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DAILY BLESSINGS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE., NEWINGTON.

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 21ST SEP., 1871.

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” —
Psalm 68:19, 20.

WE observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm, and to master it means much labor. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it cometh to practical duties, and to those doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture; wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew. With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Savior hung upon the tree, the darkness is past, and the true light shineth there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth, and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses, and remark that they remind us first of the mercies of life. “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.” They then assure us of the mercies of death. “He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God belong the issues from death.” And then the two verses tell us of the common occupation of both life and death, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of his benefits, or whether he open for me the gates of the grace.

Let us begin then, and contemplate for a few moments: —

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text saith, “He daily loadeth us with benefits.” Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that he gives us? Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language—benevolence. You know that means good wishing, *bene volens*. He may be a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any. But God’s goodness to us is not merely bene volens, in which he wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing. His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He doth to us that which is good. He doth not only wish us well, and speak to us well, and direct us well, but he doth well unto us. He doth not only say, “I pity thy last estate,” but he delivers the lost out of their ruin. He doth not say, as the churl doth, “Be thou warmed, and be thou filled,” and do no more, but, wishing us well, he doth well unto us; he warms our hearts with his love, and fills them with his mercy, and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks us well. What more could he say than, to us, he has said in his blessed Word? It is true he wishes us well. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live.” But the essence of his goodness lies in this, that he goes beyond wishes and words into acts.

Begin, brethren, with the greatest of his acts. “He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all.” In that gift he hath already given us all things, and from that blessed pledge he has never gone back, but he has given us all that we want for this life, and for the life to come, for ye have grace and glory, and hath abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the nether springs. If Christ is our perpetual bread and wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayer, is given us according to his assurance, “Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.”

Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear brother, dear sister? Turn them over now in your mind — the benefits that you have actually yourself received — not only read of, and heard of, and had promises of, but that you have received. Oh! the benefits of early education! the being restrained from, sin. Oh! the benefits of conviction! of being enlightened and made to see the guilt off sin. Oh! the sweet benefit of being led to the Savior! made to stand at the cross foot, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh! the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness, which covers us and justifies in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God — of preservation from falling into final, vital sin — of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of. Some of them come in at the front door of the house; some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. Ye shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the dust upon the sand beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of his benefits.

Leave that word then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that he loads us with them — loads us with benefits. He does not put a little upon us of his goodness, but much; very much, until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it, I have desired to praise him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." It seemed as if "words were but air, and tongues but clay, and his compassion's so divine," that it was impossible to speak of them. His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as thick and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heavings of the lungs, pulsings of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God's continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. "Plagues and death around us fly." God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts — whither might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walketh both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so numerous, and each one so

weighty, that eye cannot say less than this, "That he daily loadeth us with his benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to his mercy." "He loadeth us with benefits."

Oh! are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals hard with you? Well, you are what you are by his grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be — few admire that residence. In the prison you might be — God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be — better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave's mouth you might be — on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God's holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In hell you might be amongst the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because thy grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, "Thou hast loaded us with benefits."

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God's children; you are joint-heirs with Christ. "All things are yours"; ay, and "things to come," you have guaranteed too — preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end. The "many mansions" are for you; the palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be. In all the gifts of his ascension you have a part; in the gifts that come to us through his session at the right hand of God, you have your share; and in, the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake. See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, he loadeth you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door, and you shall give to him all he wants for food, and cover him, and give him something to make glad his heart withal. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again to-morrow, you might find it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon you seven days in the week: I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time. If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach; don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah! this is man; but look at God. He

daily loadeth us with benefits. How many days has he done that with some of us? Thirty years? “Ah!” saith one, “I can talk of sixty years” — yes, and some of you of seventy and eighty years. Well, he has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, so far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King’s table and give a portion from him. And yet you murmur. You have been unbelieving, proud, idle; all sorts of ill-temperers have you shown. Yet has he daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God’s love, but up to this hour his love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon his exchequer, but that exchequer has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won’t do for to-day. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh. When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam; and when he shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He “daily loadeth us with benefits” — every day; and he loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick, and tossing to and for upon the bed, he still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sends sometimes his choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of heaven come to us, and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith’s eye has seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How he loadeth us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear brother who is almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of some such exclamation as this, “Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one. It is blest seven times over.” And, indeed, it so is. He loadeth us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies too; and right on to the close on Saturday night the Lord continues to heap on his mercies one after another, that he may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking him than he will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness.

There is one other word — a very little one, but a sweet one too: “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.” “Us.” Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul, and herein lieth the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvellous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that he should load me with benefits. Beloved brethren and

sisters, I do not feel your imperfections, and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you, but I know some of my own shortcomings, and they seem to me to be greater than those of others; therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that he should load me with benefits.

*“Why do I meet to hear his voice,
And enter where there’s room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”*

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that, but I am compelled to feel that, if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord’s mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of his infinite grace. Let us bless the Lord at this hour because he loadeth us with benefits when he might have passed us by. He might have suffered us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then he might have made us reap for ever that which we had sown. Instead of this, he has made us — many of us — however unlikely persons — to be his chosen ones, and he hath loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal — indeed, is not the meaning of the passage.

Those you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words “who” and “with benefits”, are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense; and some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burdens”; and I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that he loads us, as that he lifts our load for us, and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, “He daily bears our burden”; and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them. “Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you.” A man who has a burden-bearer certainly need not bear the burden himself. Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay

her burden. She hath a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God. But unbelief, with a far less load than faith carries easily, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever thy burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God. You have done your little all; leave it now. Your fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change the night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born; it will when you are dead. Leave the helm.

Whenever you have been foremost you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers; but when God has been foremost, and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake then; and when God has been your shepherd, you have been constrained to say, "I shall not want." Oh! then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens."

And then the text adds that he is "the God of our salvation." In this life we ought to praise him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection — that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of his salvation. It is true I am poor, but I am saved. It is true I am sick, but I am saved. It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved; and the salvation of God sweetens all. Then is it added to that, it is "our" salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, "This is mine," is rich to all the intents of bliss, and has his daily life gilded with joy.

And then it is added beyond that, "our God." God is ours. He that is our God is the God of salvation. His omnipotence and omniscience, his immutability and his faithfulness — all his attributes are ours. The Father is ours; the Son is ours; the Spirit is ours. The God of election is ours; the God of redemption is ours; the God of sanctification is ours. Oh! with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine! We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord. Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate: —

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

"Unto God belong the issues from death." This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belong escapes from death. Oh! blessed be his name, we may come very near the grave, and the jaws of death may be open to receive us; but the pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come.

*“Plagues of death around me fly.
Till he please, I cannot die.
Not a single shaft can hit,
Until the God of love see fit.*

*“What though a thousand at thy side,
At thy right hand ten thousand, died?
Our God, his chosen people saves,
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves”*

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty. It is better to die in service than live in idleness — better to glorify God and depart, than rot above ground in neglecting what he would have us to do. Unto God belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong the issues that lead actually down to death. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the belief that Christ will come, and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in actually passing through the grave and rising again, than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. “To” die is “gain”; and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will be at God’s bidding. No one hath the key of death but the Lord of life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ’s flock. Till God saith “Return,” our spirit shall not leave the body; and we may be well content to depart when God saith the time is come. Oh! how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God, and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends The Master took them home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly, not by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the infinite love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death; that is, the coming up from death again. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered. for his word says, if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, “so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Savior. Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulcher he shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, beloved. What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants, and in due time feed animals, and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet he that made us can re-make us; and the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. “Unto God belong the issues from death.” In this we are comforted — to fall asleep, because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp all that comes after death. The spirit issues from death — never touched by it indeed. Leaving the body behind a while, the spirit enters into a glory, waiting for the fullness. Then when Christ descends, and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the first resurrection, then shall the re-united manhood enter into the fullness of the glory with a manifested Savior. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to his people. He shall give them to them for whom he has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom he has made worthy by his grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to him — not to us by merit, but they are his gifts by covenant and by grace. Oh! then, how sweet it is to think, “The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all his — all his own; and when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulcher, I shall be in my Father’s territory.” Jesus Christ is Lord of the sick-bed. He makes the bed of his people in their affliction. Even down to the borders of the grave — to the edge of Jordan’s river — it is all Immanuel’s land; and he often makes it the land of Beulah. And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master’s country. I am not out of the presence of the Lord of life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is the Master’s river still, and, on the other side, it is my Lord’s own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jewelled “city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” I shall be always at home, always in my

Father's country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which he hath no power. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me." Be of good cheer, beloved. "Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," and, life being ended, you shall "dwell in the house of your God for ever." In life and in death, you shall prove the tokens of his special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is: —

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

*"I will praise thee in life
I will praise thee in death
I will praise thee as long
As thou lendest me breath."*

"I will praise thee for ever and ever." The one occupation of a Christian is to praise his God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain by God's grace a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind; and we must endeavor to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning's work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening's work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God. Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with his praise, and during the day. We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. "Oh!" says one, "what, in trouble?" Yes, in every bitter trouble too, for Job could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." "But are we never to be sorrowful?" Yes, yet always rejoicing. How can that be? Ah! the Lord teach you it! It is a work of grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, even when heart and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God. Do as much as you can also. When your heart is glad, try to. praise him with your lip. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps, if you work in company, you cannot; but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire the most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them — at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not want to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord, who

leadeth you with benefits in life and in death. Therefore, habitually praise him. And, brethren and sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to, the praise of him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when he stops having mercy upon you — not till then; and as there is always a new mercy coming to your doors let new praise be going up out of your hearts.” But how can I praise God by my actions? saith one. “Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.” I try to praise God by preaching to-night. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades. Any work, any lawful calling may be to the Christian priest — (and all Christians are priests) — the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment; you shall make your meal a sacrament; you shall make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar; the bells upon the horses shall be “holiness unto the Lord.”

And, dear brethren, to close. Let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise him too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist here, who says for himself, “Blessed be the Lord”, is the writer of the 67th Psalm. You know how he says there, “Let the people praise thee — yea, let all the people praise thee! Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy!” Then he says again, “Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!” Do your utmost to be the means, in God’s hands, of bringing others to praise him. Tell them what he has done for you. Tell them of his saving grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be: —

*“All your business here below
To say, “Behold the Lamb!”*

and in this way you will be setting other tongues a-praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labour for this, beloved, every one of you. Labor for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Savior I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, “It is enough for me if I am saved, and if those that go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough.” No, Master, thy throne is not to be set up in some little conventicle in a back street, and there alone. Thou art not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there alone Thou art not to take this island of

Great Britain, and reign in it alone; nor in Europe — in one quarter of the earth alone. Let the whole earth be filled with his praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, “Amen and amen”? God grant it may be so! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALMS 3 AND 4:1-6.

These may be called very properly morning and evening Psalms. The III. Psalm is the morning Psalm.

PSALM 3.

A psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son.

A dark hour that for David, preceded by the shadows of his own sin, and now deepened by the horrible hatred of his own favorite child, who conspired to take his kingdom and his life.

Verse 1. *LORD how are they increased that trouble me!*

As if he could not measure his troubles. He stands amazed. He makes his appeal to God.

2, 3. *Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.*

That is the worst of all, when they begin to ridicule his religion. He was a man who had said much of his faith in God; and in former days he had done great marvels by trusting in the living God; and new one and another dared to say openly that God had cast him off.

3. *But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.*

The word in the Hebrew is a bigger word than the word shield. It is a buckler — a kind of guard above, around, beneath, an all-surrounding defense. “Thou, Lord, art a shield for me. They cannot harm me. They cannot kill me. I am still guarded by God; and, what is more, thou art my glory. Though my glory is taken away, yet I glory in thee. Whatever else I have not, I have a God, a God that I dare glory in too, for there is no such

God as he is. And thou art the lifter up of my head.” My head is still above water. I do not yet sink, and my head shall rise again. Though I bow it down like a bulrush now, I shall one day praise him. I knew that I shall, for he is the health of my countenance.

4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

He means that he loved to pray alone, but to use his voice in prayer. I have heard many Christians say that they can pray better when they can hear their own voices; they are better able to collect their thoughts. The voice is not necessary to prayer. It is the mere body of prayer. Still, a right healthy body may help the soul, and sometimes the use of the voice may help the spirit. David says that he cried to God; and then it happened to him, as it always happens to us: “He heard me out of his holy hill.”

5. I laid me down and slept;

Far from the palace, and from the place of worship where he loved to meet with God.

5. I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

I was kept through the night watches; through restless anxiety I slept. Now God sustains our hearts, even when we are asleep, for else we should not sleep. We should be restless and wakeful. But God gives us a peace ere we fall asleep, which abides with us as a blessed balm of rest, and so we sleep.

6, 7. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

They were like fierce lions threatening to devour him. They had already rent him in malice. God came and smote them on the jaw, so that they lost their strength to injure him.

8. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

That is a sweet morning hymn. Sound Calvinistic doctrine that. “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.” It is he that saves man. It is he that delivers those that are saved. And here is the speciality and peculiarity of his grace.

“Thy blessing is upon thy people.” Oh! to be remembered with them! Then, even if an Absalom should persecute us, the blessing is not withdrawn, for this is entailed upon the children of God.

“Thy blessing is upon thy people.”

Now for the evening hymn.

PSALM 4.

Verse 1. *Hear me, when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

Past experience is a sweet solace in the hour of trouble. “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.” Think of what God has been to you, you tried ones, for he will be the same still.

And can he have taught you to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought you to put you to shame?

Is this God’s way — to be gracious to his people, and then to turn against them? God forbid. Pray, then, with the grateful memory of all his loving-kindness. “Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress. Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.”

2. *O ye sons of men, how, long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.*

How long will ye take to lies?

How long will you abuse a character which deserves not your censure?

How long will you pour contempt upon God, whom you ought to serve?

3. *But know*

He talks to them as if they did not know, while they thought themselves the most knowing people in the world.

3. *That the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself:*

He has marked him out to be his own peculiar treasure. “The Lord’s portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Now if God has marked out his people to be his own, he will defend them. He will guard them against every adversary. They shall not be destroyed.

3. *The LORD will hear when I call unto him.*

The sweet assurance that prayer will prevail is one of the best comforts in the cloudy and dark day.

4. *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

Tremble and sin not. Unhappily, there are many that sin and tremble not. They reverse the text. A trembling saint is often all the more saint because he trembles. Tremble and sin not. If there is not a mixture of prayer with our hope and our confidence, it is like meat without salt in it. It is apt to grow corrupt in prosperous sunny weather. Oh! for the fear of God in our hearts! Stand in awe, and sin not. Commune with your own heart. A man ought to be the best of company to himself. It is one reason why we should be well acquainted with the Word of God — that if ever we are left alone, we may be good companions to ourselves. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Hush that babel. Let God speak. Get to your bed, away from the noise of the streets and the roll of the traffic.

“Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” Some men cannot bear stillness. The quiet of their own hearts disturbs them. There must be something very rotten in the state of the man’s life who loves not some seasons of solitude. Some of us are less alone when we are alone, and most at home even when others count themselves abroad. “Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.”

5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,*

Bring your prayers, your praises. Present to God your hearts, your love, your trust.

5, 6. *And put your trust in the LORD. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?*

Gaping about for some good thing; thirsting — they know not what they are thirsting for. “Who will show us any good?” Come from the east, or the west, or the north, or the south; only bring us something promises pleasure, and we are your men. There be many that say, “Who will show us any good?” But we say not so. Our saying is another sort.

6. *LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon*

Is not that what many of you are saying to-night? You know what you want. You know that there is nothing else that will satisfy you. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." We are not well. Lord, we ask thee that it may be well between our souls and thee.

DIVINE DESTRUCTION AND PROTECTION

NO. 3494

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish. I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it.” — Ezekiel 17:29.

CAN your minds fly back to the time when there was no time, to the day when there was no day but the Ancient of Days? Can you speed back to that period when God dwelt alone, when this round world and all the things that be upon it, had not come from his hand; when the sun flamed not in his strength, and the stars flashed not in their brightness? Can you go back to the period when there were no angels, when cherubim and seraphim had not been born; and, if there be creatures elder than they, when none of them had as yet been formed? Is it possible, I say, for you to fly so far back as to contemplate God alone — no creature no breath of song, no motion swung himself alone, without another? Then, indeed, he had no rival; none then could contest with him, for none existed. All power, and glory, and honor and majesty were gathered up into Himself. And we have no reason to believe that he was less glorious than He is now, when his ministers delight to do his pleasure; nor less great than now, when he has crested worlds on worlds, and thrown them into space, scattering over the sky stars with both his hands. He sat on no precarious throne; he needed none to add to his power; he needed none to bring him a revenue of praise; his all-sufficiency could spirit of no lack. Consider next, if ye can, the eternal purpose of God that he would create. He determines it in his mind. Could any but a divine motive actuate the Divine Architect? What

must that motive have been? He creates that he may display his own perfections. He does beget, as it were, creatures after his own image that he may live in them; that he may manifest to others the joy, the pleasure, the satisfaction, which he so intensely feels in himself. Certain I am his own glory must have been the end he had in view; he would reveal his glory to the sons of men, to angels, and to such creatures as he had formed, in order that they might reflect his honor and sing his praise. You are not ignorant, my brethren, of the fact that sin entered into the world. You know that the creation, which had been harmonious as a psalm in God's praise, voluminous and exhaustive as a book in which he revealed his own character — this creation, once exceedingly fair, became foully marred. Rival instincts were produced, and rival Interests were set up. Man's will stood up against God's will; man's profit against God's honor; man's device against God's counsel. Eve took of the accursed fruit, and Adam partook of the same, and henceforth man became a rival to God, just as Satan, aforetime, had rebelled against the blessed and only Potentate, and usurped authority. From the time when Satan fell, God's purpose was to break down everything which set itself up in opposition to him. From that day till now, no matter how great, how lofty, how apparently excellent a thing might be, it has been the rule with God to pull it down if it did not stand in him, and for him; yea, and wherever he has looked, no matter how mean a thing may have been, how low, how degraded to outward appearance, it has been God's constant rule to lift it up, if it stood in him, and for him. Or if, by the lifting up of the humble, he might throw scorn upon the haughty, he would thereby magnify his own absolute right to exercise sovereign control, and to do with men as he willed.

Oh! that I could commend the words of some of the mighty masters of song, or that I had an angel's voice, so much rather would I hymn this high majestic theme than speak of it in listless prose. But I cannot rise to the awful heights of this incomparable design. I contemplate it with awe not unmingled with admiration — the Eternal God withstanding everything that opposes itself against him — thrusting down the mighty from their seats, plucking off crowns from the heads of princes, degrading the escutcheons of nobles, trampling in the mire the fine linen and the scarlet of the rich, setting at nought the wisdom of the wise, divesting the philosopher of his toga, rending in pieces the robes of the priest, and pouring contempt upon everything that vaunts pretension or arrogates prestige in defiance of his sacred prescriptive, irrevocable lordship. There is

no power or permanence, no warrant or worth, in any claim to greatness or goodness independent of God, or antagonistic to him. My conceptions are too dwarfish, my language is too feeble, to compass the grandeur of this theme. It's truth commends it, and its usefulness enhances it: since it bows the heart before God. and convinces us that then only are we in a fit state to be filled with his fullness, to live in his life, to be wise with his wisdom, and to be glorious in his glory, when we are emptied of our own conceits. Mine, however, will be a more practical lesson at this time; and I shall use more homely words than that nobler subject might have demanded.

METHINKS I see a great forest which reaches for many a league. The trees are of divers growths, and of various ages. Some of them are very lofty. Here a towering cedar and yonder the storks have made their nests among the tall fir trees. Stout oaks there are that laugh at storms, and elms that will not be twisted with the tempest. See how they rival each other! And there are lowlier trees; some bearing fruit, though scarcely seen; others, like the vine, creeping upon the ground — so obscure they can hardly be observed. It is a strange forest in which trees of every clime are to be found; some green, verdant, lader with blossoms and with fruit; others dead, dry, withered, with scarce here and there a leaf. It is the evening, the cool of the day. The Lord God that visited the fair garden of Eden is come to walk in this forest. Along those deep glades, amidst that thick shade, the Almighty appears. He comes. How see I him? Bears he in his hand an awful axe, and cloth he pass his finger along its edge to see that it be keen? Strong is the arm that wields it. Howl, cedars, if once he lift that axe against you. What means that Woodman to do? Wait, and let us hear him speak. Oh! ye trees of the field be silent before the Lord. Clap not your hands until we have heard him speak. "The trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree — beware, ye towering cedars! — "that I have exalted the low tree" — take courage, ye lowly vines! — "have dried up the green tree" — wail, ye verdant elms — "and have made the dry tree to flourish"; — hope, ye withered boughs! — "I the Lord have spoken, and have done it." Let the trees be silent before the Lord, for he cometh to judge them, and he judgeth them with much jealousy. That forest I have before my eyes; men like trees appear to me in the vision. While I gaze on this dense mass of people listening to my voice, let me interpret the Mighty Woodman's words to you. There are four notes of which we shall speak one after the other. May God sanctify the emblems

to our profit, touching our ears, and teaching our hearts, that we may rightly understand what the Lord saith to the trees of the forest.

I. “THUS SAITH THE LORD, THE TREES OF THE FIELD SHALL KNOW THAT I THE LORD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE HIGH TREE.”

Look over history, and you will see that everything gigantic in stature and colossal in dimensions, whatsoever has been great to human apprehension, grasping at earthly fame, has become an object for God’s penetrating arrows, and a subject for his withering blight. A grand idea of universal monarchy flashed upon the mind of man. He would build a tower, the top whereof should reach to heaven. What did the Lord do with this fine scheme? “I will come down,” said “to Babel, and see if it be altogether as they have said.” Then he touched their tongues, and confounded their language, and scattered the imaginations of their hearts: so he laughed them to scorn, and left them to be a laughingstock to all generations. Then came the great power of Egypt. Pharaoh said, “Am I not lord of Thebes, with its hundred gates, and with its myriads of brazen chariots? Have I not a mighty host of cavalry? Who is equal to me? I speak, and the nations tremble.” When the king hardened his heart, how did Jehovah — the King of kings get himself honor from Pharaoh and his hosts? “Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider bath he cast into the sea!” In after years Babylon set herself up as a queen. “I shall be a lady for ever,” said the gay metropolis of; the earth, the mighty city of Euphrates. “I sit alone; I shall see no sorrow.” Behold, she decketh herself out with scarlet, she arrayeth herself with silk; all the nations of the earth are quiet when she ariseth nor is the sound of a whisper heard when the voice of her command goes forth. But where art thou, daughter of Assyria, where art thou now, O daughter of Chaldea, where is the crown which once circled thy brow and adorned thy heady Go, mark a leap of rubbish, and of desolate stones; hear the hooting of the owls and the howling of the dragons, as each one calleth to his fellow in the midst of a desolation which cannot be repaired! How art thou fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning! Thus God breaketh in pieces with his right hand everything arrogant and supercilious, that dares to assert greatness apart from his endowment, or to presume on authority other than he delegates. I might prolong the strain. I might tell you of Rome, and all the boastings of that Imperial mistress, point to her faded charms, and tell of her decay and her decadence. I might lead you back to Sennacherib and all

his hosts overthrown, or recite the story of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out from the abodes of men, and feeding the beasts. I might show you lesser kings, kings of Israel, brought exceeding low, until they who had sat on the throne as princes pined in the dungeon among slaves. To multiply instances would be only to confirm the general current of history, and illustrate the fact that the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, always cuts down the high tree, humiliates the creature that exalts itself, and suffers no flesh to glory in his presence. That is the law of his government.

The question arises, how does it concerns us? Doubtless it opens a sad prospect to those who are lifted up with pride, or inflated with self-opinion. Are there any among you who boast in heraldry a long succession of illustrious names which has ennobled your pedigree? Some people seem to think that the world is hardly good enough for them to tread upon, as if they were made of china, while other men are moulded but of common clay; they look down upon the public as an ignoble herd, and speak of the masses as the “many-headed” and the “great unwashed.” Such a man will play the parasite to his own dear self, passionately cherish his own conceits and petulantly hold that whatever belongs to him is better than anyone else can procure for love or money, be it his house, or his horse, the water from his well, or the wine from his cellar. At his wit let all inferiors laugh; to his greed let all who, would receive his patronizing nod do obeisance. In stately isolation he will acknowledge no rival. Knowest thou, man, that in one respect thou hast a veritable pre-eminence? — thou mayest fairly challenge all thy fellows for one whose disposition the Lord hates more than he abhors shine. Among the seven abominations, your order ranks highest. No liar or murderer can claim a preeminence over you in vice so long as the Proverbs stand. Ere long, the heel of the Almighty shall be lifted higher than thy haughty head. He will cast thee down, be thy look never so proud; for the Lord hath purposed it to stain the pride of all glory, to bring into contempt all the excellency of the earth.

