” All the Lord’s sheep are marked in the foot, as well as in the ear. The foot and ear-mark must be in every sheep of the Lord’s flock. “They follow me.” That is to say, they openly avow him as their Shepherd. Other shepherds come, and other sheep go after them; but these sheep know the Lord Jesus, and they follow him. He alone is their Leader. They are not ashamed to own it. They take up the cross, and follow the Cross-bearer, and they bear his name.

More than that, they practically carry out their open avowal, and they follow him in daily life, copying his example. They not only say, “He is my Leader,” but they follow him. Christ’s sheep try to follow in the track that the Shepherd marks for them. Christ’s people are never so happy as when they can put down their feet where Christ put his feet down. The very marks that he has left by his bleeding footsteps we would desire to follow, all the day, and every day. Beloved, look you carefully to this! Do what Jesus did, according to your measure and power. This is what the people of God try to do. If you do not endeavor to be like Christ, you are not his sheep; for of his sheep it is true, “I know them, and they follow me.”

And this is personally operative upon them. I could not tell you exactly in English words, but the Greek word gives here a kind of personality to the whole company. "My sheep hear my voice," that is, the whole of the flock of God. "I know them," that is, again, the whole flock of them, altogether. But, "they follow me," is in the plural number. It is as though it said, "They, each one, follow me." We, who are the Lord's chosen, hear en masse, and the Lord knows the whole church, for, as a whole, it is redeemed by Christ; but we individually follow-each one for himself, through grace. We each one follow him. "They follow me." I like that singular personal pronoun. It is not written, "They follow my commandments," though they do. It is not said, "They follow the route that I have mapped for them," though they do that. But, "they follow me," distinctly. In their individual personality they follow their Lord in his individual personality. They have recognized himself above his words, above his ways, and even above his salvation. "They follow me," saith he. This is a grand mark of a Christian, not merely a life of morality, a life of integrity, a life of holiness, but a life of all these in connection with Christ. They follow him, not holiness, nor morality, nor integrity, apart from Christ, but they follow their Lord. A good life is good in any man. We cannot speak evil of virtue, even when we find it in the ordinary moralist; but this is not the complete mark of Christ's sheep. The virtues of Christ's sheep are in connection with himself. The Christian is holy, and all that, but that is because he follows his perfect Master, and keeps close to him. This is one of the peculiar and unfailing marks of the child of God.

I have run through, very briefly, the description, and I now leave you to meditate upon it when you are alone. This description of the sheep of Christ is worthy of reading, marking, and inwardly digesting.

II. But my main object to-night is to show you THE GREAT PRIVILEGE HERE CONFERRED ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Christ has secured to them the priceless boon of eternal security in him. No sheep of Christ shall ever be lost. None that he has purchased with his blood, and made to be his own, shall ever wander away so as to perish at last. This is the doctrine of the verses now before us. At any rate, if I wanted to express that doctrine, I could not find words in which I could set it forth more definitely, or more completely, than is done by the words before me.

The security of the people of God lies, first of all, in the character of the life which they have received. Listen to this: "And I give unto them

ETERNAL LIFE.” All the spiritual life which all the sheep in the flock now possess has been given to them by their Shepherd. Never was there another flock of which this could be said. No shepherd but this one can give life to his sheep; but he gave them all the true life that they have. Nay, stop: he not only gave them life, but he sustains that life by a constant gift. Observe, it is not written, “I gave to them eternal life,” but “I give unto them eternal life.” They are always living by virtue of the life which he is always giving. They are constantly receiving life from him, according to that assurance, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” What he always gives they must always receive, and therefore it cannot cease.

Notice the nature of that life. “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” Now, you all know what “eternal” means: or say, rather, none of you can form an idea of eternity which can grasp all its length of endurance. Only this, you know it has no end, and cannot therefore close. If anybody said that he had eternal life and lost it, he would be flatly contradicting himself. It could not be eternal, or else he must still have it. If it is eternal, it is eternal, and there is no end to it; and there is an end of further argument about it. If the life that Christ gives us, when we are born again, can die, it is not “eternal” life, or else words have ceased to have any meaning at all. In its nature, as being the work of the Holy Spirit, and an emanation from God, the life bestowed in regeneration is an undying one. Has not the Holy Ghost described us as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”? The life of God imparted by the Holy Ghost must live for ever. As the gift is continuous, and it is always being given, and as it is in itself eternal life, it must always exist.