There is, again, an arrogance of mind, of judgement, of option, just as ignorant — if not quite so grotesque — as his who dreams that his birth is of higher caste, and his blood of richer hue than other men. Humanity in the bulk is the idol of some people; and yonder I see the man who quotes himself as an illustrious specimen. He does not believe in the total depravity of human nature. Judging by himself, the statement that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, is a myth; or if it were ever true of a recreant Jew, it never was a fair indictment against such an

orthodox Christian as he is. No, no; he has kept the law; he feels that in all things he is blameless; he has not erred, neither will he humble himself before the word that God speaks to us. In the opinion of such, the gospel that we preach is very good for harlots, thieves, and drunkards, but it is of no use to the righteous, for they have put down their own names among those who need no repentance. Admirable in their conduct, their temper amiable, and their disposition generous, a salvation by free grace would be wasted on them. The Lord will abase thee, be thou man or woman, whosoever thou mayest be; he will shame thee; the axe is ready to be laid at thy root even now. Thy goodness is not God's goodness, and thy righteousness is not Christ's righteousness; therefore, shall the moth consume it, and it shall be eaten away. Or it is my friend yonder, a working man, who says, "Well, I work as hard as anybody; I bring up my children as well as I can; I have nothing from the parish; and if I see a poor mate out of work, I always subscribe my mite, though I have not much to give away; can it be right to tell me that I am not in a fair way of going to heaven?" Ah! the Lord will deprive you of such boasting, for he will bring down all these high trees. You that have any righteousness of your own, whether you be rich or poor, the same word will apply to you all. What mattereth it whether you are born of princes, or the offspring of beggars, pride will nestle in any heart, and presumption will take advantage of any circumstances? Perhaps I may address some person who says, "Well, I am a member of the orthodox and true church; I have been baptized, and I have been confirmed after the most proper manner; I receive the Lord's supper on all fit and proper occasions. The clergyman from whom I take the sacrament has received apostolical ordination. How tasteful the architecture of our church! How decorous; the congregation! How enchanting the music! There are none of your rough wild notes that give vent to the feelings. Our organ is the perfection of mechanism, and it is played with the utmost skill. Our sacred singers perform their parts with reverent taste. Our litanies are wailed out in plaintive tones. We do the thing in the right style; and as I am a member of a branch of a catholic church, I hold myself to be an heir of eternal life." From thy towering imaginations, O man, thou shalt speedily totter. God will cast thee down, as surely as thou livest. No boasting, even of our orthodoxy, or of our attention to religious formalities, shall ever be allowed to abide his judgment. The Lord hath set his face against all boastings, and all confidences, other than a trust in the cross, and a holy reliance on the finished work and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Or shall it fare better with another class? There is our friend who says, “Well, well, I do not believe in forms and ceremonies; but, mark you, I always judge and weigh everything.” He estimates himself as an independent thinker; he is bound by no precedents, fostered by no creeds, and considers that he is amenable to no judgment but his own. He owns no lord but his own conscience, no duty but such as he prescribes himself, and as for wisdom, he looks with indifference on all things whatsoever that his private judgment has not endorsed. Moreover, he doubts the inspiration of the Bible, and has his misgivings as to the authenticity of some parts of it. He indulges a little suspicion as to the deity of Christ, and as to the doctrines of grace; he professes much intelligence, but he exhibits gross negligence. Strong in his self-assertion, he makes light of the Word of God, and the will of God, while he holds prophets and apostles in little esteem. Ah! well, brother! God is against you; he will make a fool of you one of these days, if you are so wise as to exalt yourself above his revelation. The world shall see your folly. I tell thee, captious questioner, that the Lord will bring thee down. “Tut, tut, tut, I do not believe in any of these things,” exclaims the successful merchant; “I say the best thing is to push ahead on one’s own account; I mean to save money, to get rich, to rise in the world, as others have done who have made capital of their own wits, and taken care of their own interest.” This is the religion of many people; their creed being that God will help those who help themselves; in their account, the highest wisdom is to attend to this world, and as for the world to come, the best policy is to ignore it. To the statutes of the Lord they give no heed; Evidently you see no need to depend on God. With a stout pair of arms and a good clear brain, you are confident you can make your own way in the world. Will you prosper, sir? I tell you no; for God is against you. The Lord will you down. Whether it be strength of limbs and lungs, force of brain and intellect, cunning works or scheming plans you rely upon, he will lay you level with the dust ere long. You shall know that he who exalteth himself against his maker maketh a sorry adventure. Disaster and everlasting confusion are your inevitable fate.

II. FURTHERMORE THE LORD SAYS, “I WILL EXALT THE LOW TREE.”

Here is a word of comfort to some who specially need it. You remember Joseph in the dungeon, Israel in Egypt, Hannah in the family of Elkanah, David when Samuel would have passed him by, Hezekiah when Sennacherib rebuked him. Are not all these instances of God exalting the low tree? We have no time to expatiate on them, though they are well

worthy of attentive study. But rather now let us ask, Where are the low trees here among ourselves? Who are they? The low trees are those poor in spirit, who think others better than they are themselves; who, instead of carving their names high, are willing to have them written low, because they feel they have nothing whereof to glory, nought wherein to boast. The low trees are the penitents, those who take their stand afar off with the publican, and say, “God, be merciful to me a sinner”; you that feel your own weakness to do anything aright; you who are conscious of your own worthlessness, and afraid that God will never hear your prayers; you that are bowed down low with a sense of guilt, and hardly dare to look up to the place where his honor dwelleth; you are the low trees, you are such as God exalteth. You, too, who tremble at his word; when, you see the threatening, fear lest it should be executed upon you; when you hear the promise, hardly think it possible that it can belong to you — you are low trees — God shall exalt you. You that feel your ignorance, and are willing to be instructed; you that are modest as children, and ready to sit at the feet of Jesus; you that have been broken in pieces until you feel that a crumb of mercy would be more than you deserve, and are willing to take any dole he is pleased to give — you are the low tree. And you that are despised, who walk in darkness and see no light; slandered for Christ’s sake; reproached with crimes you never committed; you of whom the world is not worthy, though the world accounts you to be unworthy of its esteem — you are the low trees, and God shall exalt you. God grant us grace to humble ourselves under his mighty hand. The Lord exalteth the low trees. Is there a soul among you that is ready to despair — a low tree, so low that it can only compare itself to a bramble-bush? Well, God dwelt in a bush. You may think that if he should have enemy upon all other men, yet he must make an exception of you, so aggravated are your offenses, so depraved your disposition, and so alien to anything good your natural temperament. Oh! bless the Lord! He exalteth the low tree. If voice can reach now any humble, fearful, broken-hearted soul, even though that soul should say it is too good to be true, yet, in God’s name, Let me assure you it is God’s message to you. Rejoice, yea, sing unto your God, for he will lift up the poor from the dunghill, while he casteth down the mighty from the seats of their pomp and their places of power.

III. THE LORD HAS ALSO DECLARED THAT “HE WILL DRY UP THE GREEN TREE.”

Whether that green tree be high or low, it does not matter; if it be green in itself, he will cut it down. Mark you, a man may be as high as heaven; if it is God that makes him high, he will stand; but if he be high in creature-strength, land creature-merits, and creature-glory, he shall be brought down; and a man may be low without merit, if he is merely mean and mire, paltry and pitiable, not worth a straw. That is not the spirit of lowliness that God blesses. In like manner, a man may be garden because he is planted by the rivers of God's living waters, that is healthy enough; but those that are like the green bay tree of the Psalmist, trees growing in their own soil, never transplanted by grace, green in the verdure of worldly prosperity, and taking all their delight in earthly things those are the trees God will dry up. Many I know of this kind! They profess to be God's people, and they say, "Well, I never have any anxiety about my eternal state; I do not see why I should ever have any doubts or fears. I have no prickings of conscience." This green tree boasts "that its leaves never fade, that its evidences are always bright." "They have no changes; therefore, they fear not God." "They have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They have no cares; they walk confidently, they talk arrogantly; they smile disdainfully at some of God's people who groan over their infirmities and bemoan their sins. Perhaps they go the length of protesting that they have no vices, and do no wrong; or they will say, "Why, as for me, I have overcome my bad habits and made amends for my youthful follies and indiscretions; and if I have any faults, they are only such as are natural to men, and they do not cause me any trouble." He will even turn round and rail on this wise, "I cannot think how some of God's people can do as they do." No; he is such a blessed, heavenly-minded hypocrite, that after he has condoned his own crimes, he condemns other people's customs; hence he holds up the severity of his judgment as a proof of the integrity of his character. He makes broad fringes to his own garment, and he cannot think how good men can wear such narrow fringes to theirs; he has a wide phylactery, and he cannot imagine how a godly man can wear a smaller one; he prays an hour and a half at the corner of the street; he cannot think that any man is godly who prays for ten minutes in his closet; he sounds a trumpet, and gives away three halfpence to the poor; he cannot understand people when they give away ten pounds, or a hundred pounds, in the cause of religion; he thinks they must have mercenary motives. He might stand up and say, "Look at me if you want to see what a man should be, how a Christian should live, and what his manner, and conduct, and conversation should be." Behold the man who counts himself the paragon of perfection.

Have you never met with such green trees? I have. These people feed without fear, and mock without motive. They laugh at the idea of Paul's apprehension, when he said, "I keep under my body, lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." They think such fears inconsistent with the doctrine of final perseverance, though in this they are mistaken. A man may know that a true believer will persevere and yet be very much afraid that he shall not himself hold out, because he may suspect himself whether he is a true believer at all. This green tree is never troubled about the future; it is all right with him; he has launched upon a smooth, deceitful sea, and he believes it will be calm until he gets to the other side, as for human weakness, he knows nothing at all about that. He hears God's children crying, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" and he looks shocked.

The professor, too, who boasts his deep experience, is like this green tree. Young Christians he frowns at — he does not like young people. No; he would not have many young people in the church, because they might adulterate it, and bring down its spiritual tone. As to doctrine, he is profoundly learned; "he can a hair divide, betwixt the west and south-west side," and he censures at once the man who does not understand all the points. He understands more than the Bible reveals; he has improved upon the Scriptures; and those who cannot get up to his standard he despises. As for the poor, and meek, and sickly among the people of God, he, one of the strong ones, pushes them on either side, and will give them no rest. Never a man yet had anything to boast of as his own, but God was sure to dry him up. Let your life be green as emerald, it shall be brown as March dust before long. You seek sap and nourishment from yourselves. The spider's web — how soon it is blown away! Well it may, because it cometh out of the spider's own bowels. Everything that comes out of self, and lives on self, and hands on self, and fattens on self, no matter how green it may be, verily, verily, it shall be dried up. Lastly: —

IV. THE LORD MAKES "THE DRY TREE TO FLOURISH."

There are some dry trees to be pitied in their present condition, yet to be congratulated on their prospects. I would not say a word to encourage doubting, but I would say a great many words to encourage doubters. How many of God's people may be fitly compared to a dry tree! They have little joy; they have not got to full assurance. They are afraid to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Every night, before they go to bed, they

feel such consciousness of sin that they can hardly sleep. They feel themselves so weak that where others go and think nothing of it, they dare not trust themselves. They are afraid to risk temptation; sometimes they are so conscious of their own weakness, that they do not exert themselves as they ought, and hence their low spirits, their melancholy, and their mourning. They think they are of no use to the church, they are half inclined to suspect it was a mistake for them to be baptized, and that they were to blame for uniting themselves with the people of God. "Oh!" say they, "if I be a lamb, I am the sickliest of the whole flock." Were I an heir of promise, should I feel the assaults of sin as I do? or should I be so much the prey of indwelling corruption, and become so dry and withered? Do they retire to the closet to pray, hardly a word can they utter. They come to, the assembly of believers, and though they do sing with their lips, the heart cannot sing as it would. There are times, too, when walking home they say, "I go where others go, but I get no comfort; if I were really the Lord's, should I be thus; if I did trust Christ, should I ever be so languid?" Brethren, if it is of your own bringing about that you are thus dry, I do not offer you any comfort; but if the Holy Spirit has led you to see your weakness, your nothingness, your deadness, then I am glad you have been brought to this pass, for God will cause the dry tree to flourish. When we are weak, then are we strong. The death warrant is gone out from God against everything that is of the creature. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled; not your bad nature only, but your good nature; not your vices only, but your virtues; not your sins alone, but your graces; all these must be contemned and despised so far as you venture to put them in the place at Christ. You must cry "Away with them; away with them," as if they were so much dung and dross. Christ's blood only for our hope, the Spirit's work only for our life. Here let us stand, and we shall be safe. The dry tree by divine grace shall flourish; the green tree, deserted by the dew of heaven, shall dry up. The low tree, fostered by the husbandman, shall mount even to the stars; the high tree, cut down by the axe of judgment, shall lay outstretched along the plains of ruin for ever.

I think I see the last great day. There is a greater forest than this; this is but one corner of it. I see that forest stretched over sea and land, over mountain and valley. It is a forest of men. There stand the Pharisees, the self-righteous, the tyrants, the autocrats of haughty mien, the men of profound intellect with lofty brows, the men that questioned God's government; the infidels who said "Atheos," and denied his being. I see the

high trees, that towered to such an elevation, and attracted so much admiration; and there, too, are the low trees contented to be low, for Christ of Nazareth was lowly. He, whose disciples they are, came riding on an ass even in the day of his highest earthly triumph. And now I hear the trumpet ring exceeding loud and long. Through the glades of that vast human forest the sound comes ringing broad and clear, “Smite! smite! smite! and let all the high trees fall!” O God, what a crash!

He smote great kings and slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever. He smites. What! another crash? The orthodox who rested in their orthodoxy, and the self-righteous men and women fall there; yonder the philosophic atheist, and here the scoffing sceptic; there the haughty persecutor, and there, again, the pompous priest and pretentious ceremonialist. Gather them; in Tophet, ordained of old, pile them together, cedar upon oak, and elm upon fir, gather them together. pile them on, pile them up; let the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, come upon the mighty pile. It is the funeral pyre of the giants. There lies the dead body of sin, and here comes the living spouse of sin, to be immolated upon that same pile. Her name is Pride. She comes; they clasp. The great transgression and the evil imagination, together they lie down, and the flames arise. Now the cedars, full of resin, give forth their flame, the sparks go up to heaven, and the flames even unto the throne of God, whilst I hear the voices of multitudes singing, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for thou hast judged the great temptress, even Pride, and thou hast given her up to be burned with fire!” But what of you, what of you, that will be faggots to that great burning? What of you, proud sons of men, that will be fuel to that flame? Turn ye, turn ye! Fly ye to Christ, and then you shall stand in the judgment, and join in the anthem, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Oh! that we all may be found among the humble — not the haughty — in our present life, and that we may be gathered among the blessed, not destroyed among those whom the Lord abhorreth, in our future destiny!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ISAIAH 1:1-9.

Verses 1, 2. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Ezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

The good and gracious God, having been treated ungenerously, makes his appeal not to men who themselves are guilty, but to the very heavens and each, calling on the silent stones of the field, and the trees of the wood, and the stars of heaven, to judge between him and his rebellious children. “I have nourished and brought up chillon “ — taken a nurse’s interest in them, shown a parent’s love to them, “and they have rebelled against me.”

3, 4. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

More brutish than the brutes are men when they forget their God. The dog follows its master’s heels, but man will not be obedient to his Lord. The ox knows his owner, and gives some sign of recognition when he sees him; but alas! the ungodly sons of men know not the God that made them, feeds them, keeps them alive.

Where art thou, oh! backslider? Mingling once again with the people of God, let these words come home to you. There is a “Thus saith the Lord” in the prophets words to them; and thus saith the Lord to you. *You* have gone away backward, provoking the Holy One of Israel to anger.

5. *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.*

It was of no use chastising these people. They only sinned the worse for all the afflictions that were sent, and when the fire of affliction doth not melt the iron heart, what can do it? Why waste the fuel upon them? Ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

They had been smitten, they had been afflicted, till the whole nation through and through had been brought low. Their head and heart had been made faint. And, oh! there are some that have passed through many trials and are none the better. They have seen poverty, and yet they go again to the sin that first brought them to it. They feel in their very bones the result of their transgressions, and yet they hug in their bosoms the serpent that has stung them.

6. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

The whole land of Israel was so destroyed through sin, it was like a body that is covered with sores that have not been touched by the surgeon's hand. Yet they do not repent.

7, 8. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,

A mere shanty run up during the grape season, wherein the persons who took care of the vineyard found shelter from the rain.

8. As a besieged city.

For the same purpose.

9. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Yet, though they were reduced to this, they kept on with their sins. It really seems as if men would suffer anything for their sins rather than give them up. It is not always the pleasure of sin which seems to fascinate, but the very bitterness of sin seems sweet to some.

THE JUDGMENT UPON ZACHARIAS

NO. 3495

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.” — Luke 1:20.

UBELIEF is everywhere a great sin, and a grievous mistake. Unbelief has proved the ruin of those countless multitudes who, having heard the gospel, rejected it, died in their sins, have been consigned to the place of torment, and await the fiercer judgment of the last day. I might ask the question concerning this innumerable host, “Who slew all these?” The answer would be, “Unbelief.” And when unbelief comes into the Christian’s heart, as it does at times — for the truest believer has his times of doubt; even Abraham, the father of the faithful, sometimes had his misgivings — that unbelief does not assail his thoughts without withering his joys, and impairing his energies. There is nothing in the world that costs a saint so dear as doubt. If he disbelieve his God, he most assuredly robs himself of comfort, deprives himself of strength, and does himself a real injury. The case of Zacharias may be a lesson to the Lord’s people. It is to them I am going to speak: Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. In reviewing these, we mark: —

I. THE CHARACTER AND POSITION OF ZACHARIAS.

Here we cannot fail to discover some profitable lesson. He was undoubtedly a believer. He is said, in the sixth verse, to have been righteous before God. No man ever obtained such a reputation except by

faith. "The just shall live by faith." No other righteousness than that which is faith is of any esteem in God's account. Such was the righteousness of Abraham, and such was the righteousness of all the saints before the advent of our Redeemer. Such, too, has been the standard ever since. Zacharias evidently was a real believer. Yet for all that, when the angel appeared to him, and God gave him the promise of a son, he was amazed, bewildered, incredulous, and could not credit, but only question the announcement. "How shall I know that these things shall be?"

Nor was he merely a genuine believer; he was well instructed and greatly enlightened, for he was a priest, and, as a priest considered, he was righteous before God, and blameless, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. That he was well instructed in the Word of God is undeniable. He could not otherwise have discharged his duty, for the priest's lips must keep knowledge, and he must teach men. Being proficient in the one, and competent for the other, ignorance offered him no excuse. Moreover, as a man of years, he was probably to be classed among the experienced saints of his time. He had borne the burden and heat of the day, and received proof upon proof of the abundant mercy of God. Now mark this. For any of us to doubt, who have been justified by faith is a shameful delinquency. For those to doubt who have, in addition to their first convictions, a thousand confirmations of the truth they have embraced, who are acquainted with the covenant and its rich inventory of promises, who are deeply taught in the things of God — for such to doubt involves a higher degree of guilt. I do not think that had Zacharias been a mere babe in grace, or an inexperienced stripling, his unbelief would have met with so stern a rebuke. It was because he was a venerable priest, one thoroughly schooled in sacred truth, a man who for many years instructed the people of Israel in the oracles of God, that it became a crying evil for him to say, "Whereby shall I know this?" when the angel told him of his prayer being heard, and of the manner of answer the Lord would vouchsafe him.

The high office that Zacharias held as a priest caused him to be looked up to. Hence his conduct was more narrowly watched, and his example had a wider influence. On a similar account we have need, all of us in our several spheres, to consider the effect of our actions upon others. The higher a man's position, the greater his responsibility; and in the event of any delinquency, the graver his offense. For you to disbelieve, my dear brother, who are at the head of a household, is worse than a personal infirmity; it is

a violation of duty to your family. And you, dear friend, who preach the gospel, for you to disbelieve, who are looked upon by many as an advanced Christian, as a mature saint whose example may be safely followed by those who listen to your counsels — this is a great and a crying evil, whereby you dishonour the Lord. I pray God that your conscience may be tenderly sensitive, and that you may be aroused to a sense of the dishonor you bring to him by your faithlessness.

How peculiarly favored Zacharias was! An angel of the Lord appeared unto him. Not to any of the other priests, when they were offering incense, did such a heavenly visitor come. And what welcome tidings he brought! It was a wonderful message that he was to be the father of a child great in the sight of the Lord, one who should minister in the spirit and power of Elias, and become the forerunner of the Messiah. This surely was a signal instance of Divine favor. And mark this, beloved, our God is very jealous of those whom he highly favors. You cannot have privileged communications from the Lord, or be admitted into close communion with him, without finding that he is a jealous God. The nearer we draw to him, the more hallowed our sense of his presence will be. But to doubt his Word, or question the fulfillment of his promise when he speaks kindly to us, must incur his censure. I speak after the manner of men; we do not expect from a stranger the esteem which we ought to merit from our servants. But our friends, who know us better than servants, ought to trust us more implicitly. And yet beyond common friendship in the near relation and tender attachment of a wife to her husband, the most unqualified confidence should be reposed. Even so, my brethren, if you and I have ever been permitted to lean our heads on Jesus' bosom; if we have sat down at his banquets, and his banner over us has been love; if we have been separated from the world by peculiar fellowship with Christ, and have had choice promises given us, we cannot, like Zacharias, ask, "Whereby shall I know" without grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and bringing upon ourselves some sad chastisement as the result.

What soothing comfort had just been administered to Zacharias by the angel of the Lord! Was not the manner of the salutation fitted to allay terror, and inspire him with trust? The troubled thoughts that perplexed him, and the fear that fell upon him when the angel appeared standing at the right hand of the altar, met with no rebuke. If it was natural that so unwonted a vision should startle him, there was a gentle sympathising tenderness in the angel's address that might well have stilled the throbblings

of his heart. "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." And so is it with us when the consolations of God have been neither few nor small, and when his good will towards us has been pointedly expressed, does it not make doubt and questioning more inexcusable? Do we not thereby aggravate the sin? Some of us have lived in the very bosom of comfort. Precious promises have been brought home to our souls; we have eaten of the marrow and the fatness; we have drunk the wines on the lees well refined. We are no strangers to the blessing of his eternal and unchanging love, or to the light of his countenance, which they prove who find grace in his eyes. Oh! if we begin to doubt after these discriminating love tokens, what apology can we offer? How can we hope to escape from the chastening rod?

Moreover, the misgivings that Zacharias betrayed relate to the very subject on which his supplications were offered. It was in response to his own petition that the angel said to him, "Thy prayer is heard." I marvel at his faith that he should persevere in prayer for a boon which seemed, at his own and his wife's age, to have been out of the course of nature, and beyond the domain of hope, but I marvel a great deal more that, when the answer came to that very prayer, Zacharias could not believe it. So full often is it with us; nothing would surprise some of us more than to receive an answer to some of our prayers. Though we believe in the efficacy of prayer, at times we believe so feebly that when the answer comes, as come it does, we are astounded and filled with amazement. We can scarcely think of it as a purpose of God, it seems rather to us like a happy coincidence. Surely this adds greatly to the sin of unbelief. If we have been asking for mercy without expecting it, and pleading promises while harbouring mistrust, every prayer we have offered has been only a repetition of our secret unbelief; and it is God's faithfulness that brings our inconsistency to light.

One other reflection is suggested by the narrative. Zacharias appears to have staggered at a promise which others, whom we might well imagine to have been weaker in faith than himself, implicitly believed. The veteran falters where a babe in grace might have taken courage. And is it not always a scandal if any of us who have been conspicuously favored of God are ready to halt, while our feeblers brethren and sisters are animated and encouraged? No dubious thought seems to have crossed the mind of Elizabeth, no incredulous expression fell from her lips. She said, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me."

This case was the very opposite of that of Abraham and Sarah. There Abraham believed, but Sarah doubted; here the wife believes in the face of her husband's scruples. In like manner, Mary, that humble village maiden, accepts with simple faith the high and holy salutation with which she was greeted. She just basks a natural question, and that being answered, she replies, "Be it unto me, according to thy Word." Her surprise was soon exchanged for joy, and by-and-by she begins to sing with a loud voice, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Not a little remarkable is this opening chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Woman, who had been in the background through long preceding generations, seems suddenly to take a foremost place. Zacharias and Joseph stand in doubt, while Elizabeth and Mary exultingly believe. And who knows but I may be addressing some poor woman here who, in the depth of affliction, bodily suffering, and poverty, nevertheless rejoices in God with all her heart? But without a doubt, I am now speaking to many a man who is vexed with trifling cares, murmurs bitterly because of petty annoyances, and distrusts his God when clouds come over the sky so that he sees not his way. Shame on our unbelief. Think shame of yourselves because of it, I pray you. Never does it disgrace us more than when the weaklings of the Lord's family put us to the blush by the simplicity and sincerity of their faith. The character and position of Zacharias may furnish a striking moral, but I do urgently entreat each Christian to point the keen edge of criticism at himself, and consider how much he is personally to blame for his own unbelief. Let us now proceed to investigate: —

II. THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS.

Whence this perilous wavering at that privileged hour His fault was that he looked at the difficulty. "I am an old man," said he, "and my wife is well stricken in years." And while he looked at the difficulty he would fain suggest a remedy; he wanted a sign. "Whereby shall I know this?" It was not enough for him that God had said so; he wanted some collateral evidence to guarantee the truth of the word of the Lord. This is a very common fault among really good people. They look for a sign. I have often trembled in my own soul when I have felt an inclination thus to tempt the Lord by looking for some minute circumstance to verify a magnificent promise. When I have thought, "Hereby shall I know whether he does hear prayer or not," a cold shiver has passed over me, the shudder has gone through my soul that ever I should think of challenging the truth of God's word, when the fact is so certain. To us who have full often cried unto the

Lord in our distresses and been delivered out of our troubles, to raise such a question is indeed ungrateful. For a child of God who habitually prays to his Father in heaven to look upon his faithfulness as a matter of uncertainty is to degrade himself, and to dishonor his Lord. Yet there is no denying the tendency and disposition among us to want a sign. As we read a prophecy of the future, we crave a token in the present. If the Lord were pleased to give us a sign, or if he told us to ask for a sign, we should be quite right in attaching a high importance thereto, but for us to doubt a plain promise, and, therefore, ask a sign, is to sin against the Lord. Sometimes we have wanted signs in spiritual things. Meet and proper is it for us to rejoice in the true delights of fellowship with Christ, but it ill becomes us to make our feelings a kind of test of our acceptance, or to say, "I will not believe God if he does not indulge me with certain manifestations of grace; unless he gives me the sweetmeats I crave, I will be sulky and sullen, and refuse to eat the children's bread." Why, such conduct is wilful and wicked; it is weak, and utterly inexcusable. Yet how many of us have been guilty of this folly? Now, as Zacharias stood upon the threshold of the gospel dispensation, and he was the first among those who heard the glad tidings to express unbelief, it was necessary that he should be made an example of.

God would show at the very outset, even before John the Baptist was born, that unbelief could not be tolerated nor should it go unchastened. Therefore, his servant, Zacharias, must, as soon as he had asked for a sign, have such a sign as would make him suffer for months to come, constrain him to be sorry that he had ever dared to proffer the request. Oh! beloved, is our faith still so weak, and our experience still so contracted, that we cannot yet trust our God? Twenty years have we known him. Has he been a wilderness to us? Have his mercy and truth ever failed us in time of need? Shall all his tender dealings with us count for nothing? Do ye think so lightly of the gift of his Son, the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the dally providence which has guarded you, and of the hourly benediction which has been vouchsafed to you, that ye would fain put aside these unfailing benefits from your grateful remembrance, while you indulge in some paltry whim, and tempt the Lord your God by your mistrust? That be far from any of us! We would rather take up the position of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who, when arraigned before Nebuchadnezzar, and adjudged to be thrown into the furnace of fire, said, "Our God is able to deliver us; but," they added, "if not (though he should do nothing of the kind), nevertheless be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy

gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” That is the spirit in which we ought to walk before God — “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” What if he does not spare my mothers precious life? What if he does not preserve my child from the ravages of the fatal epidemic? What if he take away the desire of mine eyes with a stroke? What if my business should cease to thrive? What if my health fail and my strength decay? What if I be dishonored by the scandal of my neighbors? Shall I, therefore, cast off my allegiance to God, or betray my trust in him? Am I to engage in rebellion like this? Not flood nor flame could quench or extinguish his love to me. Shall anxiety or tribulation, disappointment or disaster sever my heart from devotion to him? Nay, God give me grace to see my cattle destroyed, and my goods swept away, and my children cut off in their prime, and to hear cruel taunts from the wife of my bosom; to be covered with sore boils, and to sit on a dunghill and scrape myself with a potsherd and find my best friends miserable comforters, and yet, in the midst of accumulated distresses, to be able to say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth; he has not failed to deliver me hitherto, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Though the fig-tree should not blossom, though the flocks and herds be cut off, yet will I trust in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation.” If true to our high profession, the Christian’s faith should not borrow its hue from the circumstances by which he is surrounded. To hanker after signs that a promise shall be fulfilled is obviously to show distrust of the promiser. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.” So shall you be restrained from asking for a petty sign to justify you in relying on his princely bounty. The Lord keep you from this great transgression! We pass on to observe: —

III. THE PENALTY ZACHARIAS INCURRED.

His morbid propensity was followed by a mortifying punishment. He had doubted, and he became dumb, and as the narrative clearly shows us, he was deaf likewise. Such was his chastisement, and it was sent not in anger, but in God’s own covenant love. What a salutary medicine! Although bitter to the taste, how effective it was! Read his song, and you will see the evidence. He had been for months silent, quiet, shut out from all sound, and unable to make any. But well he had occupied his months of seclusion. He had searched the prophets — do you see that? He had been musing much upon the coming one — do you see that? Deep humility had taken

the place of arrogant presumption. He was bowed down before the majesty of God, yet at the same time full of peace and blissful hope. Thus he looked into the glorious future. Oh! dear brethren, if you are prone to doubt, this sickness of the mind will require a strong corrective. Very likely God will give you some sharp medicine, but it shall work for your good. As his child, he will not chasten you so as to injure you, but he will chasten you so as to benefit you. I do not think children generally court the rod, however beneficial it may be, and yet I am quite sure there is no wise child of God who would not shrink from the graver ills which render such discipline essential to his soul's health.

See how judgment was tempered with mercy. The punishment sent to Zacharias was not so severe as it might have been. Instead of being struck deaf and dumb, he might have been struck dead. As I read this passage, I wondered that God had not struck me deaf and dumb when I have spoken unbelieving words — when I have been depressed in spirit, and spoken unadvisedly with my lips. Oh! had the Lord been wroth with me, and said, "If that is your witness about me, you shall never speak again." That would have been most just, and I might have been a mournful instance of his indignation against his unbelieving servants; he has not dealt so with me; glory be to his name!

And this chastisement did not invalidate the promise. The Lord did not say, "Well, Zacharias, as you don't believe it, your wife, Elizabeth, shall not have a son. There shall be a John born, but he shall not come to your house." Oh! no; that is a grand passage — "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." The promise still stands. God does not take advantage of our unbelief to cry off and say, "I will give thee no blessings because thou doubtest me" — no, but having said it, he does it and his Word does not return unto him void. Even the trembling, doubting children, though they get the rod, get the blessing too; and the promise is fulfilled, though the father is dumb when the blessing comes. Very painful, indeed, was his chastisement. One would not like to be deaf and dumb for a day; but to be deaf and dumb for the space of nine months must have been a very painful trial to this man. Moreover, he could not bless the people; he could not speak a word; he could not instruct the people; he was useless for that part of the priest's work; and when the song went up within the hallowed walls of the temple, he could not hear it. He might know by signs that they were singing a hallelujah, yet his ears could not catch its grateful strains. That poor tongue of his was silent. He could not

add a note to the volume of praise that went up to the God he loved. It must have been mournful to him to have no prayer in the family which he could hear, and in which he could join, and to be as good as dead for all practical purposes. Now I am afraid thence are many believers who have had to suffer something like this, for many days, on account of their unbelief. I think I can point out some who are unable to hear the gospel as once they did many years ago, a friend said that he could not hear me preach. I said to him, "Buy a horn." "No," he said, "it is not your voice; I can hear that, but I don't enjoy it." My reply was, "Perhaps that is my fault, but I am far from sure that it is not your own." I fear, in such cases, it is quite as often the hearer's fault as the preacher's fault. At any rate, when others profit, and our judgment approves, though our hearts find no refreshment, there is reason to suspect that in the dullness of our senses we are compelled to bear chastisement for our unbelief. You go where others go, and find no solace. You hear what edifies and comforts them, but there is no cheer for you. You are deaf; your ears are closed to what the Lord says. Very often it has happened, I fear, to some here, that, for want of faith, they have lost their speech. Time was when they could tell of the Lord's goodness, but they seem silent now. They could sing once, but their harps are hung on the willows now. As they get with their companions, they seem as if they have lost all their pleasant conversation. If they try the old accustomed strings of the time-worn harp, the ancient skill is gone. They cannot praise God as once they did; and all because on one occasion, when the promise was clear before their eyes, they would challenge and mistrust it. They could not rely upon their God. Little do we know how many Fatherly chastisements come upon us as the result of our unbelief.

The lessons I gather, and with which I conclude, are these — First, if any of you, beloved, are weak in faith, do not be satisfied about it. Cry to God. Our God deserves better homage of us than a weak, attenuated faith can render him. He deserves to be trusted with such confidence as a child gives his parent. Ask him to increase your faith. And you who have faith, oh! keep it jealously, exercise it habitually; pray to the Lord to preserve it. Never begin to walk according to the sight of the eyes. Confer not with flesh and blood. Don't come down from that blessed height of simple confidence in God, but ask that you may abide there, and no longer doubt. The Church wants believers to believe for her, and to pray for her. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. Let not

that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” Art thou strong in faith, be thou stronger still; art thou weak in faith, be thou strong.

But let the unbeliever, the utter unbeliever, tremble. If a good man, a saved man, a noble and a blameless man was nevertheless for months struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. To you, unbeliever, no angel Gabriel will appear, but the destroying angel awaits you. What shall be your fearful chastisement? You will be silent; it will be eternal. Oh! you shall stand silent at the judgment-seat of Christ, unable to offer any excuse for your rebellion and unbelief. Unbelief will destroy the best of us: faith will save the worst of us. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath eternal life — he that believeth not (whatever else his apparent excellences will assuredly perish. Faith, faith! this is the priceless saving thing to every one of us. The gift be yours to believe. The grace be yours to inherit the righteousness of faith. The joy be yours to believe in Jesus Christ with all your hearts. The triumph be yours to believe now to the saving of your souls. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

HEBREWS 3; 4:1-9.

Verse 1. *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus.*

Would God we considered him more! He is supremely worthy of our perpetual consideration from all points of view. And the more you consider him the more you may, for there is a depth and breadth about his wondrous personality, his work, and his offices well worthy of our deepest thought and admiring worship. Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, we may well consider him.

2-4. *Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.*

The translators were obliged to supply the word man, and yet it is not correct. It is only half the matter; for behold Christ is God and man in one ever blessed person, and, therefore, was he counted worthy of repro glory than Moses.

5, 6. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for testimony of those things which were to be spoken alter; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

We are the house in which he dwells with delight — in which he finds comfort and rest. We ere the household over which he rules, and in which he is the delight and the icy of us all. Oh! may our church ever be such a house, so well ordered, that when the Lord cometh into it — nay, when he ever dwelleth in it — he may not be grieved in his own house. Whatever trouble a man has, he hopes to find solace at home. And so let the house of God be the house of Jesus — the place where there is peace, obedience, love, holiness.

7-9. *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day if ye will hear his voice. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.*

That was a house in which it was hard to dwell. It had been Moses' prayer, "if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence"; and the curtains had been spread for God's abode, and there was the holy place. But, oh! their provocations made it an uneasy house for the Lord of the house, which ultimately he left, rending its veil from the top to the bottom as he left it, for it was finished, and he had done with it.

10. *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.*

They do err; they did always err in their heart. God is very tender to errors of judgment — errors of the head. But to err in the heart — this is the heart of erring, and very provoking to the Most High; and for it always to be so after having tasted the bitter fruit of erring — after having known God's angers on account of previous errors — oh! this was sad! "They do always err in their heart." The foundation of sin often lies, however, in ignorance — "They have not known my ways." Ignorance can never be of any benefit to us. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good." But

ignorance of God is the constant course of the errors of the heart. “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord,” is a very gracious promise, and where it is carried out, there the errors are rectified by the grace of God.

11. *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*)

What a dreadful warning this is to us! If God has had forty years’ patience with you, hake heed, sinner, take heed, lest he swear in his wrath that yea shall not enter into his rest, for your entrance into that rest depends upon his good will and pleasure, He will have mercy of whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. If, then, you provoke him to swear that you stroll not enter into his rest, into that rest you never can enter, for then the gates of hell are barred upon you, and the gates of heaven fast locked against you. Beware, then, lest ye provoke him.

12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, an departing from the living God.*

That is the thing that provokes God — unbelief; not so much the unbelief of the head, as the unbelief of the heart, when the heart will not yield to the plan of salvation, when men want to be saved by their own works, or else are indifferent altogether about whether they are saved or not. It is heart-unbelief that damns men. It is heart-faith that is the means of salvation. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; but heart-unbelief leadeth to, and seals his, ruin.

13. *But exhort one another daily.*

In opposition to their always erring, do you be always exhorting, and you cannot do that with any face unless you are always watching that you do not err yourselves; but when, walking yourselves near with God, you exhort one another, it is well. “Exhort one another daily.”

13. *While it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

If sin were to come to us labeled as sin, I trust we should reject it; hut there is a deceitfulness of sin. It sometimes comes as a necessary action. We think that wisdom demands that we should sin a little sometimes to avoid some great evil; and in this way the soul gets hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Oh! if the devil would come in the shape of a devil, he

would do little mischief, but he assumes the fashion of an angel of light, and there it is that he causes us so much sin and sorrow.

14. *For we are made partakers of Christ if we field the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.*

It is not true that one act of faith is all that is required; except you will consider that one act to be continuous throughout life. If a man were a believer once, and if that were possible to cease to be so, then, of course, he is ruined; but the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints speaketh not on that wise, but it saith that he who is a believer shall continue so — that he who is right with God shall abide so even to the end; and unless it be so we are not partakers of Christ at all. We are made partakers of Christ if we “hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”

15, 16. *While it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke*

There are many such, and there are no sinners who provoke God so much as there who hear the gospel. A man who never hears the gospel at all may provoke God, but the man that sins after he has heard it again and again, and again, and has the sound of it ringing in his ears, provoke. God with a sevenfold degree of provocation.

16. *Howbeit not all that came, out of Egypt by Moses.*

No, but all but two. Yes, but the Lord will not forget two. There were only a few a more handful — in Sodom, but the Lord would not consume them with the wicked. They were brought out of it; and so here, if there be only two, the Holy Spirit takes care to be very accurate in the counting of God’s elect ones; and he says, “Howbeit, not all that come out of Egypt by Moses.” If you are one of a family, and two of a city, he will take you and bring you into Zion. You may be in so great a minority that in all your acquaintance there may not be one godly person; yet the Holy Ghost will not take the matter in the lump, but he will choose you out, and mark you out, and distinguish you. Do you not notice how careful he was when he spoke about Judas — the good Judas? He says, “Not Iscariot.” No, no; he will not have him mistaken for that traitor. He guards the names of his people, each one of them, if there be but one — and two, if there be but two. “Howbeit not all that come out of Egypt by Moses.”

God has an election according to grace. Doubtless there are some here now who will no longer provoke God, but who, constrained by sovereign love, will throw down all the weapons of their rebellion, and yield themselves up to him. May it be your case; may it be your case sinner, even at this moment.

17. But with whom was he grieved forty years; was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

How he speaks of them, and calls them “carcasses”! He never speaks of his children so; and you remember that in the Old Testament the unredeemed man is comparable to the ass. “Thou shalt not redeem him; thou shalt break his neck”; but the redeemed man is comparable to the sheep. Valuable property is in him, and God esteems him. “Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.”

18, 19. And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It is those who believe not who have God’s curse. If you do not rest upon Christ as your salvation, you, too, shall hear God swear that you shall not enter into his rest.

HEBREWS 4.

1. 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.

If you avoid the very seeming of it, you will avoid the thing itself. Oh! that we were careful about this — that there was nothing that should give any reasonable fear to those who observed us, or to ourselves when we search our hearts, lest we should not enter into this rest.

2. 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.

It must be mixed with faith. There are many drugs that are of no value till they are mixed with something else; and the Word preached become of no value to a soul until it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

3. *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: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

I leave out the intermediate words for the time being. “There is a rest.”

9. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*

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“But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” — Ephesians 2:13.

I DO not want you to feel at this time as if you were listening to a sermon, or to any sort of set discourse, but rather I should like, if it were possible, that you should feel as if you were alone with the Savior, and were engaged in calm and quiet meditation; and I will try to be the prompter, standing at the elbow of your contemplation, suggesting one thought and then another; and I pray, dear brethren and sisters in, Christ, as many of you as are truly in him, that you may be able so to meditate as to be profited, and to say at the close, “My meditation on him was sweet. I will be glad in his name.” There are three very simple things in the text. The first is what we were. Some time ago “we were far off.” But secondly, what we are — we are “made nigh” And then there is the how, the means of this great change. It is “in Christ Jesus,” and it is added, “by the blood of Christ.” First, then, let us with humility consider, as believers: —

I. WHAT WE WERE.

There was a day when we passed from death unto life. All of us who are children of God have undergone a great and mysterious change; we have been new created, we have been born again. If any of you have not

experienced this great change, I can only pray that you may, but you will not be likely to take much interest in the theme of meditation this evening. As many of you as have experienced this great change are now asked to recollect what you were. You were far off, first, in the respect that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The Jew was brought nigh. The Jewish people were favored of God with light, while the rest of the world remained in darkness. "To them he gave" the oracles; with them he made a covenant; but as for the rest of the nations, they were left unclean and far off. They could not come near to God. This was our condition. We were Gentiles. We had no participation in the covenant that God had made with Abraham; we had no share in the sacrifices of Aaron or his successors. We could not come in by the way of circumcision. We were not born after the flesh, and we had no right to that fleshly covenant, however great its privileges. We are brought nigh now. All that the Jew ever had we have. We have all his privileges, and more. He had but the shadow, we have the substance. He had but the type: we have the reality. But aforetime we had neither shadow nor substance; we were afar off, and had no participation in them.

And, beloved, when we think of our distance from God, there are three or four ways in which we may illustrate it. We were far off from God, for a vast cloudland of ignorance hung between our souls and him. We were lost as in a tangled wood in which there was no pathway. We were like some bird drifted out to sea that should be bereft of the instinct which guides it on its course, driven to and fro by every wind, and tossed like a wave by every tempest. We knew not God, neither did we care to know. We were in the dark with regard to him and his character; and when we did make guesses concerning God, they were very wide of the truth, and did not help to bring us at all near. He has taught us better now; he has taught us to call him Father, and to know that he is love. Since we have known God, or, rather, have been known of God, we have come nigh, but once our ignorance kept us very far off. Worse than that, there was between us and God a vast range of the mountains of sin. We can measure the Alps, the Andes have been sealed, but the mountains of sin no man has ever measured yet. They are very high. They pierce the clouds. Can you think of the mountains of your sin, beloved? Reckon them all up since your birth-sins of childhood, and youth, and manhood, and riper years; your sins against the gospel, and against the law; sins with the body, and sins with the mind; sins of every shape and form — ah! what a mountain range they

make! And you were on one side of that mountain, and God was on the other. A holy God could not wink at sin, and you, an unholy being, could not have fellowship with the thrice Holy God. What a distance! — an impassable mountain sundered you from your God. It has all gone now. The mountains have sunk into the sea, our transgressions have all gone, but, oh! what hills they were once, and what mountains they were but a little while ago! In addition to these mountains, there was, on the other side nearest to God, a great gulf of divine wrath. God was angry, justly angry, with us. He could not have been God if sin had not made him angry. He that plays with sin is very far from knowing anything of the character of the Most High. There was a deep gulf. Ah! even the lost in hell know not how deep it is. They have been sinking: but this abyss hath no bottom. God's love is infinite. Who knoweth the power of shine anger, O Most High? It is all filled now, as far as we are concerned. Christ has bridged the chasm. He has taken us to the other side of it; he ho brought us nigh; but what a gulf it was! Look down and shudder. Have you ever stood on a glacier and looked down a crevasse, and taken a great stone and thrown it down, and waited till at last you heard the sound as it reached the bottom? Have not you shuddered at the thought of falling down that steep? But there you stood but a little while ago, an heir of wrath, even as others. So the Apostle puts it, "even as others." Oh! how far off you were!

Nor was this all, for there was another division between you and God. When, dear friends, we were brought to feel our state, and to have some longings after the Most High, had the mountains of sin been moved and the chasm of wrath been filled, yet there remained another distance of our own making. There was a sea of fear rolling between us and God. We dare not come to him. He told us he would forgive, but we could not think it true. He said that the blood would cleanse us — the precious blood of the atoning sacrifice — but we thought our stains too crimson to be removed. We dared not believe in the infinite compassion of our Father. We ran from him; we could not trust him. Do you not remember those times when to believe seemed an impossibility, and salvation by faith appeared to be as difficult a thing as salvation by the works of the law? That sea has gone away now. We have been ferried o'er its streams. We have no fear of God now in the form of trembling, slavish fear; we are brought nigh and say, "Abba Father," with an untrembling tongue. You see then something of the distance there was between us and God, but I will illustrate it in another way. Think of God a moment. Your thoughts cannot reach him: he is

infinitely pure; the heavens are not clean in his sight; and he charges his angels with folly. That is one side of the picture. Now look at yourself, a worm that has rebelled against its Creator, loathsome with sin, through and through defiled. When I see a beggar and a prince stand together I see a distance, but ah! it is but an inch, a span, compared with the infinite leagues of distance in character and nature between God and the fallen man. Who but Christ could have lifted up from so low an estate to so high a condition — from fellowship with devils unto communion with Jehovah himself? The distance was inconceivable. We were lost in wonder at the greatness of the love that made it all to vanish. We were afar off.

Now I have stated that very simply. Think it over a minute. And what do you feel as the result of your thought? Why, humility rises. Suppose you are a very experienced Christian, and a very intelligent reader of the Bible; suppose that for many years you have been able to maintain a consistent character. Ah! my dear brother, my dear sister, you have nothing whereof glory when you recollect what you were, and what you would have been still if it had not been for sovereign grace. You, perhaps, have forgotten a little that you were just what the Bible says. You have been so contemplating your present privileges that you have for a while failed to remember that it is only by the grace of God that you are what you are. Let these considerations bring you back to your true condition. And now with lowly reverence at the cross-foot bow down your soul and say, “My Lord, between me and the greatest reprobate there is no difference but what thy grace has made; between me and lost souls in hell there is no difference except what shine infinite compassion has deigned to make. I humbly bless thee, and adore thee, and love thee, because thou hast brought me nigh.”

And now we shall continue our contemplation, but take the second point. We have a bitter pill in this first one, but the next consideration kills it, takes the bitterness away, and sweetens it. It is:

II. WHAT WE ARE — WHAT WE ARE

“We are made nigh through the blood of Christ.” You will please to observe that the Apostle does not say, “We hope we are”; he speaks positively, as every believer should. Nor does he say, “We shall be.” There are privileges reserved for the future, but here he is speaking of a present blessing, which may be now the object of distinct definite knowledge, which ought to be, indeed, a matter of present experimental enjoyment. We are brought nigh. What means he by this? Does not he mean, first, what I

have already said, that as we were far off, being Gentiles, and not of the favored commonwealth of Israel, we are now brought nigh, that is to say, we have all the privileges of the once favored race. Are they the seed of Abraham? So, are we. for he was the Father of the faithful, and we, having believed, have become his spiritual children. Had they an altar? We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. Had they any high priest? We have an high priest we have one who has entered into the heavenly. Had they a sacrifice and paschal supper? We have Christ Jesus, who, by his one offering, hath for ever put away our sin, and who is to-day the spiritual meat on which we feed. All that they had we have, only we have it in a fuller and clearer sense. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and they have come to us. But we are brought a great deal nearer than the Jew — than most of the Jews were, for you know, brethren, the most devout Jew could not offer sacrifice to God; I mean, as a rule. Prophets were exceptions. They could not offer sacrifices themselves; they could bring the victim, but there were some special persons who must act as priests. The priest came nigh to God on the behalf of the people. Listen, O ye children of God, who were once afar off! It is the song of heaven. Let it be your song on earth — "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hath made us priests and kings." We are all priests if we love the Savior. Every believer is a priest. It is for him to bring his sacrifice of prayer, and thanksgiving, and come in, even into the holy place in the presence of the Most High. And I might say more, for no priest went into the most holy place of all, save one, the high priest, and he once in the year, not without blood and not without smoke and of incense, ventured into the most holy place. Be we, brethren, see the veil taken right away, and we come up to the mercy-seat without the trembling which the high priest felt of old, for we see the blood of Jesus on the mercy-seat and the veil rent, and we come, boldly to the throne of heavenly grace to obtain grace to help in time of need. Oh! how near we are; nearer than the ordinary Jew; nearer than the priest; as near as the high priest himself, for in the person of Christ we are where he is, that is, at the throne of God. Let me say, dear brethren, that we are near to God today, for all that divides us from God is gone. The moment a sinner believes, all that mountain of sin ceases to be. Can you see those hills — those towering Andes? Who shall climb them? But lo! I see one come who has the soar of one that has died upon a cross. I see him hold up his pierced hand, and one drop of blood falls on the hills, and they smoke; they dissolve like the fat of rams; they burn to vapor, and they are gone.

There is not so much as a vestige of them left. Oh! glory be to God, there is no sin in God's book against the believer; there is no record remaining; he hath taken it away and nailed it to his cross, and triumphed in the deed. As the Egyptians were all drowned in the sea, and Israel said, "The depths have covered them; there was not one of them left," so may every believer say, "All sin is gone, and we are pure, accepted in the Beloved, justified through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ." Oh! how glorious this nearness is when all distance is gone!

And now, brethren, we are near to God, for we are his friends. He is our mighty friend, and we love him in return. Better than that, we are his children. A friend might be forgotten, but a child — a father's bowels yearn towards him. We are his children. He has chosen us that we may approach unto him, that we may dwell in his courts and abide, and go no more out for ever." The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." And this is our privilege. And yet even more than that. Can anybody here imagine how near Jesus Christ is to God, So near are we, for that is truth which the little verse sings: —

*"So near — so very near to God,
More near I cannot be
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he."*

If we are, indeed, in Christ, we are one with him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and he has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servants be," and he has declared that we shall receive the glory — the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. What nearness is this!

Now I have stated that truth, I want you now to feed on it for a minute, and draw the natural conclusions, and feel the fit emotion. Beloved, if you are brought so near to God, what manner of lives ought you to lead? Common subjects ought never to speak traitorous word, but a member of the Privy Council, one who is admitted to the Court, should certainly be loyal through and through. Oh! how we ought to love God, who has made us nigh! — a people near unto him. How ought heavenly things and holy things to engross our attention! How joyously we ought to live too, for with such high favors as these it would be ungrateful to be unhappy! We are near to God, brethren. Then God sees us in all things — our heavenly Father knows what we have need of; he is always watching over us for

good. We are near to him — let us pray as if we were near God. There are some prayers that are dreadful from the distance there is evidently in the mind of the offerer. Too generally liturgies are addresses to a God too far off to be reached, but the humble familiarity which boldly comes trembling with fear, but rejoicing with faith, into the presence of God — this becomes those who are made nigh. When a man is near a neighbor whom he trusts he tells him his griefs, he asks his help. Deal thus with God; live on him, live for him, live in him. Be never distant from a God who has made you nigh unto himself. Our life ought to be a heavenly one, seeing that we are brought nigh to God — the God of heaven. Brethren, how assured every one of us may be of our safety if we are, indeed, believers in Christ, for if we are made nigh by love and friendship to our God, he cannot leave us. If, when we were enemies, he brought us nigh, will he not keep us now he has made us friends? He loved us so as to bring us up from the depths of sin, when we had no thoughts, nor desires towards good, and now he has taught us to love him and to long for him, will he forsake us? Impossible! What confidence this doctrine gives!