But, principally, I dwell upon the glorious character of the Giver. “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” The life that Christ gives is not that poor, paltry life which lasts the professor for about three weeks, and then dwindles down, and dies out; or, say, three months, and then the revival is over, and the convert is spun out and done for, and has to begin again. Such is the religious life which is excited by men; but it is not so with the life which comes from God. I said that the false convert begins again, though how he begins again I know not, because I read in Scripture of people being born again; but I have never read of their being born again, and again, and again, and again. I am told that some of our religionists have had their people converted and born again more times than they can count; and I heard that a woman had been born again twelve times down at

a certain meeting; but he who stated the fact said shrewdly that he feared it was not done well the last time. No, I do not think it will ever be done well in that way. He that is born again, according to Scripture, has received eternal life; and this is the only life worth receiving. I would not preach my very soul away in order to proclaim such a twopenny, trumpery, temporary salvation as that; but to preach the Lord Jesus as giving eternal life is worth living for and dying for. I tell you, sirs, it is this that brought me to Christ. While I was yet young, and thinking over matters, I saw young lads that were brought up with me, excellent in character, who left their homes to be apprenticed, and after a while the temptations of the world overcame them, and they went astray, and had no religion at all. But when I read that Christ gave his sheep eternal life, I looked at it as a kind of moral life insurance for my soul, and I came to Christ, and trusted him to keep me to the end. I shall suffer a grievous disappointment if I ever find out that the life of God in me is not eternal, and that the new birth does not assure final perseverance. I did not go up to the booking-office, and take a ticket for a quarter of the distance to heaven; but I took my ticket all the way through. I trust, nay, I know, that according to my faith, so will it be unto me. I am very glad to have my through-ticket with me, and I believe that unless the train of Almighty grace smashes up-which it never will-I shall get through to the Celestial terminus as surely as ever divine power can draw me there; for so it is written, "I give unto my sheep eternal life."

Now, depend upon it, it is what you hold out to people that has much to do with how they behave themselves afterwards. Tell them that if they believe in Christ, they are going to get, not eternal life, but life for a little while-life for as long as they take good care of it, and I fear it will prove to be so. It may do them good to get the poor little change you offer them; but as surely as they are converted to a temporary life, they will die out before long. You told them that they would. You did not propose any more to them. But when you propose to them this-"Here is everlasting life to be had by believing in Christ. It is not temporary, but eternal life"-why, then they grip it as such. They believe in Christ for that, and according to their faith it is unto them; and the Lord and Giver of life is glorified in giving to them this great and splendid gift, the gift of all gifts. "I give unto my sheep eternal life."

I do not know in what other way to preach from this text than the one in which I am preaching from it. Somebody says, "Oh, that is Calvinism!" I do not care what it is. It is Scriptural. I have this inspired Book before me,

and I cannot see any meaning in the words before me, if they do not mean that those who have received life from the Lord Jesus have an endless inheritance. I cannot make them mean anything else. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," must mean that believers are eternally secure. "It is dangerous doctrine," cries one. I have not found it dangerous, and I have tried it these many years. I conceive that it would be far more dangerous to tell people that they could be truly converted, and yet the work of grace would end in six months, and then they could come back again, and begin again, and do so as many times as they liked; whereas the Word of God tells them that if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Men may fall and be restored; but if they fall away utterly, there remains no other work which can be done for them. If this everlasting life could die, the Holy Ghost would have done his best, and nothing more would remain to be done. If it were so that this salt which is good should lose its savor, wherewith could it be salted? See what a gulf opens before you; and do not look for a work which will not endure every possible strain. Oh, that you may get this eternal life!