And once more, dear brethren and sisters, if the Lord has brought us nigh, what hope we ought to have for those who are farthest off from God to-day! Never be you amongst that pharisaical crew who imagine that fallen women or degraded men cannot be uplifted again. Ye were sometimes far off, but he has made you nigh. The distance was so great in your case that surely he who met that can also meet the distance in another case. Have hope for any who can be got under the sound of the gospel, and labor on until the more hopeless, the most hopeless, are brought there. Oh! let us gird up our loins for Christian work! believing that if God has saved us, there remain no impossibles. The chief of sinners was saved years ago. Paul said so. He had no mock modesty. I believe he said the truth The chief of sinners has gone through the gate into heaven, and there is room for the second worst to get through — there is room for thee, friend, as there is room for me. The God that brought me nigh has taught me to know that no man is beyond the reach of his grace. But I must leave that with you, hoping that it will flavor all your thoughts to-night. Once more. The last thing we are to consider is: —

III. HOW THE GREAT CHANGE WAS WROUGHT.

We were put into Christ, and then through the blood we were made nigh. The doctrine of the Atonement is no novelty in this house. We have

preached it often, nay, we preach it constantly, and let this mouth be dumb when it prefers any other theme to that old, old story of the passion, the substitution, and consequent redemption by blood. Beloved, it is the blood of Jesus that has done everything for us. Our debts Christ has paid; therefore, those debts have ceased to be. The punishment of our sin Christ has borne and, therefore, no punishment is due to us; substitution has met a case that is never to be met by any other means. The just has suffered for the unjust to bring us to God. We deserved the sword, but it has fallen upon him who deserved it not, who voluntarily placed himself in our room instead, that he might give compensation to justice and full liberty to mercy. It is by the blood that we are brought nigh then. Christ has suffered in our stead, and we are, therefore, forgiven. But think about that blood a minute. It means suffering; it means a life surrendered with agony. Suffering — we talk about it; ah! but when you feel it, then you think more of the Savior. When the bones ache, when the body is racked, when sleep goes from the eyelids, when the mind is depressed, when the head turns; ah! then we say, “My Savior, I see a little of the price that redeemed me from going down into the pit.” The mental and physical suffering of Christ are both worthy of our consideration, but depend upon it his soul’s sufferings were the soul of his sufferings; and when we are under deep depression, brought near even unto death with sorrow, then again we guess how the Savior bought us. The early Church was noted in its preaching for preaching facts. I am afraid now that we are too noted for forgetting facts and preaching doctrine. Let us have doctrine by all means, but, after all the fact is the great thing. When Paul gave a summary of the gospel which he triad preached, he said, “This is the gospel that I have preached — that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, was buried, rose again.” There in Gethsemane, where bloody sweat bedews the soil; there on the pavement, where the lash tears again and again into those blessed shoulders till the purple streams gush down, and the ploughers make their furrows, and the blood fills them; there when they hurl him on his back to the ground, and fasten his hands to the wood with rough iron; there when they lift him up and dislocate his bones, when they fix the cross into the earth; there when they sit and watch him, and insult his prayers, and mock his thirst, while he hangs naked to his shame in the midst of a ribald crew; there where God himself forsakes him, where Jehovah turns his face away from him, where the sufferer shrieks in agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — there it is that we were brought nigh, even we that were far off. Adore your Savior, my brethren — bow before him. He is not here. for he

is risen; but your hearts can rise, and you can bow at his feet. Oh! kiss those wounds of his; ask that by faith you may put your finger into the print of his nails, and your hand into his side. "Be not faithless, but believing," and let all your sacred powers of mind assist your imagination and faith to realize now the price with which the Savior brought you from a bondage intolerable. God grant you grace to feel something of this.

I have laid the truth before you. Now sit down and quietly turn it over in your mind. And what will strike you? Why, surely first the heinousness of sin. Was there nothing that could wash out sin but blood, and was there no blood that could wash it out hut the blood of the Son of God? O sin! O sin! what a black, what a damning thing thou art! Only the blood of an incarnate God can wash out the smallest stain of sin. My heart, I charge thee to hate it; my eyes, look not on it; my ears, listen not to its siren charm; my feet, run not in its paths; my hands, refuse to handle it; my soul, loathe, loathe that which murdered Christ, and thrust a spear through the tenderest heart that ever beat.

Next to that, do you not feel emotions of intense gratitude that, if such a price was needed, such a price was found? God had but one son, dearer to him than Isaac was to Abraham, and though there was none to command him to do it, as there was in Abraham's case, yet voluntarily the gracious Father led his son up to the cross. and it pleased the Father to bruise, him; he put him to grief; he gave him up for us. Which shall I most admire — the love of the Father, or the love of tile Son? Blessed be God, we are not asked to make distinctions, for they are one. "I and my Father are one," and in that sacred act of the sacrifice for the sins of men the Father and the Son are both to be worshipped with equal love. You see, then, the heinousness of sin in some degree, for its needing for its pardon the love of Jesus, and the love of God that gave the Savior's blood.

But, dear friends, ere I sit down, let me remark that we learn from our text and from the whole contemplation. what it is that would bring us nearer experimentally than we are to-night. How did I get nigh first? Through the blood. Do I want to get near to God to-night? Have I been wandering? Is my heart cold? Have I got into a backsliding state? Do I want to come close now to my blessed Father, and again to look up to him, and say, "Abba," and rejoice in that filial spirit? There is no way for me to come nearer except the blood. Let me think of it then, and let me see' its infinite value; it is sufficient, let me hear its everlasting, ever-prevalent plea, and

oh! then I shall feel my soul drawn; for that which draws us nearer to God, and will draw us right up to heaven, is none other than the crimson cord Of the Savior's endless, boundless, dying, but ever-living love.

And this teaches me, and teaches you, too, and here I have done, what it is we ought to preach and teach if we would bring the, far-off ones in — if we would bring near to God those that now wander from him. Philosophy, bah! You will philosophize men into hell, but never into heaven. Ceremonies you can amuse children, and you can degrade men into idiots with them, but you can do nothing else. The gospel, and the essence of that gospel, which is the blood of Jesus Christ — it is this which is an omnipotent leverage to uplift the filth, debauchery, and poverty of this city into life, into light, and into holiness. There is no battering-ram that will ever shake the gates of hell except that which every time it strikes sounds this word, "Jesus, Jesus, the Crucified." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If it will save us, it will save others; only let us spread the good news, let us tell the good tidings. Every one of us ought to preach the gospel somehow. You that speak in common conversation forget not to speak of him. Scatter such tracts as are most full of Christ — they are the best; others will be of little use. Write letters concerning him. Remember his name is like ointment, full of sweetness, but to get the perfume you must pour it forth. Oh! that we could make fragrant all this neighborhood with the savor of that dear name! Oh! that wherever we dwell every one of us might so think of Christ in our hearts that we could not help speaking of him with our lips! Living, may we rejoice in him; dying, may we triumph in him. May our last whisper on earth be what our first song shall be in heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood." Oh! I pray God to make this season of communion very sweet to you, and I think it will be if you have the key of our meditation to-night, and can unlock the door — if you know how far off you were, and see how near you are by the precious blood.

Oh! there are some far-off ones here to-night, however, to whom I must say just this word. Far-off one, God can make you nigh; you can be made nigh to-night. Whoever you may be, he is able still to save, but the blood must make you nigh — the blood of Jesus. Trust him. To believe is to live, and to believe means only and simply to trust, to depend upon. That is faith. Have confidence in Christ's sacrifice, and you are saved. God grant you may be enabled to do it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

1 CHRONICLES 22.

May the Lord instruct us while we read.

Perhaps We shall understand it better if we begin in the 21st chapter at the 26th verse.

1 Chronicles 21:26, 27. *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.*

“And David built there” — that is upon the threshing-floor of Ornan. The place of sacrifice was the place of salvation. The angel was smiting Jerusalem, but as soon as ever the sacrifice was offered the angel sheathed his sword.

28. *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.*

Then came a sacrifice of thanksgiving, as there always should be after prayer is answered. Remember how the Psalmist puts it, “Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar” — after the sin is pardoned and the transgression is put away.

29, 30 and 1 Chronicles 22:1. *For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD. Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel.*

The place where God had answered him, where the angel had appeared to him, where the fire had come down from heaven, he felt to be holiest, and that the Lord had directed him to it as the spot where his temple was to be built. It is very significant that it should be upon a threshing-floor, for surely the Church of God is God’s threshing-floor, where he gathereth his sheaves together, and separates between the wheat and the chaff. “I will winnow,” saith he, “my threshing-floor.” Oh! that we might ever recognize

that Christ is the temple of God, and Christ is the sacrifice; Christ is the appearance of God that is better to us than the appearance of angels, and Christ is God's answer to us by fire, and where Christ is, there is the burnt-offering.

2. And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.

It is very observable, not the Israelites, but the foreigners, the aliens, the strangers, the remaining Canaanites that were in the land, were set to hew the stones for the house of the Lord. I have heard very good people indeed object to the ungodly giving any money whatever to God's cause. This is all against it; here are the aliens employed to hew the stones for the house of God, and why should not they? It will do them good, at least, to do some good thing or ether in their lives. Let them have an opportunity so to do. But I see here an indication of the calling of the Gentiles, for whenever the Jews said the Gentiles had nothing to do with God, why the very stones of their temple spoke against them. Were not the timbers brought from Tyro by the Tyrians along in floats? Were not the stones quarried by aliens and foreigners? Oh! the Lord would have his people follow a large, and liberal, and prophetic policy in their dealing with mankind. God forbid that we should shut anybody out from anything that looks like good. Oh! let us not repel them; it may be that in repelling their offerings we may be hardening their hearts. David was a wiser man than that.

3, 4. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight; Also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.

Here, again, was a kind of prophecy of what would happen in better days, when the poor Gentiles should be permitted to have a share in the building of the house of God. These Tyrians and Zidonians were amongst the worst of idolaters, and yet they were used in their due place and subservience to hew the trees and float them to the temple, as near as they could get by sea to Joppa.

5. And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame

and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it.

There is no way of helping young people to serve God like setting them a good example. Let the father feel, with regard to his son, that he is young and tender; he may not be able to begin, but if I begin, I shall get him in the mode of doing such things, and maybe he may carry out my design when I am sleeping in the grave. It was well, it was wise, it was splendid of David thus to make all preparations that Solomon might afterwards go on with the good work.

5. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

If you cannot do everything yourself — and who can? — is it not well to prepare abundantly before our death for somebody else to go on with the work? Thus shall we live after we are dead — live in our sons, if God be so good to us, live in our grandchildren, who knows? — live in someone we were the means of bringing to the Savior's feet by our ministry.

Then he called to Solomon, his son. He had prepared everything, and now he speaks to him, and he charged him to build a house for Jehovah, the God of Israel.

7-8. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.

It was not an allusion to Uriah's blood, as some have thought, for God said. this to David long before David's great sin. The wars in which David was engaged were honest wars for the defense and deliverance of the country, in which God had helped him, and yet even the best wax is bad in God's esteem. When blood is shed, God delights not in it; and he sets his servant on one side without blaming him, and says, "No: a bloody hand is not fit for the building of my temple. Thou hast been called in the order of Providence to bet a warrior and a conqueror; thou must be content with that; thou canst not build the temple to the God of Peace."

9. Behold a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest

That is a very sweet name for Solomon, “A man of rest.” I pray that many a believer here may be a man of that kind. Some believers have to be men of war. There they are, in a world of struggles, disputes, contentions, of their own ambitions — but happy is that man who is of a gentle and a tender spirit, a spirit of holy wisdom, and whom God gives the great privilege to be a man of peace.

9, 10. *And I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will established the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.*

What a sweet benediction from an aged man’s mouth.

11-13. *Wow, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfill the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.*

This was addressed to a young man and tender by an old man who had displayed much courage. They who have been courageous themselves can safely encourage others to be so. God make us all in every good cause to be free from fear. Like Bernard, the knight, may we be “without fear, and without reproach,” ever contending for God and his truth.

14. *Now behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold,*

Whatever sum that may have been, it could hardly have been a Babylonian talent, because that would have made him to have laid up one thousand millions sterling.

14. *And a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.*

A capital text for a collection, whenever there has been a good sum given already, “Thou mayst add thereto.” Next Sunday week we collect for the

hospitals. Thou mayest add to the gold if thou canst; thou mayest add to the silver if thou canst; thou mayest add to the copper if thou canst not add to the silver or the gold.

15. *Moreover there are workmen with thee in abundance,*

David had foreseen all that was wanted, and had got a list of the men of skill and art throughout all his land.

15. *Hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.*

You remember that text, “The Lord showed me four carpenters,” and so when the Lord wants carpenters there will be carpenters. Whatever kind of men he requires for his service, that kind of men shall be forthcoming in the day of need — “All manner of cunning men for every manner of work.”

16. *Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no number. Arise, there/ore and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.*

That is his word to Solomon.

17. *David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying,*

What a grand thing it is when a man has true-hearted helpers, men who are ready to stint themselves, annihilate themselves, as it were, to help some other man to do the work of the Lord, quite satisfied to be themselves unknown, so long as the house of the Lord is built, and God’s name is glorified!

18. *Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.*

So then they had not to fight, but to work. If Jesus Christ has conquered all our foes, and routed all our sins; if sin, and death, and hell lie prostrate at his feet, what can we do but devote our rest and peace to his service?

19. *Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.*

A SOLEMN EMBASSY

NO. 3497

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 26TH FEB., 1871.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” — 2 Corinthians 5:20.

THERE has long been war between man and his Maker. Our federal head, Adam, threw down the gauntlet in the garden of Eden. The trumpet was heard to ring through the glades of Paradise, the trumpet which broke the silence of peace and disturbed the song of praise. From that day forward until now there has been no truce, no treaty between God and man by nature. Man has been at variance with God. His heart has been at enmity towards God. He would not be reconciled to God. Never in the heart of any natural man, unless divine grace has put it there, has a desire to re-establish peace been felt or entertained. If any of you long to be at peace with your Maker, it is because his spirit has made you long for it. Left to yourselves, you would go from conflict to conflict, from struggle to struggle, and perpetuate the encounter, until it ended in your eternal destruction. But though man will not make terms with God, nor sue for peace at his hands, God shows his unwillingness any longer to be at war with man. That he anxiously desires man to be reconciled unto him, he proves by taking the first step. He, himself, sends his ambassadors. He does not invite them from the other party — that were grace — but he sends ambassadors, and he commands those ambassadors to be very earnest, and to plead with men, to pray them, to beseech them that they would be

reconciled to God. I take this to be a sure pledge that there is love in the heart of God. Why, at the very announcement of these tidings, the rebellious sinner's ears should be opened! It were enough to make him say, "I will hearken diligently; I will hear what God the Lord shall speak, for if it be true that he takes the first step towards me, and that he is willing to make up this deadly quarrel, God forbid that I should turn away; I will even now hear and attend to all that God shall speak to my soul. "May he bless the message to you, that you may be reconciled to him without a moment's delay. John Bunyan puts it plainly enough." If a certain king be besieging a town, and he sends out the herald with a trumpet to threaten the inhabitants that, if they do not give up the town, he will hang every man of them, then straightway they come to the walls and give him back a reviling answer; they swear that they will fight it out, and will never surrender to such a tyrant. But if he sends an embassy with a white flag to tell them that, if they will but surrender and yield to their lawful king, he will pardon every one of them, even the very vilest of them will relent." Then, saith honest John, "do they not come trembling over the walls, and throw their gates wide open to receive their gracious monarch." Would that such a result might be accomplished to-night! While I speak of the great grace of this Prince of Peace, who now sends his ambassadors to the rebellious, may some rebel say, "Then I will be at peace with him; I will hold out no longer. So irresistible a love as this has dissolved my heart, resolved my choice, and constrained my allegiance."

Well now, let us speak awhile of the Ambassadors — the Commission with which they are entrusted — the duty they have to discharge — and close with a question — What then? First, then, we have to speak of: —

I. THE AMBASSADORS.

Welcome messengers are they! All nations, with one accord, have agreed to honor ambassadors. Strange, then, that all nations and all people should have conspired to dishonor the ambassadors of God! Which of God's ambassadors in the olden time was not persecuted, rejected, or slain? Were they not stoned, beheaded, sawn asunder? How continually they were maltreated, and made to wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, though of them the world was not worthy! But there have been some men to whom the ambassadors of God have always been welcome. The men whom God had ordained to eternal life. Those on whose behalf, from before all worlds, he had made an effectual covenant of peace. From them

the ambassadors get a hearty welcome. Standing here to preach as an ambassador, I shall get but little attention from some of my audience. The proclamation of mercy will sound commonplace to many. They will turn on their heel and say, "There is nothing in it." But mark you, the ambassador of God will be very welcome to some of you, who have bitterly felt your estrangement, to some whose hearts are prepared by a sense of ruin for the good tidings of redemption; to some in whom the secret mystery of predestination begins to work by the overt energy of effectual calling. These shall find their souls greatly but surely drawn to the proclamation of mercy that shall be made, and they will say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of peace, that publish salvation!"

Ambassadors are always specially welcome to a people who are engaged in a war which is beyond their strength, when their resources are exhausted, and the peril of defeat is imminent. If some tiny little principality has ventured to rebel against a great empire, when it is absolutely certain that its villages will be consumed, its provinces, ravaged, and that all its power will be crushed, ambassadors are pretty sure to receive a cordial welcome. Ah! man, thou best bid defiance to the King of Heaven, whose power is irresistible; by whom rocks are thrown down; whose voice breaketh the cedars of Lebanon; whose hand controlleth the great deep sea. He it, is who bindeth the clouds with a cord, and girdleth the earth with a belt! Angels that excel in strength cannot stand against him. From the lofty battlements of heaven he hurled down Satan, the great archangel, and the mighty host of rebellious morning stars! How canst thou stand against him; shall the stubble contend with the fire? Shall the potter's vessel resist the rod of iron? What art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! The breath is in thy nostrils, and that is not thine own; how then canst thou, poor mortal, contend with him who only hath immortality? With art thou but a moth, easily crushed beneath his finger! Thy breath broken more rapidly than a sear leaf by the wind! How canst thou venture to be at war with one who has heaven and earth at his command, who holds the keys of hell and of death, and who has Tophet as his source of ammunition against thee? Listen to his thunders, and let thy blood curdle! Let his lightning flash, and how art thou amazed! How, then, canst thou stand against the greatness of his power, or endure the terror of his wrath? Happy for thee that terms of peace are proclaimed in your ears. God is willing to cease the warfare; he would not have thee be his adversary. Wilt thou not gladly

accept what he proposeth to thee? Never, surely, was war more charged with disaster than that into which thou hast madly rushed.

An ambassador is always welcome when the people have begun to feel the victorious force of the king. Yonder province has already yielded. Certain cities have been taken by the sword and given up to be sacked. Now the poor miserable inhabitants are glad enough to get peace. They dread the foot of the conqueror now that they have felt its weight. Doubtless there are some here present who have known the power of God in their conscience. Perhaps he has soared you with visions, and frightened you with dreams. Though it be but the voice of a man that you heard, yet the law has been very terrible to you, and now you find no pleasure in your pleasure; no joy in your joys. God has begun to break your bones with conviction; he has made you feel that sin is a bitter thing; he has made you drunken with wormwood, and broken your teeth with gravel stones. He has brought you down as the fool in the hundred and seventh Psalm, by affliction and by labor, and you are crying out in anguish, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Ay, doubtless, you that have once felt the weight of God's hand upon your conscience, will rejoice to hear that there is an embassy of peace sent to you.

An ambassador is likewise always welcome to those who are laboring under a few of total and speedy destruction. If none of you are in that plight, I remember when I was, when I thought every day it was a marvel of mercies that I was kept alive, and wondered as I woke at morn that I was not lifting up my eyes with Dives in hell. Everything about Christ was precious to me then! I think I would have stood in the most crowded chapel, nor would I have been weary had I sat upon the hardest seat; no length of service would have wearied me, might I but have had an inkling that God would peradventure have mercy upon my soul. My eyes were full of tears. My soul was faint with watching, and I would have kissed the feet of any man who would have told me the way of salvation. But, alas! it seemed as if no man cared for my soul, till at last God blessed an humble instrument to give light to his poor dark child. Hence I know that the news of mercy will be exceedingly welcome to you who stand upon the jaws of hell, fearing that the gates will soon be bolted upon you, and that you will be for ever lost. You will be ready to cry like our Methodist friends, "Hallelujah! Glory! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!" whilst you hear that God still sends an embassy of peace to your soul.

Most acceptable, too, is a messenger of peace if the people know that he brings no hard terms. When a certain king sent to the inhabitants of a town that he would make peace with them, provided he put out their right eyes and cut off their right hands, I am sure the tidings must have caused the utmost consternation, and the ambassador could not be very popular. But there are no hard terms in the gospel. In fact, there are no terms, no conditions at all. It is an unconditional peace which God makes with men. It is a gospel which asks nothing of men, but gives them everything. The Lord saith, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed; all things are ready, come ye to the supper." There is nothing for man to get ready; all things are prepared. The terms — if I must use a word I do not like — are simple and easy. "Believe, and live." With what joy should a rebellious sinner hear the voice of the ambassador who brings no hard conditions from God.

And should not the fame of the King increase the zest with which the embassy is received? Comes it not from him who cannot lie! No temporary peace is proposed that may presently be broken, but a peace that shall stand fast for ever and ever. No temporary armistice, no brief interlude between the deeds of battle do we herald. Peace; eternal, unbroken peace; peace that shall endure in life and outlive death; peace which shall endure throughout eternity, we testify and make known to you.

This peace is proclaimed to all men. It is proclaimed without exception. "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude. Such an ambassador bringing such a message must surely be a welcome messenger from his God. Let us ask now, What is: —

II. THE COMMISSION OF PEACE which God has entrusted us to proclaim? The words are concise, the sense is transparent. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespass unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. "Let us open the commission. It lies in a nutshell." Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they be red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow. Our commission begins with the announcement that God is love, that he is full of pity and compassion, that he is desirous to receive his creature back, that he willeth to forgive, and that he electeth, if it be consistent with the

high attribute of his justice, to accept even the most rebellious, and to put them amongst his children. Our commission goes on to disclose the manner, as well as the motive, of mercy. Inasmuch as God is love, he, in order to remove all difficulties in the way of pardoning rebels, has been pleased to give his only begotten Son that he might stand in the room, place, and stead of those whom God has chosen; their sins he engaged to take; to carry their sorrows, and to make an atonement on their behalf. Thus the justice of God should be satisfied, and his love flow over to the human race. We declare, therefore, that God has given Christ, and he has made it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that he came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. Christ, the Son of God, has become man. Cheerfully and willingly he took upon himself our nature; veiled the form of Deity in a humble garb of clay; was born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of holiness, and died a death of sacrifice. Through this marvellous death of the Man, the God, Christ Jesus, God is at peace with his people. The peace is made already, for he is our peace. God is at peace with every man for whom Jesus died. Jesus Christ stood in the room, place, and stead of his chosen people. Christ was punished for their sins. Justice cannot punish twice for one offense. Christ, the substitute, being punished, the sinner cannot be amenable for his own offenses. Those for whom Jesus died go free. The proclamation is that God is willing to be reconciled, that he is reconciled. It is an announcement, not that you may have peace merely, but that peace is made with God by Jesus Christ for you — full peace, without condition, not half-made, but wholly made; the penalty being completely paid to the last doit, and the sacrifice completely slaughtered till the last drop of blood had expiated the last offense.

But the proclamation needs something more to give us any satisfaction. Are there any tidings in it for you and me? Well, our message goes on to announce that whosoever in the wide world will come to Jesus Christ, and commit his cause to him as Redeemer, Savior, and Friend, shall forthwith be at peace with God, receive full pardon for all offenses, and be welcomed as a favorite of the Most High. He shall know that for him Jesus Christ did die in his stead, and as surety did stand for him when he appeared before God. From condemnation he is, therefore, free; of salvation he is, therefore, sure. This proclamation, I say, is to be made universally. Though every man will not be blessed by it, the preacher cannot discriminate between those who must and those who will not inherit the blessing. Though only some will accept it, the preacher is not warranted in showing

any partiality. It is the Holy Spirit's work to impress the Word on the conscience, and to arouse the conscience by the Word. As for us, we are willing enough to turn our face to the north or to the south, to the east or to the west. Gladly would we proclaim it to the red man who hunts the savannahs of America, to the swarthy man who never heard the name of Christ before, or to the white man who has often heard, but never heeded it. The same message, that God has accepted Christ as a substitute for every man that will believe in Christ, and that whosoever trusts Christ to save him is in that moment saved, will suffice for all. Yea, we would tell them that before the sinner does trust Christ he is reconciled unto God by his death, because the atonement which he offered had been accepted, and there was peace forestalled between God and that sinner. What a message I have to present! What a proclamation I have to make! Nothing is necessary on your part. God expects nothing of you to merit his esteem, or to enhance the value of his gift. If repentance be indispensable, he is prepared to give it to you. If a tender heart be needed, he is ready to give you a heart of flesh. If you feel that you have a heart of stone, he has engaged to take it away. Does your guilt oppress you, he says, "I will sprinkle clean water, water of pure fountains, upon them, and they shall be cleansed from all their filthiness, and from all their uncleanness will I save them." Know, all men, that there is no exception made. When Charles II came back to England there was an amnesty, except for certain persons, and these were mentioned by name — Hugh Peters and others were proscribed; but there is no exception here. I find not any traitors singled out and denounced by name. I have to proclaim an indemnity of such universal import that it is indiscriminate, "Whosoever believeth on him shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

Moreover, there is no exception made in my commission to any form of sin — unless it be the sin against the Holy Ghost — which carries its own evidence as well as its consequence. Those to whom I now speak, if they feel any drawings of heart towards God have not committed that mortal crime. Murder, theft, forgery, felony, fornication, adultery, and covetousness, which is idolatry — black and hideous as is the catalogue — here is pardon for the whole. Ransack the kennels, however filthy; rake the slums, however odious; drag out the abominations of the age, however degrading; here is pardon not only possible, probable, but positive. Bring a man here who has stained himself crimson all over with every sort of infamy, though it be not the lapse of an hour, but the habit of a life, yet

God is still able to forgive. Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.

I do not know whether you find it very good to hear the proclamation, but I do know that I feel it most gratifying to utter it. Thrice happy am I to have such an announcement to make to rebels. Unwonted hearers, listen to my voice. By what strange chance have yon reckless, heedless, unconverted souls mingled with this throng of worshippers? Not often do you darken the floor of a place of worship. You hardly know how you were led to come in hither. To what depths of sin you have run, to what extremities of iniquity you have gone! You marvel to find yourself in the company of God's people. But since you are here, give heed to the message: "Thus saith the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins. Return unto me, for I am married unto thee. I have given my blood to redeem thee. Return, O wandering child of man; return, return, and I will have mercy upon thee, for I am God, and not man." Having thus opened my commission, I will endeavor to perform: —

III. A VERY SOLEMN DUTY.

My text supplies me with a warrant. It says, "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." Then it seems we have not merely to read our commission, but we have to beseech you to accept it. Why should we beseech you? Is it not because you are rational creatures, not automata, men not machines. A machine might be compelled to perform functions without persuasion, but the Spirit of God often acts upon the heart of man by the sound arguments and affectionate entreaties of his servants whom he commissions. We are to beseech you because your hearts are so hard that you are prone to defy God's power, and resist his grace. Therefore, we pray you to put down your weapons. We are to beseech you because you are unbelieving, and will not credit the tidings. You say it is too good to be true that God will have mercy on such as you are. Therefore, we are to put our hand on you, to go down on our knees to you, and to beseech you not to put away this blessed embassy. We are to beseech you because you are so proud and self-satisfied that you will sooner follow your own righteousness and cling to your own works, than accept a peace already and freely proffered to you. We are to beseech you because you are careless. You give little heed to what is spoken: you will go your way and forget all our proclamations;

therefore, are we to press you urgently, instantly, importunately, And to beseech you as when a mother pleadeth for her child's life, as when a condemned criminal beseeches the judge to have pity on him, so are we to beseech you. I think I never feel so conscious of my own weakness as when I have to ply you thus with exhortations. Oh! there have been a few times in my ministry when I could with flowing eyes beseech you to be reconciled to God, but these dry eyes of mine are not so often fountains of tears as I could wish. We need such an one as Richard Baxter to dilate upon this last part of the text. Perhaps we could handle the former part better than he, but he could handle this last far better than we can. Oh! how he would have summoned you by the terrible reality of things to come! With what glaring eyes and seething words he would say, "Oh! men, turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? By the need of a Savior you will feel in the pangs of parting life, when the pulsings shall be few and feeble, till with a gasp you shall expire; by the resurrection when you will wake up, if not in his likeness, to everlasting shame and contempt; by the judgment-seat, where your sins shall be published, and you shall be called to account for the deeds done in the body; by the dread decree which casteth into the pit for ever those that repent, not; by the heaven you will lose; and by the hell into which you will fall; by eternity, that dread eternity whose years never waste; by the wrath to come, the burning indignation of which shall never cool; by the immortality of your own souls, by the perils you now run, by the promises you despise, by the provocations you multiply, by the penalties you accumulate, we do beseech you to be reconciled to God." Fly to Jesus. Call upon his name. Trust him; his word; his work, his goodness and his grace. This is the way of reconciliation. Bow the knee and kiss the Son. We do conjure you to do so. Acquaint yourselves now with God, and be at peace with him. My text bangs like a crushing weight upon my soul at this moment. It is awful in its grandeur, and it is majestically full of divine love. I must read the words again in your hearing. Oh! that the sense might break in on your understanding!

We are to beseech you as though God did beseech you, and we to do it in Christ's stead. You see God speaks when his ambassadors speak. I wonder, oh! I wonder, whether I have brain enough to compass the thought of how God would beseech you to be reconciled! 'Tis the Father's own self-pleading with his prodigal son. Can you imagine the father in the parable going after his son, and finding him in rags feeding swine? Can you conceive him saying, "My son, my dear son, come back! come back and I

will forgive you all!" You think you hear that son saying to his father "Get you gone, I will not hear of it", till his father says "My dear son, why will you prefer the company of swine to your father's house? Why will you wear rags when you might be clothed in the best robe? Why will you starve in a far-off country when my house shall be full of feasting on your return?" What if that son should utter some indignant word, and tell his father to his face he never would go back! Oh! I think I see the venerable, loving man falling on his son's neck and kissing him, in his filth just as he is (for "the great love wherewith he loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins!") — and he says to the rebel that insults him and resents his tenderness, "My dear son, you must come back; I must have you; I cannot be without you. I must have you; come back!" In such a style we ought to plead with men. Ah! then, I cannot plead with you as I would. As though God himself, your offended Maker, came to you now as he did to Adam in the cool of the day, and said to you, "Oh! return to me, for I have loved thee with an everlasting love," even so, as though God spoke, would I woo you, ye chiefest sinners, to return to him. You know, dear friends, that the great God did send another ambassador, and that great ambassador was Christ. Now the Apostle says that we, the ministers, are ambassadors for Christ in Christ's stead. Christ is no more an ambassador; he has gone to heaven; we stand in his stead to the sons of men, not to make peace, but to proclaim it. What! am I then to speak in Christ's stead! But how can I picture my Lord Jesus standing here? Alas, my imagination is not equal to the task. Would that I had sympathy enough with him to put myself in his case so as to use his words. Methinks I see him looking at this great throng as once he looked at the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He turns his head round to these galleries, and about on yonder aisles, and at last he bursts into a flood of tears, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." He is choked with tears, and when he has paused a moment, he cries, "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, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; a bruised reed I will not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

Again, I think I see him, as he looks at you again, and when he observes some hearts so obdurate and hard that they will not melt, he unwraps his mantle, and exclaims, "See here." Do you mark the gash in his side? As he lifts his hands and shows the nail-prints, and points downward to his

pierced feet, he says, "By these, my wounds, which I endured when suffering for you, O my people, return unto me; come, bow at my feet, and take the peace which I have wrought out for you. Oh! be not faithless, but believing! Doubt no longer! God is reconciled! Tremble no more! Peace is established. Toil no more at the works of the law, cling not to your own doings. Cease to consult your feelings. It is finished. When I bowed my head upon the tree, I finished all for you. Take salvation: take it now! Come to me; come now to me just as you are." Alas! this is but a poor representation of my Lord and Master. I could wish myself laid among the clods of the valley, sleeping in my grave, rather than that I should be so poor an ambassador. But, Lord, wherefore didst thou choose thy servant, and why givest thou this people still to hear his voice, if thou wilt not more mightily enable him to plead with men. I have no more words, oh! let these, tears plead with you. I feel that I could freely give my life if it would avail for the saving of your souls. Fain would I meet a martyr's death, if you would be persuaded thereby to come to Christ, for life. But oh! sinners, no pleading of mine will ever prevail if the pleading of Christ prove ineffectual with you. To each one of you, a distinct proclamation of salvation is addressed. Whosoever among you will believe that Christ died, and that he is able to save you, and will trust your soul upon what he did, shall be saved. Oh! why reject him? He will not hurt nor harm you. Do lay hold of this good hope, for your time is short! Death is hastening on; eternity is near! Do lay hold of it, for hell is hot, the flames thereof are terrible! Lay hold of it, for heaven is bright, and the harps of angels are sweet beyond compare! Lay hold of it. It shall make your heart glad on earth, it shall charm away your fears and remove your griefs! Lay hold of it! It shall bear you through Jordan's billows, and land you safe on Canaan's side. Oh! by the love of the Father, by the, blood of Jesus, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, sinner, believe and live! By the cross and the five wounds, by the agony and bloody sweat, by the resurrection, and by the ascension, sinner, believe and live! By every argument that would touch your nature, by every motive that can sway your reason or stir your passions, in the name of God that sent me, by the Almighty that made you, by the Eternal Son that redeemed you, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, sinner, I command you, with divine authority to sanction my vehemence, that ye be reconciled to God through the death of his Son! And: —

IV. WHAT THEN?

When we have answered this question we shall have done. What then? Are there not some of you with whom this peace is made at this good hour? I will go back and tell my Master so. Then there shall be fresh ratifications between you and him. The angels will hear of it, and they will strike their harps anew to sweeter lays than they have known before.

Others there are of you that will not be reconciled. I must have an answer from you. Do you hesitate? Do you delay? Do you refuse? You shall never have another warning, some of you! No tears of pity shall be wept for you again; no loving heart shall ever bid you come to Christ again must have your answer now. Yes or no. Wilt thou be damned or not? Wilt thou be saved or not? I will not have thee say, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Sinner, it cannot be a more convenient one than this. This is a convenient place; it is God's house. It is a convenient time; it is the Lord's day. Now, sinner, wilt thou be reconciled, restored, forgiven? "Wilt thou be made whole?" said Jesus, and I say the same to thee, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do you say, "No"? Must I take that for an answer? Mark you, sinner, I have to tell my Master must tell him when I seek the closet of the King to-night; I must tell him your reply that you would not. What then remains for an ambassador to do when he has spoken to you in the name of the Sovereign? If you will not turn, we must shake off the dust of our feet against you. I am clear, I am clear, of the blood of you all, I am clear. If you perish, being warned, you perish wantonly. The wrath cometh upon you, not on him who, to the best of his power, has told his Master's message. Yet again, I beg you to accept it. Do you still say no? The white flag will be pulled down. It has been up long enough. Shall I pull it down, and run up the red flag now? Shall I hurl threatenings at you because you heed not entreaties?

*"If your ears refuse
The language of his grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race,
The Lord in anger drest,
Shall lift his trend and swear
Ye that despised my promised rest
Shall have no portion there."*

But no, I cannot pull it down, that white flag! My heart will not let me do so; it shall fly there still, it shall fly there as a sign and a symbol of the day of grace. Mercy is still held out to you. But there is one coming — I can

hear his footsteps — who will pull down that white flag. The vision haunts my eyes. That grim, heartless skeleton whom men call Death will rend the white flag from its place, and up will go the blood-red flag, with the black escutcheon of the thunderbolts. Where are you then, sinners? Where will you be then? You shudder at the thought. He lays his hand on you. There is no escape. Oh! turn ye, turn ye, turn ye! Come and welcome, sinner, come now while you are welcome. 'Tis love invites you. Jesus stretches out his hand to you all the day long. He has stretched out his hands to a rebellious, and a gainsaying generation. Do not say, "I will think of it," but yield to his love who around you now the bands of a man doth cast. Do not make a resolution, but commit yourself to the good confession. Now, even now, may sovereign grace constrain, and irresistible love draw you. May you believe with your heart, may you record your profession at once. Before you close your eyes in sleep, just as you would wish before your eyes are closed in death, may you be at peace with God. I pray God, as I entreat you, that this may come to pass, for his Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

LUKE 18:31-43.

Verses 31-34. *Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall he accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and*

shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spired on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

It would be hard to imagine our Lord speaking more plainly. He tells them of his sufferings in detail — describes exactly what happened. But their thoughts did not run that way; and when you are not expecting a thing, it little matters how very plainly you may be told of it. You are doating upon something else, and, therefore, you do not readily perceive the meaning. You know how; when you are expecting to hear a thing said, you can hear it even at a great distance, or think you hear it, from the very motion of the

man's lips. But if he should say something clean contrary to what you expect, then you do not so readily hear. And these disciples of our Lord were looking to see him made a king, and they could not comprehend that the only crown he was to have would be one of thorns, and that the homage paid to him would be to be scourged and to be spat upon. They did not understand. And do not you think that the run of our thoughts sometimes may be so contrary to divine truth that we may not be able to understand some very plain things in the Bible, which are only difficult to us because our thoughts are not yet running that way? And when one day we shall be more completely cleansed from the grossness of this world, many a riddle will become plain enough to us.

35-39. *And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

Only to think that there should be some who think that when results are to be seen they can ever be regarded as hindrances. For is it not a result of ministry — a result of Jesus passing by — that men cry out, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me”? And yet, when the wave-sheaf is before them, they seem to put it aside as though it were an impediment in the Savior's way. “Let him go on sowing.” Well, but, sir, it will not hinder him to let him also reap a little, for evidently there has been good seed shown in this heart, and here is the outcome of it, for the man is crying, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” We do not get our sermons interrupted in this way, but what a mercy it will be when they are! And I suppose that in some better times when God's Spirit more mightily blesses the word, we shall have to stop in our sermons every now and then to deal with anxious souls, or get them to step aside where those that are skillful in heaven's surgery may bind up their wounds. They will be crying ever and anon, “Sirs, what must we do to be saved? Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

40, 41. *And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, he asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?*

If Christ were to come near to every unconverted person here, and say to him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” do you know what it is you want? No. The unhappy circumstance is that the mass of mankind do not know what mercy they should ask for, even if they believed that they had only to ask and have. But, dear friend, you want deliverance from the power of sin. You want a new heart and a right spirit. You want to give up the sins you love, and to follow after the virtues which now you despise. May God give you grace to know that you want this.

But this blind man knew what he wanted.

41-43. *And he said, Lord that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith have saved thee. And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

GOD'S GENTLE POWER

NO. 3498

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPT. 10TH, 1871.

“And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so. when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?” — 1 Kings 19:11-13.

ELIJAH was a man of like passions with ourselves. We all know that when we have passed through any great excitement of high joy there almost always comes following, a corresponding reaction and depression. Elijah had gone to the top of Carmel and had pleaded his cause, and the rain floods had come in answer to his prayer. He had taken the prophets of Baal, and had slain them, and gained a glorious victory for his God; and so full of excitement was he that he girded his loins as though he had been a young man, and ran before the chariot of Ahab, like the royal footmen. It was almost inevitable that after an excitement so high, and strong, that he should be desponding and depressed in spirits, and we find that he was so depressed. If the like should ever happen to any of you' my brethren and sisters, count it no strange thing, nor suppose that some extraordinary trial hath happened unto you. It is but a physical result from physical causes. The mind has operated upon the body. It has strung the bow too tightly,

and now, unless the string be relaxed, there is a danger of its breaking altogether. Now as Elias was a man of like passions with us, we may conclude that the way in which God dealt with him is very much the way in which he would deal with us. With a similar case, and the same physician, we may look for the same treatment. As, therefore, the Lord spake to Elijah not by earthquake, nor wind, nor re, but by the still small voice, so in all probability will he speak to us. It may be, it is just possible it may be, that here to-night there is some worker for God very much in the same condition as Elijah. You, my dear brother, have been working for God in a neighborhood where you have met with little but opposition and disappointment, and you have almost resolved that you will go away from the place. "The soil is hard," you say, "and breaks the ploughshare. Shall oxen plough upon a rock?" 'Tis in vain for you to continue your labor there, you think, and you have come here to-night still with this thought uppermost — that you have labored in vain, and spent your strength for nought. Hear you the word of the Lord this night. He speaks not to you by any earthquake of judgment with which he means to visit you, neither by any fiery word of severe rebuke; but perhaps through me, this evening, he may speak with a still small voice that shall just meet your case and send you back to your labor. Brother, will you play the Jonah? Will you refuse to go to tile great city — to Nineveh? Remember there are worse places than Nineveh. He that goes out of the path that God marks for him may yet come to be at the bottom of the sea with Jonah, with the weeds wrapped about his head. You go at your own cost, remember, if you go away from the post of duty, however arduous. Don't attempt the risk. But thus saith the Lord unto thee, "It may be thou hast not labored in vain as thou hast supposed." Elijah knew nothing of the seven thousand men that God had in reserve. You don't know what converts God has given you. There are scattered up and down the world — perhaps some precious ones who owe their salvation instrumentally to you, and could they all stand before you — you would blush with shame at the thought of leaving a harvest — field that has really been so prolific, though not in your sight. Go back again to thy work, for the Lord has blessed thee. Play not the fool by deserting the post where he will give thee honor yet.

But then the voice told Elijah also that God would punish the people who had treated him so ill; that he, would send Hazeal with his sharp sword and Jehu, yet to mow the ground a second time. And oh! thou true servant of God, the Lord will not suffer thee to be rejected. If they have rejected thee,

they have rejected thy God also. If thou hast been faithful to his truth, leave thou that matter to him — go thou back to thy work. And one other word there was to Elijah. He was to go back to anoint his successor. If Elijah flees, and if Elijah at length is taken up to heaven, yet Elisha shall succeed him. Perhaps there may be a brother here who is in the state I have described who does not know what God has in store for him. You are to call into the Christian ministry a brother that shall do greater than you have, you shall light as greater candle shall your own. Oh! what joy Elijah must have had when he felt there would be someone to take up his work! You have not, my dear brother, yet called out for your master the man the Lord means to call. What a happy man he must have been who was the means of the conversion of Whitefield or Jonathan Edwards, or some great missionary of the cross. You may be that, in that little village — in that back slum. Go thou back then. What doest thou hero Elijah? What doest thou here? With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? The Master's voice speaks to thee. Go to thy closet, and get fresh strength from on high, and then go back to thy difficulties — go back to thy self-denials, go back to all thy service with a good heart and true." Fear not thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord." Arise, thou worm, and thresh the mountain, for "I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." I have delivered the message. It is to somebody, I know not to whom, in this place.

But now the drift, the great aim of the sermon at this time is to speak to the unconverted. With them I dealt also this morning.* I feel persuaded God will bless it. Now, this evening, let us have another word with them. We will read the text again. "Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake. but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice." Our first observation is that: —

I. POWERFUL MEANS MAY ALTOGETHER FAIL TO IMPRESS SOME MINDS.

Let us think a while. Terrible judgments appear as if they must convert sinners; yet there may be those here, and there certainly are those in many places who have passed through a whole series of judgments, and are rather hardened than softened by them. You may have been, dear friend in a storm of sin; you may have been just barely washed upon a rock, and

escaped as with the skin of your teeth. You have also passed through a time of cholera. You have been in a city smitten with the plague. You have lived in a house where others have sickened and died; and at those times you did pause a little, and you made some good resolutions, but they all ended in smoke; and here you are still, a proof that God is not in the earthquake, nor yet in the wind, nor yet in the fire. It may be you have suffered a great deal of personal sickness. Do I not know some here present who have been laid very low with fever — who have been the subjects of very frightful accidents, and brought to the borders of the grave? These things were loud voices to you, but you did not hear them. They were God's terrors, sent to fetch you to himself, but they failed to do it. You remained just where you were, perhaps worse instead of better; for when the sun shines on wax, it melts it, but if it shines on clay, it hardens it; and so God's judgments have had just that effect on you. You are hardened, instead of softened by them. Men are not converted by judgments. They may submit themselves in a false way, but power and displays of terror do not win the heart.

Again, we naturally expect that men will be converted during the times of earnest religious excitement. Some are brought in; but there are certain persons who do not seem to be affected by revivals. When others bow like the corn that waveth in the wind, they stand stiff and firm, and are altogether untouched. It is a solemn thing when a season of grace is not a season of grace to us. When we lie, like Gideon's fleece, all dry, while all around us is wet with the dew of heaven, yet with some it is just so — gracious excitements and spiritual revivals do not touch them. The Lord is not in the wind, and the Lord is not in the earthquake, and the Lord is not in the fire—at least to them. The same is the case with powerful sermons. I do not mean by this "eloquent sermons," so called. "Eloquent sermons" usually seem to me to be the least eloquent things in the world; for eloquence means speaking from the heart; and I cannot believe that the fine periods we sometimes hear read ever spring anywhere but from the head. But I mean when a sermon is full of gospel truth, when it is pertinently put, when it is pathetically urged, when the heart of the preacher is warmed, and his eyes o'erflow with tears; when you see a congregation melted, you say to yourself, "Surely that must touch so-and-so's heart." And then there comes a passage in the sermon that seems so touching that the very rocks might weep, and the stones might break; but oh! when it is all over it is all over, and it is forgotten too; and to many a hearer the Lord is not in the

wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. And so it is also in the dealing out of the judgments of God in the ministry. It is the duty of the Christian pastor, if he would make full proof of his ministry, to warn men of the results of sin — to tell them that there is a judgment — that for every idle word they speak they will have to account. We ought continually to declare that for every transgression there shall be a recompense of reward. But ah! dear hearer, though we have read books and heard sermons that were full of the terrors of the Lord, which we thought surely would move men, yet there are men who care nothing whatever about the wrath to come, nor the fire that is kindled for the wicked, nor the dreadful terrors of Divine Justice. The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, so far as they are concerned. The means that appear to be powerful are powerless to them; and when you think they will surely turn and repent, they harden their necks and go on in their sin. This, abundant facts could prove.

But the next observation shall be that sometimes a much gentler force effects what could not otherwise have been achieved. Many have been converted to God by the still small voice whom no wind, though it rose to a hurricane, no earthquake, though it rent the world to its center, and no fire, though it licked up the forests, could ever move. A gentle word has done it. Sometimes that still small voice has come to us by apparently very, very inadequate means. It is astonishing what little things God will use when he pleases to do so. He wanted to soften the heart of that rough prophet Jonah, and he sent a worm and a gourd, and they did it. He would bring Peter to repentance, and he bade a cock to crow. It was a strange preacher, but it was as good as a dean of a cathedral to the Apostle. Means may seem to be absolutely ridiculous, yet God maketh use of the things that are not, as though they were. I remember to have heard the story of a man, a blasphemer, profane, an atheist, who was converted singularly by a sinful action of his. He had written on a piece of paper, “God is nowhere,” and bade his child read it, for he would make his child an atheist too. And the child spelt it, “God is n-o-w h-e-r-e- God is now here.” It was a truth, instead of a lie, and the arrow pierced the man’s own heart. I remember one who had lived a life of gross iniquity who stepped into Exeter Hall and found Christ there. It was not my sermon, however, that God blessed: it was only this. I read the hymn, “Jesus, lover of my soul.” Just those words touched his heart. “Jesus, lover of my soul,” he said to himself. “Did Jesus love my soul? Then how is it that I could have lived as I have done?”; and

that word broke him down. God works great results by little things. A little hymn learnt at the Sunday School is sung at home by a little prattler, and the heart of the father is softened by it. One little sentence uttered by a friendly visitor reaches a mother's conscience and impresses her heart. Ay, and God can use the quiet of the evening, or the stillness of the night, or a flash of lightning, or a peal of thunder, or a dewdrop, or a little flower — he can use anything he wills to bring his banished home. Often cloth the Spirit speak thus with a still small voice.

But, brethren, beloved, the Holy Ghost also speaks to men without any means at all. With no outward agency whatever, the still small voice will come. Oh! how I wish it would come to-night to some sitting here listening to the preacher! I wish you could forget — forget the congregation, and forget everything except yourself and your God. We have known persons who have been walking in the fields, thoughtless and careless. All around has been still, and they have suddenly thought, and thought is often the avenue to prayer. We have known some passing through a country churchyard, and though no text upon the tomb how touched them, yet the very sight of those green hillocks has been a sermon to them. Aye, and men have walked through orchards, and the leaves have said to them, “We all do fade as a leaf.” Or sitting in their chamber, or lying on their bed wakeful, the old times have come over again. The man that lives to be an old sinner recollects the little prayer he said at his mother's knee. The soldier that has been at battle recollects the teaching of the Sunday School, though he has passed now his fiftieth year; and he says, “I wish I could blot out all that which lies between my mother's kiss and this hour. It has been a dark, dark season.” Only the thought has done it. God's Spirit did but touch the secret spring, and the soul was moved aright. The still small voice has done it. Oh! how satisfied I should be if the Lord would not give me a single soul in this place by my preaching, if he would but do it himself! What matters it so long as they are saved? He does put honor upon his preached word, and he brings in the most of men thereby; but so long as they are brought in, and he gets glory, what will it signify as to the means he uses? May he still speak to you by his still small voice. I commend to him in my earnest prayer some of you who are very familiar with my voice, and to whom it is as useless as familiar. You will never be brought to Christ by me. God will never give me your souls I fear. For these many years have I labored for them, and they have not been given me. Well, good Master, call them by some other means, only bring them;

and grant that this very night, conscience may be aroused by thoughts which thou thyself shalt suggest, and they may come to thee.