So we take a step farther. The children of God are safe, again, not only because of the life they receive, but because of the inner dangers which are averted. Take the next sentence—"And they shall never perish." They have a tendency to spiritual sickness, but their Shepherd will doctor them so that they shall never perish. They are sheep, and have a tendency to wander; but their Shepherd shall keep them so that they shall never perish. Time tries them, and they grow old, and the novelty of religion wears off; but they shall never perish. Think what you will of them, "they shall never perish," for so the promise stands.

The first statement, "I give unto them eternal life," is as broad as well can be, and this is broader still—"they shall never perish." The rule has absolutely no exception. The whole of them shall be preserved. Let them live to be as old as Methuselah, they shall never perish, whatever temptation may assail them. They may be tried, and troubled, and broken down, so that they may be hardly able to live; but they shall never perish. "Never" is a long day; but it is not longer than grace will last. Blessed be God, this grand promise stands fast—"They shall never perish."

Now we must go a step farther. We have no time to urge these arguments at any great length. They are safe, next, by outer injuries being prevented. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Many will pluck at

them, but none shall pluck them away. The devil will give many a horrible pluck and pull, to get them away; but out of the great Shepherd's hand he shall never take them. Their old companions, and the memory of their old sins will come, and pluck at them very hard, and very cunningly; but the Savior says, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." So, first, here is their security: they are in his hand; that is, in his possession, and he grasps them, as a man holds a thing in his hand, and says, "It is mine." Neither shall any take them away from being under his protection. Never shall they be plucked away from Christ. When he says this, he pledges his honor to preserve them, for if it could be that one were plucked out of his hand, then would the devils in hell rejoice, and say, "He could not keep them. He said that he would, but he could not. We have managed to pluck this one, or that one, out of the pierced hand of their Redeemer." But such a horrible exultation shall never be heard throughout the ages of eternity. "They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

Some one wickedly said, "They may get out of his hand themselves." But how can this be true, when the first sentence is, "They shall never perish"? Treat Scripture honestly and candidly, and you will admit that the promise "they shall never perish" shuts out the idea of perishing by going out of the Lord's hand by their own act and deed. "They shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Who is to loosen the clasp of that hand which was pierced with the nail for me? My Lord Jesus bought me too dearly ever to let me go. He loves me so well that his whole omnipotence will work with that hand, and unless there is something greater than Godhead, I cannot be plucked away from that dear, fast-holding grip.

Now, to make quite sure about it, and to pile on the comfort. the Savior goes on to add the care and power of God himself. Our Lord says, "My Father, which gave them me." The saints of God are safe, because the Father gave them to his Son. He did not give him a transitory inheritance. He did not bestow on him a something which he might, after all, lose. Will the Lord Christ lose what his Father gave him? You know how people say, "Oh, I hope that, if a burglar takes anything from my house, he will not take that cup, which is an heirloom. My father gave it to me." If a man had to defend his property, he would be sure to take care of that which was a very special gift, given in his honor, as a memorial of a great work. So is it with our Lord Jesus: he values that which his Father gave him. I delight in the thought. I picture my blessed Lord looking at each one of his believing

people, and saying, "My Father gave you to me." That poor woman, that struggling young man, that decrepit old lady, that man who is half-starved, but who loves his Lord-Jesus says of each one, "My Father gave this soul to me." He cannot lose what his Father gave him. He would die again sooner than he would lose them. His death has made their salvation safe beyond all jeopardy. He laid down his life for the sheep. The lion came, and leaped into the fold; but the Shepherd met the lion; yea, he received him on his naked breast, and held him there. It was a terrible tug. The Shepherd sweat great drops of blood as he held the monster; but he rent him, and he hurled him to the earth, and said, "It is finished:" and it was finished. He has so saved all his flock until now that we are sure that he will never lose one of those whom his Father committed to his trust. "My Father gave them me."

Then he goes on to say that his people are kept by the Father's power; for he says, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Beloved, although God gave us to Christ, he did not cease to care for us himself! Our sweet text last Sunday night I must bring to your memory. I could not fully preach from it, but the text was enough without a sermon: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." We tried to show you how we were none the less the Father's because we were the Son's, and none the less the Son's because we belonged to the Father. So here Jesus in effect says. "My Father gave you to me; yet he takes care of you none the less, but all the more. Because he is determined that what he gave to me shall be mine, the Lord will put forth his wisdom and power to preserve you."