You see, then, the first two points, that the most powerful means will often fail, and that the least means may be successful. Ay, and the Holy Ghost may work without means altogether. And now once again: —

II. WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO MEN, HIS VOICE IS ALWAYS LINKED WITH PERSONAL ADDRESS.

Look at the text. What says the still small voice? “What doest thou here Elijah?” There was the man named. It was no general statement about prophets who proved faithless, or about believers who grew doubtful, or about men of courage that played the coward. Oh! no; it was, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” It is a mark of God’s Spirit that when he speaks to men he speaks to them personally. Just take a case or two. You remember Jesus Christ going through Jericho, preaching as he went. He meant to call that rich publican who had climbed the tree. In what way did the effectual voice of grace do it? He says, “Zaccheus” It was not a general observation about people up in trees that were to come down; but “Zaccheus” — that is the man. “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide in thy house.” The personal call did it. And Mary, when she did not know her Master, and was in the garden, and thought he was the gardener — what was it that opened her eyes to know her Lord, and made her say, “Rabboni”? It was no word else except that he said unto her, “Mary.” The tone in which he said it, and the name — the old familiar name, Mary — that did the work. And when the Savior meant to break Simon Peter’s heart, and yet to assure him that he was forgiven, how did he speak to him? Three times he said to him, “Simon, son of Jonas. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” This is how God speaks to men. And when out of the open heavens Jesus spake to the maddened persecutor who was on the road to Damascus, but whom he meant to make his elect apostle to the Gentiles, how did he speak but thus? “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Now here I cannot speak except to the crowd and the congregation, and though one labors hard to make a description apt and plain, and to fit the cap to all wearers’ heads, yet men slip through in the crowd; they will not take it to themselves, nor can we make them. But when the Holy Ghost speaks with the still small voice, it is always, “Thou art the man. Thou art the man. Thou art the sinner condemned. Thou art the sinner invited to mercy. Thou art the

sinner that shall be received by grace.” Believe thou, and thou shalt be saved, for he loves thee and gave himself for thee. May the Lord send us such personal work as this. I know every Christian here, if he could state his experience, would tell you that the word never came with power to his soul until it came right to him as though he were the only sinner, and the gospel were meant for him above all others. Oh! for an arrow from the great archer’s bow to go right into you, that, like a stag that is smitten by the archer, you might retire into the glades of the forest, to weep alone and die alone, unless the hand that sent in the dart shall gently draw it out and heal the wound that it has made! Oh! for this personal conviction! — conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment laid home to each man’s heart. It must be so, or you cannot be saved. But now another truth is suggested by the text. It is this, that: —

III. WHEN GOD’S STILL SMALL VOICE SPEAKS TO MEN PERSONALLY, THE SUBJECT IS THEMSELVES AND THEIR ACTIONS.

“What doest thou here, Elijah?” This was the voice of God. May the same voice come to-night to some here about their actions. Let me take the text and use it to you. What are you doing? What doest thou? What have you been doing? You are getting on in life. What have you done? Mischievous I fear. What good have you done? You were made to glorify God, that was the end for which you were created. Have you glorified him? You have been fed by him, clothed by him. Have you made him any return? What have you done? No good — much evil. What are you doing now? Sitting here and listening. Ay, but how are you treating the Word? Are you receiving it? Do you hear the voice of mercy, and do you reject it, or will you accept it? What are you going to do? What are you going to do to-night when you get out of this place? How will the last hours of the precious Sabbath be spent? And to-morrow, and the next day — what are you planning? Is there anything holy in it, anything noble in it, anything that will be glorifying to God? Do you never take stock? Spiritual trader, do you never take stock? Mariner upon the sea of life, dost thou never consult thy chart? Dost thou never heave the lead, or take thy bearings? Art thou so mad as to sail on in the fog, and not care what becomes of so goodly a vessel as thy soul? Oh! pause. What best thou done? What art thou doing? What wilt thou do? Especially what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? Unsaved, what will you do when the death-sweat stands upon your brow — when the cold beaded drops are there, and the marrow is frozen, and the strong man gathers up his feet in the bed for the last dread struggle

— what will you do without a Savior? What will you do when the trumpet rings through heaven and earth, and sea, and men live again, and you, with them, stand before the judgment-seat, and amidst the rolling thunder the book is opened and your sins stand there unforgiven? What will you do? What will you do? Oh! that you may never be brought to this, but be brought to Christ to-night! Do you notice how the word was put? It was not, “What are you doing?” only, but “What doest thou — thou, Elijah?” And there are some special persons whose sins receive an aggravation by the very fact that they are what they are. I know thee — what thou wert of old. What a sweet child. How his mother loved him, and loved to hear him sing, and pray, too, in his way. What happiness it was to the parents! Ah! they fell asleep and died, and ‘tis a mercy they did, else perhaps your course would have brought them to the grave with grief. What doest thou, child of many prayers and many tears? What doest thou? Still to be an enemy to thy mother’s God, and to blaspheme the name they father loved. You have been hearers of the gospel, some of you almost ever since you can recollect. Your mother carried you in her arms to God’s house, and sometimes conscience has pricked you, and the word has gone through, and through, and through; but you have resisted it. What has led you, I pray you, to remain still what you are? What infernal power has helped you to steel your heart? In what fire has your soul been annealed to make it hard as adamant stone? O soul, soul, sinful soul, delaying, procrastinating soul! what doest thou in such a state after so much love and mercy? And I might speak to some that promised fair many times, and that have been almost persuaded to be Christians, and yet still are out of God, and out of Christ, and on the borders of destruction. What do you here? Perhaps there is someone who has come to London lately, that in the country was an observer of religion, apparently sincere, but oh! this wicked London! You have given up those good habits; you have got into bad company, and oh! I shall not tell what you have done; but I hope you will confess it to God in your own secrecy. But how dare you do it? How could you do it? Oh! how could you do it? How could you be a prodigal? — you, your fathers dearly beloved, taught so well, with so much light, with such a tender conscience — how could you sin? Why the very tramps of the street might be ashamed of you, for they never knew much better. Those that go into foulest sin might condemn you, for with their bad street training, educated perhaps in the kennel, who wonders that they are what they are? But for you, it is a wonder. The angel Lucifer, son of the morning, fell down to the deeps of hell. You have fallen from the side of the pulpit, fallen from a Christian

parent's side, and almost from inside the Church of God, and fallen into sin. Perhaps I speak to some that have belied their baptism, have given up the profession that they made when they there were buried with Christ, who have belied the sacramental table where they once sat, and professed to eat his bread and drink of his cup, and to be partakers of his body and of his blood. You have crucified the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" My, and you used to preach too; you used to preach to others, and now what are you? You were once, as it were, a priest at the altar of God, and now you are a priest at the altars of Baal. God have mercy upon you, and may his still small voice now speak in your soul.

There was one point in the question which was asked, which was this: "What doest thou here?" Each man, when he is called to search himself by the Spirit of God, must recollect his surroundings. I thank God, my brethren and my sisters, that you are hearers — not to commend you that you may be Pharisees, because you happen to go to a place of worship. I do, nevertheless, praise God that you are here. When the sick lay round the Pool of Bethesda, there was some hope of their being healed. You are favored in being where Christ is preached; but what doest thou here? Did you come to find a jest? Did you come to hear one who was much talked of in your hearing? Did you come from curiosity? Did you come from a worse motive? Well, never mind, but what are you doing now? Are you willing to listen to God's voice? Will you now yield? He round you now, as with the bands of a man, would cast the bands of his love, who was given for you, and to his altar bind you fast. 'Tis but to yield; and surely it must be hard to resist when it is divine mercy that plies you, and eternal love that persuades you. "Come unto me," says Jesus; "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Will you not come? "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Will you not come? Oh! that your answer to the question, "What doest thou here?" might be to-night, "I am doing this here; I am laying my sins on Jesus; I am confessing the past; I am asking grace for the future; I am looking to the wounds of him that was cleft as a rock is cleft that I may shelter in him; I am saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Thy God be praised if such is the case. But I must close with the last observation, and that is, that: —

IV. WHERE THE LORD DOES SPEAK WITH A STILL SMALL VOICE TO MEN PERSONALLY ABOUT THEIR CONDUCT AND THEIR SIN, IT IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL.

You notice what Elijah did. He first wrapped his mantle about his face — he became subdued and awe-stricken — full of reverence. Oh! it is a great thing when a sinner is willing to wrap his face when he is confounded, and say, “I cannot defend my course; I am guilty.” We know that if at our judgment-seat a man pleads guilty, he is punished; but at the judgment-seat of the gospel whoever pleads guilty is forgiven. Wrap your face. Oh! but you thought that you were better than most; you went to church, and you went to the meeting-house, the chapel, regularly, and were you not better than others? Ah! wrap your face. Your church-goings and your chapel-goings have only increased your responsibilities if you have rejected the Savior. Take the mantle of self humiliation, and wrap it about your face now. Say, with the leper, “Unclean! Unclean!” Where you are in the Tabernacle, where you are, never mind where you stand or sit, I commend to you the publican’s prayer. Say it now, and God help you, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Did you say it from your heart? Go home. You shall go home to your house justified, for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

But you must notice that while Elijah thus wrapped his face in reverence, he stood still and listened. It was a still small voice, and the prophet was attending. No other sound was heard but this, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” But he stood. I doubt not that man of iron stood and wept, and seemed to say in his soul, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” “He that bath earn to hear, let him hear.” Oh! be very attentive to the voice of God’s Spirit! If you have only a half of a good thought, take care of it. It may be the beginning of another one. Oh! if you have only just got a little leaning, thank God for it. Remember Christ does not quench the smoking flax; don’t quench it yourself. “Quench not the Spirit.” Oh! I have known times when I would have given my whole life to have had one tear of repentance. Can you repent now? Can you long after God now? Oh! cherish that longing! Yield to the Spirit of God. Don’t be like iron to the fire that needs to have the blast-furnace on it before it will melt; but oh! be like wax to the flame, like cork on the water that moves up and down with every influence. God make you so. It wants a strong wind to shake the oak; but the fern that grows under it waves its branches at every breath of the zephyr. May you be just as sensitive as that. Bow before the Spirit’s influence. The Lord make you to do it for his name’s sake.

And then, best of all and last of all, the prophet was not only reverent, humble, and attentive, but he was obedient. God told him to go and do this

and that. He never questioned, but away he went and executed the divine commission, and until the time when he was taken up in the chariot of fire Elijah never quailed again. The still small voice had made him twice a man, and steeled him once again to bear all that he had to endure in his chequered life. He was obedient to the heavenly vision. Will you be obedient to-night?" If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." May God make you to be obedient. But you say, "What is his command then? What is the work of God—this great work that God commands? This is the one gospel precept, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; or take it in the shape in which the Master put it, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." To believe is to trust. To be baptized is to be immersed into Christ — immersed in water upon profession of faith, for so it is put, and I dare not give you half the gospel. So it is put, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Don't leave out any part of the divine command. Be obedient to the whole of it. "Believe and be baptized," or as the Apostle put it, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you." May God grant that you may be obedient to this. The great command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Trust in him — in his substitutionary work for sinners. He bore their guilt, and was punished in their stead, and whosoever trusts in what he did — in a word, trusts in him, is saved. God grant you to do it. I leave it to his still small voice to work this blessed result. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

1 KINGS 18:17-40.

We shall read at this time the story of Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal. Remember that there had been three years without dew or rain. The whole country was dried up till it seemed to be a desert; and all were famished for lack of water.

Verses 17, 18. *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel: but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and Thou hast followed Baalim.*

It is the way of men to cast the blame of their trouble not upon their sin and upon themselves, but upon those who have warned them. Mark Elijah's holy boldness. "I have not troubled Israel, but thou."

19. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

He knew how many there were of them. The man's heart was so engaged in this battle for God against idols, that he had counted all his adversaries.

20, 21. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

So undecided were they — perhaps so cowed by the presence of that brave man who feared none, but only feared God.

22-24. Then said Elijah unto the people, I even I only, remain a prophet of the LoRD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves. And out it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

And the Baalite priests could not refuse the challenge. For they worshipped the sun-god — the god of fire; and if he could not answer the sun-worshippers, he must be no God at all.

25, 26. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon.

Which was Baal's own high time, for then the sun would be at its zenith — "from morning, even unto noon."

26. *Saying, O Baal, hear us.*

Repeating their cry again and again. For this is the way of all false worship — to use vain repetitions, as the heathens do, which is forbidden to us.

26. *But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.*

Which was their superstition. They were going through the whole performance of the genuflexions of some kind or another. They leaped upon the altar which was made.

27, 31. *And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud. For he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, And cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till tire blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broke, down. And Elijah took twenty stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.*

For he meant this day to prove that God was God of the twelve tribes — not of himself and his tribe, but of all the families of Israel.

32-37. *And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, And pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time, And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled a trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that, Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and thou hast turned their heart back again.*

There was the prayer. How different altogether from this repetition of words — this leaping — this cutting with knives. He states his wish; he pleads his cause; he brings forward his arguments; and this is his prayer.

38-40. *Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

And thus did he prove that he was the prophet of God, and that God was the God of Israel.

THE BLISS OF THE GLORIFIED

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“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” — Revelation 7:16.

WE cannot too often turn our thoughts heavenward, for this is one of the great cures for worldliness. The way to liberate our souls from the bonds that tie us to earth is to strengthen the cords that kind us to heaven. You will think less of this poor little globe when you think more of the world to come. This contemplation will also serve to console us for the loss, as we call it, of those who have gone before. It is their gain, and we will rejoice in it. We cannot have a richer source of consolation than this, that they who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished; they have not lost life, but they have gained the fullness of it. They are rid at all that molests us here, and they enjoy more than we as yet can imagine. Cheer your hearts, ye mourners, by looking up to the gate of pearl, by looking up — to those who day without night surround the throne of their Redeemer. It will also tend to quicken our diligence if we think much of heaven. Suppose I should miss it after all! What if I should not so run that I may obtain! If heaven be little, I shall be but a little loser by losing it; but if it be indeed such that the half could never be told us, then, may God grant us diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be certain of entering into this rest, and may not be like the many who came out of Egypt, but who perished in the wilderness and never entered into the promised land. All things considered, I know of no meditation that is likely to be more profitable than a frequent consideration of the rest which remaineth for the

people of God. I ask, then, for a very short time that your thoughts may go upward to the golden streets.

And, first, we shall think a little of the blessedness of the saints as described in the simple words of our text; then we will say a few words as to how they came by that felicity; and thirdly, draw some practical lessons from it. First, then, we have here: —

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE GLORIFIED.

We have not the full description of it here; but we have here a description of certain evils from which they are free. You notice they are of two or three kinds — first, such as originate within — “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more” — they are free from inward evils; secondly, such as originate without — “Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” They are altogether delivered from the results of outward circumstances. Take the first: “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.” We are never so to strain Scripture for a spiritual sense as to take away its natural sense, and hence we will begin by saying this is no doubt to be understood physically of the body they will have in glory.

Whether there will be a necessity for eating and drinking in heaven, we will not say, for we are not told, but anyhow it is met by the text, “The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them” — if they need food — “and lead them to living fountains of water” if they need to drink.

Whatever may be the necessities of the future, those necessities shall never cause a pang. Here, the man who is hungry may have to ask the question, “What shall I eat?”; the man who is thirsty may have to say, “What shall I drink?”; and we have all to ask, “Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” But such questions shall never arise there. They are abundantly supplied.

Children of God have been hungry here: the great Son of God, the head of the household was hungry before them; and they need not wonder if they have fellowship with him in this suffering. Children of God have had to thirst here: their great Lord and Master said, “I thirst”; they need not wonder, therefore, if in his affliction they have to take some share. Should not they who are to be like their head in heaven be conformed unto him on earth? But up yonder there is no poverty, and there shall be no accident that shall place them in circumstances of distress. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.”

While we take this physically, there is no doubt that it is to be understood mentally. Our minds are also constantly the victims of hungerings and

thirstings. There are on earth various kinds of this hunger and thirst — in a measure evil, in a measure also innocent. There are many men that in this world are hungering after wealth, and the mouth of avarice can never be filled. It is as insatiable as the horse-leech, and for ever cries, “Give, give!” But such hunger was never known in heaven, and never can be, for they are satisfied there; they have all things and abound. All their enlarged capacities can desire they already possess, in being near the throne of God and beholding his glory; there is no wealth which is denied them. Here, too, some of the sons of men hunger after fame, and oh! what have not men done to satisfy this? It is said that breaks through stone walls; certainly ambition has done it. Death at the cannon’s mouth has been a trifle, if a man might win the bubble reputation. But in heaven there is no such hunger as that. Those who once had it, and are saved, scorn ambition henceforth. And what room would there be for ambition in the skies? They take their crowns and cast them at their Savior’s feet. They have their palm-branches, for they have won the victory, but they ascribe the conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to his death. Their souls are satisfied with his fame. The renown of Christ has filled their spirit with everlasting contentment. They hunger no more, nor thirst any more, in that respect. And oh! what hunger and thirst there has been on earth by those of tender and large heart for a fit object of love! I mean not now the common thing called “love,” but the friendship which is in man’s heart, and sends out its tendrils wanting something to which to cling. We must — we are born and created for that very purpose — we must live together, we cannot develop ourselves alone. And oftentimes a lonely spirit has yearned for a brother’s ear, into which to pour its sorrows; and doubtless many a man has been brought to destruction and been confined to the lunatic asylum whose reason might have been saved had there been some sympathetic spirit, some kind, gentle heart that would have helped to bear his burden. Oh! the hunger and the thirst of many a soul after a worthy object of confidence. But they hunger and they thirst, up there, no more. Their love is all centered on their Savior. Their confidence, which they reposed in him on earth, is still in him. He is their bosom’s Lord, their heart’s Emperor, and they are satisfied, and, wrapped up in him, they hunger and they thirst no more.

And how many young spirits there are on earth that are hungering after knowledge who would fain get the hammer and break the rock, and find out the history of the globe in the past. They would follow philosophy, if they could, to its source, and find out the root of the matter. Oh! to know,

to know, to know! The human mind pants and thirsts for this. But there they know even as they are known. I do not know that in heaven they know all things — that must be for the Omniscient only — but they know all they need or really want to know; they are satisfied there. There will be no longer searching with a spirit that is ill at ease. They may, perhaps, make progress even there, and the scholar may become daily more and more wise; but there shall never be such a hungering and thirsting as to cause their mental faculties the slightest pang. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Oh! blessed land where the seething ocean of man's mind is hushed, and sleeps in everlasting calm! Oh! blessed country where the hungry spirit, that crieth every hour for bread, and yet for more, and yet for more, and spends its labor for that which satisfieth not, shall be fed with the bread of angels, and be satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord.

But, dear friends, surely the text also means our spiritual hungering and thirsting. "Blessed is the man that hungers and thirst to-day after righteousness, for he shall be filled." This a kind of hunger that we ought to desire to have; this is a sort of thirst that the more you have of it will be the indication of the possession of more grace. On earth it is good for saints to hunger and to thirst spiritually, but up there they have done even with that blessed hunger and that blessed thirst. Today, beloved, some of us are hungering after holiness. Oh! what would I not give to be holy, to be rid of sin, of every evil thing about me! My eyes — ah! adieu sweet light, if I might also say, "Adieu sin!" My mouth — ah! well would I be content to be dumb if I might preach by a perfect life on earth! There is no faculty I know of that might not be cheerfully surrendered if the surrender of it would deprive us of sin. But they never thirst for holiness in heaven, for this excellent reason, that they are without fault before the throne of God. Does it not make your mouth water? Why this is the luxury of heaven to be perfect. Is not this — the heaven of heaven, to be clean rid of the root and branch of sin, and not a rag or bone, or piece of a bone of our old depravity left — all gone like our Lord, made perfect without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And here, too, brethren and sisters, we very rightly hunger and thirst after full assurance and confidence. Many are hungering after it; they hope they are saved, and they thirst to be assured that they are. But there is no such thirst as that in heaven, for, having crossed the golden threshold of Paradise, no saint ever asks himself, "Am I saved?" They see his face without a cloud between; they bathe in the sea of

his love; they cannot question that which they perpetually enjoy. So, too, on earth I hope we know what it is to hunger and thirst for fellowship with Christ. Oh! when he is gone from us — if he do but hide his face from us, how we cry, “My soul desires thee in the night”! We cannot be satisfied unless we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. But in heaven they have no such thing. There the shepherd is always with the Sheep, the King is ever near them, and because of his perpetual presence their hungering and their thirsting will be banished for ever. Thus much upon those evils, then, that would arise from within. As they are perfect, whatever comes from within is a source of pleasure to them, and never of pain.

And now, dear friends, the evils that come from without: let us think of them. We no doubt can appreciate in some measure, though not to the degree which we should if we were in Palestine in the middle of summer — we can appreciate the words, “Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” This signifies that nothing external shall injure the blessed. Take it literally. There shall be nothing in the surroundings of heavenly saints that shall cause glorified spirits any inconvenience. I think we may take it mainly in relation to the entire man glorified; and so let us say that on earth the sun lights on us and many heats in the form of affliction. What heats of affliction some here have passed through! Why there are some here who are seldom free from physical pain. There are many of the best of God’s children that, if they get an hour without pain, are joyful indeed. There are others that have had a great fight of affliction Through poverty they have fought hard. They have been industrious, but somehow or other God has marked them out for the scant tables and the thread-worn garments. They are the children of poverty, and the furnace heat is very hot about them. With others it has been repeated deaths of those they have loved. Ah! how sad is the widow’s case! How deep the grief of the fatherless! How great the sorrow of bereaved parents! Sometimes the arrows of God fly one after the other; first one falls and then another until we think we shall hardly have one left. These are the heats of the furnace of affliction. And at other times these take the form of ingratitude from children. I think we never ought to repine so much about the death of a child as about the ungodly life of a child. A dead cross is very heavy, but a living cross is heavier far. Many a mother has had a son of whom she might regret that he did not die even the very hour of his birth, for he has lived to be the grief of his parents, and a dishonor to their name. These are sharp trials — these heats

— but you shall have done with them soon. “Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” No poverty, no sickness, no bereavement, no ingratitude — nothing of the kind. They for ever rest from affliction. Heat sometimes comes in another form — in the matter of temptation. Oh! how some of God’s people have been tried — tried by their flesh! Their constitution, perhaps, has been hot, impulsive, and they have been carried off their feet, or would have been but for the interposing grace of God, many and many a time. They have been tempted, too, in their position, and they of their own household have been their enemies. They have been tempted by their peculiar circumstances; their feet have almost gone many a time. And they have been tempted by the devil; and hard work it is to stand against Satanic insinuations. It is hot, indeed, when his fiery darts fly. Oh! when we shall have once crossed the river, how some of us who have been much tempted will look back upon that old dog of hell, and laugh him to scorn because he will not be able even to bark at us again! Then we shall be for ever free from him. He worries us now because he would devour us, but there, as he cannot devour, so shall he not even worry us. “Neither shall the sun of temptation light on them, nor any heat.” Happy are the people that are in such a case. The heats of persecution have often, too, carried about the saints. It is the lot of God’s people to be tried in this way. Through much tribulation of this sort they inherit the kingdom; but there are no Smithfields in heaven, and no Bonners to light up the faggots, no Inquisitions in heaven, no slanderers there to spoil the good man’s name. They shall never have the heat of persecution to suffer again. And, once more, they shall not have the heat of care. I do not know that we need have it, even here; but there are a great many of God’s people who allow care to get very hot about them. Even while sitting in this place to-night while the hymn was going up, “What must it be to be there!” the thoughts of some of you have been going away to your business, or your home. While we are trying to preach and draw your attention upwards, perhaps some housewife is thinking of something she has left out which ought to have been looked up before she came away, or wondering where she left the key. We make any excuses for care through the cares we continually invent, forgetting the words, “Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you.” But they have no cares in heaven. “They hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” Ah! good man, there shall be no ships at sea by-and-bye-no harvests — to trouble you as to whether the good weather will last! Ah! good woman, you shall have no more children that are sickly to fret over, for there you will have all you desire, and be in

a family circle that is unbroken, for all the brothers and sisters of God's family shall by-and-bye be there, and so you shall be eternally blest.

We have thus opened up as well as we could the words of the text on the felicity of the saints. Now, very briefly: —

II. HOW DO THEY COME TO BE HAPPY?

Well, it is quite clear that they did not come to it because they were very fortunate people on earth, for if you read another passage of the Word of God you will find, "These are they that came out of great tribulation." Those that have had trial and suffering on earth are amongst those that have the bliss of heaven. Encourage yourselves, you poor and suffering ones. It is quite certain they did not come there from their own merit, for we read, they have "washed their robes" — they wanted washing. They did not keep them always undefiled. There had been spots upon them. They came there not because they deserved to be there, but because of the rich grace of God. How did they come there then? Well, first, they came there through the lamb that was slain. He bore the sun and the heat, and, therefore, the sun doth not light on them, nor any heat. The hot sun of Jehovah's justice shone full upon the Savior — scorched, and burned, and consumed him with grief and anguish; and because the Savior suffered, therefore we suffer it no more. All our hopes of heaven are found at the cross.

But they came there next because the Savior shed his blood. They washed their robes in it. Faith linked them to the Savior. The fountain would not have cleansed their robes if they had not washed in it. Oh! there shall be none come to heaven but such as have by faith embraced what God provides. Dear hearer, judge thyself whether thou art right, therefore. Hast thou washed thy robe and made it white in the Lamb's blood? Is Christ all in all to thee? If not, canst thou hope to be there? And they are there in perfect bliss, we are told. No sun lights on them, nor any heat, because the Lamb in the midst of the throne is with them. How could they be unhappy who see Christ? Is not this the secret of their bliss, that Jesus fully reveals himself to them?

And besides, they have the love of God to enjoy, for the last word of the chapter is, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The blood of Jesus applied, the presence of Jesus enjoyed, and the love of God fully

revealed — these are the causes of the bliss of the saved in heaven. But we must close our meditation with the last point, which is: —

III. WHAT THIS TEACHES US.

First, the bliss of the saved in glory teaches us to long for it. It is legitimate to long for heaven — not to long to escape from doing our duty here. It is idleness to be always wanting to have done with this world — it is clear sloth — but to be longing to be where Jesus is, is only natural and gracious. Should not the child long to go home from the school? Should not the captive pine for liberty? Should not the traveler in foreign lands long to see his native country? Should not the bride, the married wife, when she has been long away from her husband, long to see his face? If you did not long for heaven, surely you might question whether heaven belonged to you. If you have ever tasted of the joys of the saints, as believers do on earth, you will sing with full soul: —

*“My thirsty spirit faints
To reach the land I love
The bright inheritance of saints,
Jerusalem above.”*

You may long for this.

And the next lesson is, be patient until you get there. As it will be such a blessed place when you arrive, don't trouble about the difficulties of the way. You know our hymn: —

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.”

So

“Let us fill it with hope, and cheer it with song.”

You know how well your horse goes when you turn its head homewards. Perhaps you had to flog him a bit before, but when he begins to know he is going down the long lane which leads home he will soon lift up his ears, and away, away he will go. We ought to have as much sense as horses. Our heads are turned towards heaven We are steering towards that port — homeward bound. It may be rough weather but we shall soon be in the fair haven where not a wave of trouble shall ever disturb us again. Be patient, be patient. The husbandman has waited for the precious fruits of the earth; you can well wait for the precious things of heaven. You sow in tears, but

you shall reap in joy. He has promised you a harvest. He who cannot lie has said the seed-time and harvest shall never cease. They do not cease below; depend upon it, they won't cease above. There is a harvest for you who have been sowing here below.

Our first lesson, then, is, long for this, and then be patient in waiting. But our next lesson is to be, wait your appointed time. And now the next instruction is, make much of faith. They entered heaven because they had washed their robes in blood. Make much of the blood and much of the faith by which you have washed. Dear hearers, have you all got faith? It is, as it were, the key of blessedness. "But all men have not faith," says the Apostle. Hast thou faith? Dost thou believe in Christ Jesus? In other words, dost thou trust thyself alone with him? Can you sing with our poet:

*"Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die?"*

Make much of the faith that will admit you to heaven.

Once more, our text teaches us this lesson — Do any of us want to know what heaven is on earth? Most of us will say, "Aye" to that. Well then, the text tells you how to find heaven on earth. You find it in the same way as they find it in heaven. First, be thou washed in the blood of Christ, and that will be a great help towards happiness on earth. It will give thee peace now, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." Some people think that heaven on earth is to be found in the theater, and in the ballroom, and in the giddy haunts of fashion. Well, it may be heaven to some, but if God has any love to you, it won't be heaven to you. Wash your robe, therefore, in the Savior's blood, and there will be the beginning of heaven on earth.

Then next, it appears, if you read the connection of our text, that those who enjoy heaven serve God day and night in his temple. If you want heaven on earth, serve God continually day and night. Having washed your robe first, then put it on, and go out to serve God. Idle Christians are often unhappy Christians I have met with many a spiritual dyspeptic always full of doubts and fears. Is there a young man here full of doubts and fears who has lost the light he once possessed, and the joy he once had? Dear brother,

get to work. In cold weather the best way to be warm is not to get before a fire, but to work. Exercise gives a healthy glow, even amidst the frost. "I am doing something," says one. Yes, with one hand; use the other hand. "Perhaps I should have too many irons in the fire," says one. You cannot have too many. Put them all in, and blow the fire with all the bellows you can get. I do not believe any Christian man works too hard, and, as a rule, if those who kill themselves in Christ's service were buried in a cemetery by themselves, it would be a long while before it would get filled. Work hard for Christ. It makes happy those who are in heaven to serve God day and night, and it will make you happy on earth. Do all you can. Another way is to have fellowship with Christ here. Read again this chapter. "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them — he shall feed them." Oh! if you want to be happy, live near to Jesus. Poor men are not poor when Christ lives in their house. Truly, sick men have their beds made easy when Christ is there. Has he not said, "I will make his bed in all his sickness"? Only get fellowship with Jesus, and outward circumstances won't distress you. The sun will not light on you, nor any heat. You will be like the shepherd on Salisbury Plain, who said it was good weather, though it rained hard. "It is weather," said he, "that pleases me." "How so?" said a traveler to him. "Well, sir," he said, "it pleases God, and what pleases God pleases me." "Good day!" said one to a Christian man. "I never had a bad day since I was converted," said he. "They are all good now since Christ is my Savior." Do you not see, then, that if your wishes are subdued, if you do not hunger any more, or thirst any more as you used to do, and if you always live near to Christ, you will begin to enjoy heaven on earth. Begin, then, the heavenly life here below. The Bible says, "For he hath raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The way to live on earth, according to many, is to live on earth, but to look upward to heaven. That is a good way of living, but I will tell you a better, and that is to live in heaven, and look down on earth. The Apostle had learned that when he said, "Our conversation is in heaven." It is good to be on earth, and look up to heaven; it is better for the mind to be in heaven, and to look down upon earth. May we learn that secret. The Lord lead us into it. Then when faith is strong, and love is ardent, and hope is bright, we shall sing, with Watts: —

*"The men of grace have found
 Glory begun below;
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground
 From faith and hope may grow."*

The Lord grant you a participation in this bliss, beloved, and an abundant entrance into that bliss for ever, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOHN 17.

Verse 1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, thee hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:*

The hour has come. The most important, the darkest, the most dreadful hour of Christ's life was come. But he had only one thought in his mind. "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." Beloved, when our hour comes — and we shall have hours of darkness — may we have nothing on our mind but that, — that God would help us to glorify his name. We shall not dread suffering if that be our one desire, because we shall see that suffering often gives opportunities to God for manifesting his own glory in the patience of his people.

2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

I think this verse is a solution of the problem about general redemption and particular redemption. Christ, by his death, has obtained power over all flesh. There is a universality about his redemption, but the object of it still was that he should give eternal life to "as many as thou hast given me." There is a specialty and peculiarity about the grand ultimate result and design of the death of our Lord. Let us believe both truths.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

Is the knowledge of God life? Is the knowledge of Jesus Christ life? It is even so. But what a blessed form of knowledge this is! It is taught to us by the Spirit of God in a special and remarkable way. This is life eternal.

4-6. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou invest me to do And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world:*

The best the clearest manifestation of the name or character of God is to be found in the person, the life, the work, the love of Jesus Christ. Well did he say in another place, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world."

6. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

It has been their treasure. They have preserved it as a priceless blessing. They would never let it go.

7, 8. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou invest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

Now that description of the people of God in Christ's day is true of us to-day. We have received the words which the Father has given the Son, and we believe of a surety that the Father has sent Jesus Christ into the world.

9. I pray for them:

Oh! how emphatically true this is! Christ always prays for them — for them, one by one — with most effectual prevalence. It is because- he prays that any of us are preserved. "I pray for them."

9. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me:

There is a specialty in intercession, as well as in redemption. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me."

9-11. For they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.

And now they are left. Their great guardian and protector has gone. They have no visible Head left. "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world." You and I know that we are in the world. The world makes us know that. We are in an enemy's country. We are in a land which is not our rest; and however happy our portion may be as Christ the world takes care that we should understand that we are aliens and foreigners in it; hurrying through it towards our abiding home.

11. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me that they may be one as we are.

Do all that you can, beloved, to promote the unity of the people of God, not only on the larger scale, wherein all churches snail be brought together in loving accord, but also on the smaller scale among your own friends, and those Christian brethren who are in your own church. Let none of us break the concord. Oh! may we always be of a gentle, generous, Christlike spirit, that we may be one, as the Father is one with the Son.

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

It is, perhaps, more wonderful that there were not more like Judas than that there should have been one like him. I wonder whether we can hope that in our churches there would be found as few as one in twelve who are not in heart with Christ. It is very wonderful that the rest should have been kept, and that this son of perdition should have been left to perish.

13-15. *And now come I to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

Either by death, or by shutting them up in monasteries, or causing them to dwell in caverns alone. "I do not pray for that."

Do not take them out of the battle, but save them from the deadly arrow. Help them to play the man, and win the victory, and not desert the colors.

16-18. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

Do you recognize your mission, dear friends? Do we all catch it? — that, as truly as Christ was the messenger of the Father, so every believer is the messenger of Christ. You are sent into this world to do an errand, not for yourselves, but for your Master. Are you doing it?

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

Christ sets himself apart for us, that they may set us apart for him. Have you realized this, my brother — that you are dedicated to Christ — that

every breath you breathe, and thought you think, and word you speak, and act you do, should all be done as unto him? He lived alone for you.

Live alone for him.

20. *Neither pray I for these alone.*

These saved ones.

20-22. *But for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one;*

Christ prays for us before we believe, and we believe in answer to his prayer. Oh! what glorious words. The very glory which the Father gave to the Only-begotten has that Only-begotten handed over to his people. “that they may be one, even as we are one.”

23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Now drink that in — all the sweetness of it — that the Father has loved his people even as he loved his Only-begotten.

24. *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 then lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

He will not be in glory, and leave me behind him. He is a bridegroom that cannot be satisfied unless his bride be a partaker of all his joy. He is so one with us, that as the head can never be content to be crowned, and the rest of the body be disgraced, so neither could Christ. We must be, if he wills it, where he is. We must behold his glory; we must share it.

25. *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*

It is delightful to hear *Jesus* praying in this way for us, side by side with himself, though we are unworthy of so unspeakable an honor; praying for us as if his own self, his own glory, depended upon our safety. If Christ prayed thus for us, how ought we to pray for one another!

26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:*

As long as the Christ lived, he showed forth his Father's glory, and so should we. If we have declared it, we should say, "And will declare it." "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Thus the glorious union stands. May we always rejoice in it.

26. *That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

TWO COVERINGS AND TWO CONSEQUENCES

NO. 3500

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.” — Proverbs 38:13.

“Thou Hast covered all their sins.” — Psalm 85:2.

IN THESE two texts we have man's covering, which is worthless and culpable, and God's covering, which is profitable, and worthy of all acceptation. No sooner had man disobeyed his Maker's will in the garden of Eden than he discovered, to his surprise and dismay, that he was naked, and he set about at once to make himself a covering. It was a poor attempt which our first parents made, and it proved a miserable failure. “They sewed fig-leaves together.” After that God came in, revealed to them yet more fully their nakedness, made them confess their sin, brought their transgression home to them, and then it is written, the Lord God made them coats of skin. Probably the coats were made of the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, and, if so, they were a fit type of him who has provided us with a sin-offering and a robe of perfect righteousness. Every man since the days of Adam has gone through much of the same experience, more or less relying on his own ingenuity to hide his own confusion of face. He has discovered that sin has made him naked, and he has set to work to clothe himself. As I shall have to show you presently, he has never succeeded. But God has been pleased to deal with his own people, according to the riches of his grace; he has covered their shame and put away their sins that they should not be remembered any more.

Let me now direct your attention, first, to man's covering, and its failure; and then to God's covering, and its perfection.

May the Holy Spirit be pleased to give you discernment, that you may see your destitute state in the presence of God, and understand the merciful relief that God himself has provided in the bounty of his grace!

I. MAN'S COVERING.

There are many ways in which men try to cover their sin. Some do so by denying that they have sinned, or, admitting the fact, they deny the guilt; or else, candidly acknowledging both the sin and the guilt, they excuse and exonerate themselves on the plea of certain circumstances which rendered it, according to their showing, almost inevitable that they should act as they have done. By pretext and presence, apology and self-vindication, they acquit themselves of all criminality, and put a fine gloss upon every foul delinquency. Excuse-making is the commonest trade under heaven. The slenderest materials are put to the greatest account. A man who has no valid argument in arrest of judgment, no feasible reason why he should not be condemned, will go about and bring a thousand excuses, and ten thousand circumstances of extenuation, the whole of them weak and attenuated as a spider's web. Someone here may be saying within himself, "It may be I have broken the law of God, but it was too severe. To keep so perfect a law was impossible. I have violated it, but then I am a man, endowed with passions that involve propensities, and inflamed with desires that need gratification. How could I do otherwise than I have done? Placed in peculiar circumstances, I am borne along with the current. Subject to special temptations, I yield to the fascination; this is natural." So you think; so you essay to exculpate yourself. But, in truth, you are now committing a fresh sin; for you are abasing God, you are inculpating the Almighty. You are impugning the law to vindicate yourself for breaking it. There is no small degree of criminality about such an unrighteous defense. The law is holy, just, and good. You are throwing the onus of your sins upon God. You are trying to mane out that, after all, you are not to blame, but the fault lies with him who gave the commandment. Do you think that this will be tolerated? Shall the prisoner at the bar bring accusations against the Judge who tries him? Or shall he challenge the equity of the statute while he is arraigned for violating it? And as for the circumstances that you plead, what valid excuse can they furnish, Has it come to this — that it was not you, but your necessities, that did the wrong and are answerable for the

consequence? Not you, indeed! you are a harmless innocent victim of circumstances! I suppose, instead of being censured, you ought almost to be pitied. What is this, again, but throwing the blame upon the arrangements of Providence, and saying to God, “It is the harshness of thy discipline, not the perverseness of my actions, that involves me in sin.” What, I say, is this but a high impertinence, ay, veritable treason, against the Majesty of that thrice holy God, before whom even perfect angels veil their faces, while they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts”? I pray thee resort not to such a covering as this, because, while it is utterly useless, it adds sin to sin, and exposes thee to fresh shame.

In many cases persons violating the law of God have hoped to cover their transgression by secrecy. They have done the deed in darkness. They hope that no ear of man heard their footfall, or listened to their speech. Possibly they themselves held their tongue, and flattered themselves that no observer witnessed their movements or could divulge their action. So was it with Achan. I dare say he took the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, mid the confusion of the battle, and hid it when his comrades seemed too much engaged to notice so trivial an affair. While they were rushing over the fallen walls of Jericho, amidst the debris and the dust, he might be unmolested; and then, in the dead of night, while they slept, he turned the sod of his tent, dug into the earth, and buried there his coveted treasure. All looks right, to his heart’s content. He has smoothed it down, and spread his carpet over the grave of his lust. Little did he reckon of the Omniscient eye. Little did he count on the unerring lot that would come home to the tribe of Judah, to the family of the Zarhites, to the house of Zabdir, and, at last, to the son of Carmi, so that Achan himself would have to stand out confessed as a traitor — a robber of his God. Men little know the ways in which the Almighty can find them out, and bring the evidence that convicts, out of the devices that were intended to cover their sin.

Do you not know that Providence is a wonderful detective? There are hounds upon the track of every thief, and murderer, and liar — in foot, upon every sinner of every kind. Each sin leaves a trail. The dogs of judgment will be sure to scent it out, and find their prey. There is no disentangling yourselves from the meshes of guilt; no possibility of evading the penalty of transgression. Very wonderful have been the ways in which persons who have committed crimes have been brought to judgment. A trifle becomes a tell-tale. The method of deceit gives a clue to the manner of discovery. Wretched the men who bury their secrets in their own bosom.

Their conscience plays traitor to them. They have often been forged to betray themselves. We have read of men talking in their sleep to their fellows, and babbling out in their dreams the crime they had committed years before. God would have the secret disclosed. No eye had seen, neither could other tongue have bold, but the man turned king's evidence against himself; he has thus brought himself to judgment. It has often happened, in some form or other, that conscience has thus been witness against men. Do I address anyone who is just now practicing a secret sin? You would not have me point you out for all the world, nor shall I do so. Believe me, however, the sin is known. Dexterous though you have been in the attempt to conceal it, it has been seen. As surely as you live, it has been seen. "By whom?" say you. Ah! by One who never forgets what he sees, and will be sure to tell of it. He may commission a little bird of the air to whisper it. Certainly he will one day proclaim it by the sound of trumpet to listening worlds. You are watched, sir; you are known. You have been narrowly observed, young girl; those things you have hidden away will be brought to light, for God is the great discoverer of sin. His eye has marked you; his providence will track you. It is vain to think that ye can conceal your transgressions. Before high heaven, disguise is futile. Yea, the darkness hideth not; the night shineth as the day. I have known persons who have harbored a sin in their breast till it has preyed upon their constitution. They have been like the Spartan boy who had stolen a fox, and was ashamed to have it known, so he kept it within his garment, till it ate through his flesh, and he fell dead. He suffered the fox to gnaw his heart ere he would betray himself. There are those who have got a sin, if not a lie in their right hand, yea, a lie in their heart, and it is eating into their very life. They dare not confess it. If they would confess it to their God, and make restitution to those whom they have offended, they would soon come to peace; but they vainly hope that they can cover the sin, and hide it from the eyes of God and man. He that covereth his sin in this fashion shall not prosper.

Again, full many a time sinners have tried to cover their sin with falsehood. Indeed, this is the usual habit — to lie — to cloak their guilt by denying it. Was not this the way with Gehazi? When the prophet said, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" he said, "Thy servant went no whither." Then the prophet told him that the leprosy of Naaman should cleave to him all the days of his life. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira, in lying in order to hide their sin, how quickly was it discovered, and how terrible was the

retribution! I wonder that men and women can lie as they do after reading that story. "Hast thou sold the land for so much?" said Peter. And Ananias said, "Yea, for so much." At that instant he fell down and gave up the ghost. Three hours after, when his wife, Sapphire, said the same, the feet of the young men who had buried her husband were at the door, ready to carry out her corpse, and bury her by his side. Oh! sirs, ye must weave a tangled web, indeed, when once ye begin to deceive; and when you have woven it you will have to add lie to lie, and lie to lie, and yet all to no purpose, for you will be surely found out. There is something about a lie that always deludes the man who utters it. Liars have need of good memories. They are sure to leave a little corner uncovered through which the truth escapes. Their story does not hang together. Discrepancies excite suspicions, and evasions furnish a clue to discoveries, till the naked truth is unveiled. Then the deeper the plot the fouler is the shame. But to lie unto the God of truth, of what avail can that be? What advantageth it you to plead "not guilty," when he has witnessed your crime? That infallible Eye which never mistakes is never closed. He knows everything; from him no secret is hid. Why, therefore, dost thou imagine that thou canst deceive thy Maker?

There are some who try to cover their sin by prevarication. With cunning subtlety they strive to evade personal responsibility. Memorable is the instance of David. I will not dwell upon his flagrant crime; but I must remind you of his sorry subterfuge, when he tried to hide the baseness of his lust by conspiring to cause the death of Uriah. There have been those who have schemed deep and long to throw the blame on others, even to the injury of their reputation, to escape the odium of their own malpractices. Who knows but in this congregation there may be someone who affects a high social position, supported by a deep mercantile immorality? Merchants there have been that have swollen before the public as men of wealth, while they were falsifying their accounts, abstracting money, yet making the books tally, rolling in luxury, and living in jeopardy. Have they prospered? Were they to be envied? The detection that long haunted them at length overtook them; could they look it in the face? We have heard of their blank despair, their insane suicide; at any rate, a miserable exposure has been their melancholy climax. "Be sure your sin will find you out." You may run the length of your tether. It is short. The hounds of justice, swift of scent and strong of limb, are on your trail. Rest assured, you will be discovered. Could you escape the due reward in this

life, yet certainly your guilt is known in heaven, and you shall be judged and condemned in that great day which shall decide your eternal destiny. Seek not, then, to cover up sin with such transparent cobwebs as these.

Some people flatter themselves that their sin has already been hidden away by the lapse of time. "It was so very long ago," says one, "I had almost forgotten it; I was a lad at the time." "Aye," says another, "I am gray-headed now. It must have been twenty or thirty years ago. Surely you do not think that the sin of my far-off days will be brought out against me? The thing is gone by. Time must have obliterated it." Not so, my friend. It may be the lapse of time will only make the discovery the more clear. A boy once went into his father's orchard, and there in his rough play he broke a little tree which his father valued. But, rapidly putting it together again, he managed to conceal the fact, for the disunited parts of the tree took kindly to each other, and the tree stood as before. It so happened that more than forty years afterwards he went into that garden after a storm had blown across it in the night, and he found that the tree had been riven in two, and it had snapped precisely in the place where he had broken it when it was but a sapling. So there may come a crash to your character precisely in that place where you sinned when yet a lad. Ah! how often the transgressions of our youth remain within our bosoms! There lie the eggs of our young sin, and they hatch when men come into riper years. Don't be so sure that the lapse of time will consign your faults and follies to oblivion. You sowed your wild oats, sir; you have got to reap them. The time that has intervened has only operated to make that evil seed spring up, and you are so much the nearer to the harvest. Time does not change the hue of sin in the sight of God. If a man could live a thousand years, the sins of his first year would be as fresh in the memory of the Almighty as those of the last. Eternity itself will never wash out a sin. Flow on, ye ages; but the scarlet spots on the sand. Flow on still in mighty streams, but the damning spot is there still. Neither time nor eternity can cleanse it. Only one thing can remove sin. The lapse of time cannot. Let not any of you be so foolish as to hope it will.

When the trumpet of the resurrection sounds, there will be a resurrection of characters, as well as of men. The man who has been foully slandered will rejoice in the light that reflects his purity. But the man whose latent vices have been skilfully veneered will be brought to the light too. His acts and motives will be alike exposed. As he himself looks and sees the resurrection of his crimes, with what horror will he face that day of

judgment! “Ah! ah!” says he, “Where am I? I had forgotten these. These are the sins of my childhood, the sins of my youth, the sins of my manhood, and the sins of my old age. I thought they were dead and buried, but they start from their tombs. My memory has been quickened. How my brain reels as I think of them all! But there they are, and, like so many wolves around me, they seem all thirsting for my destruction.” Beware, oh! men. Ye have buried your sins, but they will rise up from their graves and accuse you before God. Time cannot cover them.

Or do any of you imagine that your tears can blot out transgressions? That is a gross mistake. Could your tears for ever flow; could you be transformed into a Niobe, and do nothing else but weep for aye, the whole flood could not wash out a single sin. Some have supposed that there may be efficacy in baptismal water, or in sacramental emblems, or in priestly incantations, or in confession to a priest — one who asks them to disclose their secret wickedness to him, and betrays a morbid avidity to make his breast the sewer into which all kinds of uncleanness should be emptied. Be not deceived. There is nothing in these ordinances of man, or these tricks of Romish priestcraft (I had almost said of witchcraft, the two are so much alike) to excuse the folly of those who are beguiled by them. You need not catch at straws when the rope is thrown out to you. There is pardon to be had; remission is to be found; forgiveness can be procured. Turn your back on yonder shavelings; lend not your ear to them, neither be ye the victims of their snares. In the street each day it makes one’s soul sad to see them. Like the Pharisees of old, they wear their long garments to deceive. You cannot mistake them. Their silly conceit publishes their naked shame. Confide not in them for a moment. Christ can forgive you. God can blot out your sin. But they cannot ease your conscience by their penances, or remove your transgressions by their celebrations.

Thus I have gone through a rough, not very accurate, list of the ways by which men hope to cover their sin, but they “shall not prosper.” None of these shall succeed.

A more joyous task devolves on me now, while I draw your attention to my second text, “Thou hast covered all their sin.”

II. GOD’S COVERING.

This fact is affirmed concerning the people of God. All who have trusted in the atoning sacrifice which was presented by the Lord Jesus Christ upon

Calvary may accept this welcome assurance, “God. has covered all their sin.” How this hath come to pass I will tell you. Before ever God covers a man’s sins he unveils them. Did you ever see your sins unveiled? Did it ever seem as if the Lord put his hand upon you, and said, “Look, look at them”? Have you been led to see your sins as you never saw them before? Have you felt their aggravations fit to drive you to despair? As you have looked at them, has the finger of detection seemed to point out your blackness? Have you discovered in them a depth of guilt, and iniquity, and hell — desert which never struck your mind before? I recollect a time when that was a spectacle always before the eyes of my conscience. My sin was ever before me. If God thus makes you see your sin in the light of his countenance, depend upon it he has his purposes of mercy toward you. When you see and confess it, he will blot it out. So soon as God, in infinite loving-kindness, makes the sinner know in truth that he is a sinner, and strips him of the rags of his self-righteousness, he grants him pardon and clothes his nakedness. While he stands shivering before the gaze of the Almighty, condemned, the guilt is purged from his conscience. I do not know of a more terrible position in one’s experience than to stand with an angry God gazing upon you, and to know that wherever God’s eye falls upon you it sees nothing but sin; sees nothing in you but what he must hate and must abhor. Yet this is the experience through which God puts those to whom he grants forgiveness. He makes them know that he sees how sinful they are, and he makes them feel how vile and leprous they are. His justice withers their pride; his judgment appals their heart. They are humbled in the very dust, and made to cry out — each man trembling for his own soul — “God be merciful to me, a sinner!”

Not till this gracious work of conviction is fully wrought does the Lord appear with the glorious proclamation that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus shall have his sins covered. That proclamation. I have now openly to publish and personally to deliver to you. With your outward ears you may have heard it hundreds of times. It is old, yet ever new. Whosoever among you, knowing himself to be guilty, will come and put his trust in Jesus Christ, shall have his sins covered. “Can God do that?” Yes, he can. He alone can cover sin: Against him the sin was committed. It is the offended person who must pardon the offender. No one else can. He is the King. He has the right to pardon. He is the Sovereign Lord, and he can blot out sin. Beside that, he can cover it lawfully, for the Lord Jesus Christ (though ye know the story, let me tell it again — the song of redemption always rings

out a charming melody), Jesus Christ, the Father's dear Son, in order that the justice of God might be vindicated, bare his breast to its dreadful hurt, and suffered in our room, and place, and stead, what we ought to have suffered as the penalty of our sin. Now the sacrifice of God covers sin — covers it right over; and he more than covers it, he makes it cease to be. Moreover, the Lord Jesus kept the law of God, and his obedience stands, instead of our obedience; and God accepts him and his righteousness on our behalf, imputing his merits to our souls.

Oh! the virtue of that atoning blood! Oh! the blessedness of that perfect righteousness of the Son of God, by which he covers our sins!

There are two features of covering I should like to recall to your recollection. The one was the mercy-seat or propitiatory, over the golden ark, wherein were the tables of stone. Those tables of stone seemed, as it were, to reflect the sins of Israel. As in a mirror they reflected the transgression of God's people. God was above, as it were, looking down between the cherubic wings. Was he to look down upon the law defied and defiled by Israel? Ah! no; there was put over the top of the ark, as a lid which covered it all, a golden lid called the mercy-seat, and when the Lord looked down he looked upon that lid which covered sin. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ, the covering for all our sins. God sees no sin in those who are hidden beneath Jesus Christ.