Let me by a symbol illustrate the latter words of the text. There lie the children of God in the hand of Christ. Do you see that fast closed hand? They are safe enough there. Jesus says, "No man shall be able to pluck them out of my hand." But see the Father, he puts his hand over the hand of Jesus! There, now: you are inside two hands, "And no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Oh, the serene security of those who hear the voice of Christ, and whom he calls his sheep! A double-handed force keeps them safe against all ill. Pluck away, Satan! You will never pluck them away from the hand of Jesus, and the hand of his Father! "Quis separabit?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It is impossible to be done.

And then the Savior finishes all by saying that, while he has spoken of the Father and himself as two-and two they are as persons-yet in their divine essence they are but one. He says, "I and my Father are one;" and especially one in love to his people. "The Father himself loveth you," even as he loves his Son; and, while you read the love of Christ in his death, you must read the Father's love quite as much in that great sacrifice. It is true of our Lord Jesus that-"He loved the church, and gave himself for it;" but it is equally true of the Father- "God so loved the world, that he gave his Only-begotten Son." They are one in an infinite love to all those who, called according to the divine purpose, are following Christ, and hearing his voice. I fall back with great joy upon this blessed conviction-that he will not suffer those to perish who have received eternal life at his hands. Of course, if you have only taken temporary life-if you only believe in that-you will get no more than you believe. Your gift will be measured by your faith. But if you say, "I gave myself up to Christ that he might be Alpha and Omega to me; and I wholly trust myself to him without reserve, throughout all my life, to save me," he will do it; for "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

You are safe in Christ's hand. Know it, and feel the joy of it. "Oh," says one, "but if I thought so, I should run into sin!" I am sorry for you: things act very strangely upon you. Nothing binds me to my Lord like a strong belief in his changeless love. "Oh, but it would be far safer to tell your hearers that they may be overcome by sin, and perish!" I will not tell them what I do not believe. I will not dishonor my Lord by a falsehood. Shall I come home to your house, and tell your children that, if they do wrong, you will cut their heads off; or that, if they disobey you, they will cease to be your children. If I were to propound that doctrine, your children would grow angry at such a slander upon their father. They would say, "No, we know better than that!" Far rather would I say to them, "My dear children, your father loves you; he will love you without end, therefore do not grieve him." Under such doctrine true children will say, "We love our ever-loving father. We will not disobey him. We will endeavor to walk in his ways."

***“Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move.”***

Our loving Lord will not cast away those to whom he is bound by marriage-bonds.

“Well, but suppose we sin.” He will chasten us, and restore us “If I believed that doctrine, I should live as I like,” says one. Then you are not one of his sheep, for his sheep love holiness, and will not love iniquity. The change wrought by the new birth is such that a man will not return to his old ways of sin and folly. This is the doctrine; and how can you make it to be an indulgence to sin? True saints never turn the grace of God into licentiousness, but the very mention of eternal love leads them to careful obedience.

One thing I must say at the end. Some ministers preach a gospel with a very wide door to it, but there is nothing to be had when you get within. I am sometimes told that I make my door a little too narrow. It is not true, for I preach the gospel to every creature under heaven, with all my might; but if the door be narrow, there is something worth having when you enter by it. Even if the way be narrow, if you once get in, you have got in, and you have found eternal life, and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ’s hands. Sinner, come and have an eternal blessing! It is worth having. Come and have it! If thou believest, thou shalt assuredly be saved. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;” saved from sin so as never to go back and live in it again; so saved as to be made holy; so saved as to be preserved in holiness. Holiness shall be the set of the main current of thy life, until, made perfectly holy, thou shalt dwell with God above. Into his hands let us commit our spirits to-night, and we may rest assured that they shall be safe eternally. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

DEAR READERS,-On this, the final sermon of the year, permit your friend and servant to wish to you all, in the highest sense, a happy New Year. There is not space to do more than say from my retreat-I pray you be mindful of me in your prayers.

Yours, at the end of thirty-five volumes, most gratefully,
C. H. SPURGEON.

END OF VOLUME 35.