There was another covering at the Red Sea. On that joyous day when the Egyptians went down into the midst of the sea pursuing the Israelites, at the motion of Moses' rod the waters that stood upright like a wall leapt back into their natural bed and swallowed up the Egyptians. Great was the victory when Miriam sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." It is even so that Jesus Christ's atonement has covered up our sins. They are sunk in his sepulcher; they are buried in his tomb. His blood, like the Red Sea, has drowned them. "The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left." Against the believer there is not a sin in God's Book recorded. He that believeth in him is perfectly absolved. "Thou hast covered all their sin." I shall not have time to dwell upon the sweetness of this fact, but I invite you that believe to consider its preciousness; and I hope you who have not believed will feel your mouth watering after it; to know that every sin one has ever committed, known and unknown, is gone — covered by Christ. To be assured that when Jesus died he did not die for some of our sins, but for all the sins of his people;

not for their sins up till now, but for all the sins they ever will commit! Well does Kent put it: —

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black they’re cast
And O, my soul, with wonder view
For sins to come here’s pardon too.”*

The atonement was made before the sin was committed. The righteousness was presented even before we had lived. “Thou hast covered all their sin. It seems to me as if the Lamb of God, slain from before the foundation of the world, had in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world, covered all his people’s sins. Therefore, we are accepted the Beloved, and dear to the Father’s heart. Oh! what a joy it is to get a hold of something like this truth, especially when the truth gets a hold of you — when you can feel by the inwrought power and witness of the Holy Ghost that your sins are covered — that you dare stand up before a rein-trying, heart-searching God, and give thanks that every transgression you ever committed is hid from the view of those piercing eyes through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Some people think we ought not to talk thus, that it is presumptuous. But really there is more presumption in doubting than there is in believing. For a child to believe his father’s word is never presumption. I like to credit my Father’s word. “He that believeth in him is not condemned.” Condemned I am not, for I know I do believe in him. “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.”

Beloved, the covering is as broad as the sin. The covering completely covers, and for ever covers; for as God sees to-day no sin in those who are washed in Jesus’ blood, so will he never see any. You are accepted with an acceptance that nothing can change. Whom once he loves he never leaves, but loves them to the end. The reason of his love to them does not lie in their merits nor their charms; the cause of love is in himself. The ground of his acceptance of them is in the person and work of Christ. Whatever they may be, whatever their condition of heart may be, they are accepted, because Christ lived and died. It is not a precarious or a conditional, but an eternal acceptance.

Would you enjoy the blessedness of this complete covering? Cowering down beneath the tempest of Jehovah's wrath, which you feel in your conscience, would you obtain this full remission? Behold the gates of the City of Refuge which stand wide open. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed! to the thirsty, needy, laboring, weary soul. Not merely open are the gates, but the invitation to enter is given. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You are bidden to lay hold upon eternal life. The way of doing so is simple. No works of yours, no merits, no tears, no preparations are required, but trust — trust — that is all. Believe in Jesus. Rely upon him; depend upon him; depend upon him. I have heard of Homer's Iliad being enclosed in a nutshell, so small was it written; but here is the Plain Man's Guide to Heaven in a nutshell. Here is the essence of the whole gospel in one short sentence. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust him; trust him. That is the meaning of that word believe. Depend upon him, and as surely as thou doest it, nor death, nor hell, nor sin shall ever separate thee from the love of him whom thou hast embraced, from the protection of him in whose power thou hast taken shelter. The Lord lead you to cower beneath his covering wings, and grant you to be found in Christ, accepted in the Beloved. So shall your present peace be the foretaste of your eternal felicity. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 55:1-17.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David.

It needed the chief musician to sing such a Psalm as this; it is so full of sorrow, and yet so full of confidence in God. It is a Psalm upon the stringed instruments, and it sings not of man only, but of that Son of man — that greatest of men, who was also greatest in grief as greatest in faith. Maschil: that is, "instructive," "full of teaching." The experience of one child of God is instructive to another, and especially the experience of the great First-born among many brethren.

A Psalm of David — David, that many-sided man, who seemed not one, but "all mankind's epitome." Who has not found his own experience when

he has read the Psalms of David? It is a looking-glass — this Book of Psalms — which reflects us all. See how he begins.

Verse 1. *Give ear to my prayer, O God;*

All the saints pray. There is no exception to this rule. And in their times of trouble they pray with greater vehemence than ever. They delight in prayer. But observe how eager they are that God should hear them. It is not praying for praying's sake — for the use of good words only. "Give ear to my prayer, O God."

1. *And hide not thyself from my supplication.*

When a man passes by his fellow in his distress, he is said to hide himself. O God, do not pass me by, When thou hearest my plaintive voice, do not hurry on and leave me to my woes. Forget not, beloved, that our Lord Jesus Christ did suffer the hidings of God's face. You and I may trust that in our hour of prayer we shall not have to do so. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But even if we should have to drink of that cup, better lips than ours have tasted its bitterness long ago.

2. *Attend unto me, and hear me:*

That is three times he thus implores God to give him a hearing. It reminds me of that Gethsemane pleading of our Lord when thrice he prayed using the same words. Here David begins — makes his exordium in prayer with a threefold cry to God. "Give ear to me; hide not thyself from me; attend unto my prayer, and hear me."

2. *I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;*

Sometimes prayer is scarcely articulate. "I make a noise." He was very free with God. He spoke out his heart as best his heart would speak, and he seemed to ramble. I believe that some of our sweetly-composed prayers have no prayer in them, and some of our broken petitions are those that reach the heart of God. "Groanings that cannot be uttered" are prayers that cannot be refused. There may be most strength in the passion of the soul when there is least order in the expression of the soul. "I mourn in my complaints, and make a noise."

3. *Because of the voice of the enemy,*

He can speak, and speak clearly too. Malice is never short of language, “because of the voice of the enemy.”

3. *Because of the oppression of the wicked:*

The best men have often been the most oppressed of men. Men have often spoken worst of those who have deserved the best. David is in that plight, and so was our Lord. He, too, knew the voice of the enemy and the oppression of the wicked.

3. *For they cast iniquity upon me,*

They bespatter me with their mire; they slander me. They speak evil of my good.

3. *And in wrath they hate me.*

It is the old story. The seed of the serpent naturally hates the seed of the women. Even our Lord had a bruised heel. Know ye not that Ishmael persecutes Isaac, the child of the promise? All down history there runs this line — the mark of blood and suffering. It must be so, “for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.”

4. *My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon*

I suppose that David may have written this after he had been driven out of Jerusalem by the party under the leadership of his son Absalom and Ahithophel. When it is all over he sings his song of dolour, and yet of confidence before his God. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ could use this language with very great emphasis. “My heart is sore pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me” — as if mid-night came down upon his soul — came down from God. “Are fallen upon me.” Descended therefore; and those are the heaviest of griefs which seem to come down just when we expected that showers of mercy would come down. Our Savior knew what this meant.

5, 6. *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*

If he could not have the wings of an eagle to fight out the conflict, he begged for the wings of a dove to fly from it. But what would you and I de

if we had wings? Where could we go if we had wings, but, like the dove of Noah, fly to the Lord? And we can get there without wings, brethren. We can get there by faith in him. It is a vain wish, then, and yet how many have sighed: —

“Oh! for a lodge in some vast wilderness, Some boundless contiguity of shade, Where rumor of oppression and deceit Might never reach me more.”

Ah! we sigh for solitude, and when we get solitude we sigh to get out of it.

7. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.

Why, David had been in the wilderness, and then he sighed to get back to the temple of God; but such foolish creatures are we at our very wisest that we know not what we sigh for. It was good for David that he had not wings, and it is good for you that you cannot run away. God has made you no armor for your back because you must go forward. Long ago he burnt our boats. We cannot return. We must “forward” now to the eternal victories in his strength.

8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

But he that would fly away from slander must fly very fast. How can we scape it? That cruel tongue, that wicked tongue walks through the earth and smites with its sword the best of God’s people. Now, like a soldier, David prays as his Master would never pray.

9. Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

That was not a bad prayer, for God heard it. He did divide their tongues. The counsels of the wicked were put to naught, and so they made a mistake, and David escaped through their divisions. I see not how a king driven from his throne and hunted by rebels, can pray differently from this. If he be a warrior and fights at all, he must wish for victory. Yet let me remind you that these verses need not be read in the imperative, neither may they necessarily be understood to be prayers. They can be read as prophecies. “God will destroy and divide the tongues of the wicked.” The divisions of error are the hope of truth. God divides the tongues of those who use their tongues against his Word, and so his truth conquers.

10. *Day and night they go about upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.*

Remember, Jerusalem was in the hands of a band of wicked men. Everywhere sin prevailed when David had quitted it.

11, 12. *Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:*

Here you get to the center of David's grief. Ahithophel had betrayed him, and here you begin to see the portrait of Christ coming out on the canvas. David seems to be painted first, and then there is painted an image of our Lord, which is seen here and there. "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it."

13. *But it was thou,*

In the original it runs thus: "But thou." The ardor of poetry is upon the Psalmist. He sees him: "Thou." And he looks at him with indignation: "Thou."

13, 14. *A man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

It is Ahithophel; it is Judas Iscariot; it is either; it is both. Oh! what a grief it is to be betrayed by one whom we have trusted, one whom we treated as our equal, one whom we followed as a trusted guide, one to whom we told our secret and linked our heart. "Mine acquaintance." One whose friendship was sanctified by the sanctions of religion. "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." Have any of you had to suffer from this serpent's tongue? Be not surprised. Your Master endured it before you. And now David bursts out in words of prayer, "Let death seize upon them. Let them go down quick into hell."

15. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

And this prayer also was heard, for Ahithophel was hanged with a rope, and Absalom without one; and their followers perished by thousands in the wood of Ephraim; and so God swept away the good man's slanderers.

16. *As for me,*

What would I do? Plot against their plots, and set cunning against their cunning? No, not I.

16, 17. *I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

He would pray often, but not too often. Where time sets her boundaries there are we to set up our altars: evening and morning, and at noon. It seems natural that our undertakings should be begun, continued, and ended in God, and that each day. Oh! pray much when your enemies plot much. If, morning, noon, and evening, they are seeking your ill, then just as often seek you good from God. How beautifully he puts it. “He shall hear my voice.” He does not pray at a peradventure. He is certain that prayer will come up to God. Yea, more than that, he anticipates a blessing; he foresees, nay, he sees the blessing.

THE FEAST OF THE LORD

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 6TH, 1871.

*“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup,
ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” — 1 Corinthians 11:26.*

I THINK we cannot too often explain the meaning of the two great Christian ordinances — baptism and the Supper of the Lord; for it is essential to our profiting by them that we understand them. If we do not know what they mean, they certainly cannot convey to us any blessing whatever. They are not mere channels of grace in themselves, apart from our understanding being exercised, and our hearts being moved by them. Very soon the best ordinance in the world will become a mere form, and will even degenerate into superstitious practice, unless it be understood; and we must not always take it for granted that the meaning of the simplest emblem is understood. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, must still be the motto of the Christian minister. We must explain, explain, and explain again, or else men will satisfy themselves with the outward form, and not reach to the teaching which the forms were intended to convey. Our text deals with the supper of our Lord, and we will read it again. “As often as eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”

The first point of the text is what we do — we “show.” Then, what do we show, and how? And then, who show it — “ye do show the Lord’s death.” And then, when? — “as often” — “till he come.” First, then, when we come to the Lord’s table: —

I. WHAT WE DO.

We “show.” That word has two or three meanings. They all melt into one, but we shall get at it better by dividing it. It is meant here by showing Christ’s death that we declare it. When the emblems are placed upon the table — bread and wine and we gather around it, we declare our firm belief that Jesus, the Son of God, descended into this world and died as a sacrifice for sin upon the cross. It has been found that if a great event is to be kept in mind in succeeding ages, there must be some memorial of it. Men by degrees forget it, and even come to be dubious as to whether such an event did occur. Sometimes a stone has been set up — a monument — but this has not always been most effective. God, when he would have the children of Israel remember that he brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, did not bid them set up a monument, but he ordained a ceremony which was to be practiced on a certain day. It was called “The Passover,” and the slaughter of the lamb and the eating of it became a yearly declaration by the people of Israel that they believed that God brought their fathers up out of the house of bondage. So effective has this been that men have often used the same device. When the Jewish people escaped from the plot which was laid by Haman, through the wisdom of Mordecai and Esther, they ordained the keeping of the feast of Purim, that they might have in perpetual memory the goodness of God towards his people.

And you know how, in our own English history and in the history of other countries, certain rites and ceremonies have been ordained in order that there might be a perpetual memorial, a declaration made that such and such a thing did occur. Now that more than eighteen hundred years ago Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, died upon Calvary by crucifixion, we do here protest and declare. We set forth again to a world that is skeptical and denies the fact which is its brightest hope — we set forth our confident belief that so it was; and as long as this ordinance shall be celebrated, there shall be a standing proof in the world that that was the case.

But to set forth means more than to declare. It signifies, in the next place to represent. There is in the Lord’s Supper a representation of the death of Christ. Men, when they have found an event to be interesting and remarkable, have often devised ways of representing it to the people that they might understand it.

With regard to our Lord's death, there are some who hang up pictures on the wall; they think the use of the crucifix and so on to be proper. I find no teaching of that kind in the Word of God. I do find that too often such things lead to idolatry. And what shall we say of these miracle — plays which, even in these modern times, have been carried out, in which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is travestied? They seem to be shocking to the Christian mind. But here, in a very simple manner, you have God's own appointed way of representing to ourselves and to onlookers the death of our Lord. This is the Christian's "show" — we show the death of Christ here by a divine appointment. I shall, farther on, show how it is so, and that the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine — the use of those two emblems — is a most telling, most suggestive, most instructive method of representing the death of Christ. There are two other ways of representing it — the one the pencil of the evangelist which has drawn the death of Christ in the Word of God; the other is the preaching of the gospel. It is the preacher's business to set forth Christ crucified — evidently crucified among you. The three ways that God has ordained of representing the death of Christ are the Word read, the Word preached, and this blessed ordinance of the Supper of the Lord.

To "show." This means to declare, to testify; and it means also to represent. But it has a third meaning: it means also to hold forth, to make manifest, to publish, to call attention to. Now it has been a matter of fact that when the Jesuit missionaries went to China and converted a great many to what they called the Christian faith, they never mentioned the fact that Christ died. For years they concealed it, lest the people should be shocked. Now we, on the other hand, put that first and foremost. We have no other Christianity than this, that Christ died and rose again, and we cannot come to the Lord's table without showing it. The Jesuit could, because it would puzzle the wisest man to see the death of Christ in the Mass. He might sit and look at a hundred Masses before he knew what it meant. But the moment we gather around this table and break bread, and pour out wine, whoever asks us, "What mean ye by this ordinance? the answer is prompt — the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in this — "We set forth to you that Jesus died." "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are not ashamed of a crucified Savior. We have heard of some in these days who are always preaching a glorified Christ. We wish them such success as their ministry is likely to bring; but for us we preach a crucified Christ — "Christ and him

crucified”; for it is here, after all, that the salvation of the sinner lies. Christ glorified is precious enough — oh! how unspeakably precious to a soul that is saved! — but first and foremost to a dying world it is Christ upon the cross that we have to declare. And, therefore, when we come to the Communion table we do three things. We assert the fact that Jesus died; we represent that fact in emblem, and then we thus press it upon the attention of men. We desire them to observe it; we ask them to mark it; we tell them that this is the sum and substance of all the gospel that we were sent to preach, “God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation for our sins.”

Thus I have opened up the meaning of the word to “show.” This is what we do. Now the second point is, my brethren: —

II. WHAT WE SHOW, AND HOW.

It is said in the text, “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death.” How do we show it? What do we show? Well, first of all, we show that God has set forth Christ for men. The table is spread; there is bread on it; there is the cup upon it. What for? Not for beasts. Here is the food of men. It is set there for men. It is intended that the bread should be eaten, that the wine should be drunk. Everybody who sees a table spread knows at once that there are preparations for a meal or a festival. Now God has set forth Christ for men. There is in Christ what man wants. As bread meets his hunger, as the cup meets his thirst, so Christ meets all the spiritual wants of mankind. And the soul that would live, and the soul that would rejoice, must come to God’s provision for his living and his rejoicing, and that provision is to be found in Jesus Christ crucified. God set forth Christ of old. Even in the garden, he set him forth in the first promise. He continued to set him forth by all the prophets, and in this last day every veil has been taken away by an open Bible inviting all comers. God has set forth the bread of life to the sons of men. And you to-night will show that fact. When you see that table uncovered, you have a representation. God has made a feast of fat things for the sons of men in the person of Jesus Christ. The feast consists of bread and wine. Now in this we represent Christ’s human person, Christ’s humanity. That he is no myth, but real flesh, is taught by the bread being on the table — that he was no phantom, but that real blood coursed through his veins as through ours — that the Lord of life and glory was, like ourselves, a real man, in humanity in all respects like to ourselves, sin alone excepted. There shall be

no phantom feast upon the table, and the materialism that is there is meant to show that he was a man, a real man: —

*“Who once on Calvary died,
When streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side.”*

But the next thing we show forth is his death. We have his person; then we have his death — observe how. Recording to the Romish Church, the most of the people are only to participate in the bread — the wafer. Now such persons never show Christ’s death at all, for the text says, “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye show Christ’s death.” It is only by the two that you show his death at all. The bread represents the body, but the cup must represent the blood, or else you have no token of his suffering — no emblem of his death. Cannot the two be mixed together? No, for if the blood and flesh be together, you have the living man. It is when the blood flows — when the lifeblood ebbs from the body, and the body is bloodless, that then you have the wine as a token of death; and the separation of the two — the use of the two emblems — is absolutely needful to set forth death. The more you think this the more you see in it. The emblem is the simplest in the world, but yet the most instructive. Take either one of the elements — the bread, how it typifies Christ’s suffering! Here was the corn bruised beneath the thresher’s flail; then was it cast into the ground. It sprung up and ripened, and had to be cut down with the sickle; then it had to be threshed; then ground in the mill; then was it baked in the oven. A whole series of sufferings, if I may use the term, it had to pass through before it became proper food for us. And so must our Savior pass through sufferings innumerable before he could become food for our souls, and redeemer of our spirits. As for that which is in the cup, it was trodden beneath the foot in the wine-press — its juice was pressed forth. So in the wine-press of Jehovah’s wrath was Christ pressed before he could become the wine that maketh glad both God and man. Both emblems represent suffering, each one separately, but put together they bring forth the idea of death, “and as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death.”

But more than this; we show that God set forth Christ; we show his person as a real man; we show his sufferings and his death; but next we show our participation in the same, for it is not “as often as ye look at this bread,” or “as ye gaze upon this cup,” but “as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup.” Christ saves us not until we do receive him by an act of faith. The

bread satisfies no hunger while it rests upon the table, and a draught from the cup quenches no thirst until it really is drunk. So the precious blood of Jesus Christ our Savior must be received by our faith. We must believe in him to the saving of our souls. Now how simple a matter is eating! It matters not, unless a man be dead — he wants little teaching to know how to eat. It is as simple as a natural act — he puts food into his mouth. It is just so here. There is the Savior, and I take him — that is all. It seems to me to be even a more complex act to eat than simply to trust in Jesus, yet is it a very simple thing. The idiot can eat. No matter how guilty a man, he can eat; no matter how dark and despairing his fears, he can eat; and O poor soul, whoever thou mayest be, there shall be no want of wit or merit that shall keep thee back from Christ. If thou art willing to have him, thou mayest have him. The act of trusting Christ makes Christ as much thy own as the eating of the bread. Suppose some difficulty were raised about whether a piece of bread was mine. Well, the legal question would take a long time to decide. I cannot produce the document, nor find the witnesses to prove it is mine. But there is one little fact, I think, which will settle it — I have eaten it. So if the devil himself were to say that Christ is not mine, I have believed on him; and if I have believed on him, he is mine just as surely as when I have eaten a piece of bread there can be no question about its being mine. Now we set forth to-night, by eating bread and drinking of the cup, the fact that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and we take him by simple faith to be our all in all.

But there is more teaching still. The bread and wine, are being eaten and drunk, are assimilated into the system; they minister strength to bone, sinew, muscle; they build up the man. And herein is teaching. Christ believed in is one with us — “Christ in us the hope of glory.” We have heard persons talk of believers falling from grace and losing Christ. No, sir, a man has eaten bread — he ate it yesterday. Will you separate that bread from the man? Will you trace the drops that came from the cup, and fetch them out of the man’s system? You shall more easily do that than you shall take Christ away from the soul that has once fed upon him. “Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” He is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. See then how large a letter Christ has written to us with these pens — how in this bread and this wine, eaten and drunk, he has taught us wondrous mysteries — in fact, the whole Christian faith is, in brief, summed up here upon this table.

And now we must remark upon what it is we show forth, and how we do it. We do this very simply. Certain churches must go about this business in a very mysterious manner — a great deal of machinery is wanted — a plate becomes a paten, and a cup becomes a chalice, and a table, ah! that has vanished and turned into an altar. The whole thing is turned topsy-turvy until it is very questionable in the Church of Rome whether there is any supper at all; for if you introduce the altar, you have put away the table and done away with the whole thing. It is another ordinance, and not the ordinance which Christ established. One would suppose that when the Apostles first went out to preach, if the religion of the Romish Church be that of the Scripture, they would have needed, each of them, a wagon to carry with them the various paraphernalia necessary for the celebration of their services. But here, wherever there is a piece of bread, and wherever there is a cup, we have the plain, but instructive emblems which our Savior bade us use. “He took bread and break it. “He did drink of the cup, and passed it to his disciples, and said, “Drink ye all of it.”

Let us keep this ordinance in its pure simplicity. Let us never add anything to it by our own devising by way of fancying that we are honoring God by garnishing his table. Let us plainly show Christ’s death, and as we do it plainly we should also do it festively. Is it not delightful to reflect that our Lord has not ordained a mournful ceremony in which to celebrate his death: it is a feast. You would suppose by the way that some come that it is a funeral, but it is a feast, and joy becomes a feast; and when, according to the example of Christ, we recline at our ease in the nearest approach to the posture in which the Oriental lay along at the table, and when we come with joyful heart, blessing the Lord Jesus that though our sins put him to death, yet his death has put to death our sins, then it is that we celebrate his death as he would have us celebrate it — not as an awful tragedy, in which we try to provoke our indignation against the Romans or the Jews, but as a hallowed festival, in which the King himself comes to the table, and his spikenard gives forth a sweet smell, and our spirit is refreshed.

And once more, this way of showing Christ’s death is one of communion. Now one person cannot do it; many must come together. Ye must eat and drink together to celebrate this, your Lord’s death. And is not this delightful, for in this cup we have fellowship with him and with one another? We, being many, have one bread; we, being many, have one cup — one family at one table with one common head, the Lord Jesus, who is all in all to us. Oh! I bless his name that whereas he might have ordained a

way of our showing his death which would have been mournful, or a way which would have been solitary, he has selected that which is joyful, and that which is full of good fellowship, so that saints below and himself can meet together in the festival of love and show his death until he come, in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of wine. Thus I have tried to show what it is we show, and how we show it. Now thirdly: —

III. WHO ARE TO SHOW IT?

Who show it? “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death.” The “ye,” then includes all the saints of God — all who come to the table, who eat this bread and drink this cup; and truly a very pleasing thought arises from this. Here is a way of showing Christ’s death in which all who love Christ have a share. You cannot all show it from the pulpit; gifts are not equally distributed; but you all alike share in this showing of his death — in this special way, which he himself celebrated for our example, and which he delivered to his servant Paul, expressly that it might stand on record. Now if Paul himself were here, he could not show Christ’s death alone at the Lord’s Supper. He must ask some of his poorer brethren to come with him. If the minister of a church should be full of the Holy Ghost, yet could he not show forth Christ’s death here in this peculiar way. He must say to his brethren, “Come, brethren and sisters; it says ‘ye,’ as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup.” Here we are to-night, as we sit here, all brought into a blessed equality in the act of using the same outward sign, and of performing the Master’s will in the same way.

“But,” says ones “doth every man who comes to the table, and eats and drinks, show Christ’s death? Notice how the verse which follows my text puts a bar to that. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread.” It must be taken for granted that the man has examined himself — that he comes there as a true believer in Jesus — that he comes there with the full intent to show Christ’s death; and if he does that, such a man is showing Christ’s death. I am very earnest, dear brethren and sisters, as it has been a long time since I have met with you — having been kept away so long by sickness, though I have been with my brethren below stairs — I am anxious that we should indeed show Christ’s death to-night. Let us do it to ourselves. I find that the text may either be read in the indicative or in the imperative mood. It is either “ye show Christ’s death,” as our version has it, or it may be “show ye Christ’s death” — it is an exhortation. Oh! let us take care that we show it to ourselves. “Show it to ourselves?” says

one. Yes, it is meant for you. This is a primary meaning of the text. When you take that bread, don't think of the bread, and stay there, but say to your own soul, "My soul, think thou of Jesus. My heart, go away now to Gethsemane. Come, ye stray thoughts; Come, ye passing vanities, begone! I must away to where my Savior bled and died.

***"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing
Which, before his cross, I spend."***

I have come here to show his death; let me see him. I will ask him to permit me in spirit to put my finger into the print of the nails, and to put my hand into his side. Oh! go not from this table satisfied with the outward emblem; press into the inner court — pray the Master to manifest himself to you as he does not unto the world. For here is the main business — show his death to your own heart till your heart bleeds for sin; show it to your own faith till your faith feels it is all sufficient — show it to others. You will be sure to show it to others if you show it to yourself for as others look on and mark your reverent behavior; if they cannot enter into your joy, they will be reminded of what they have so long forgotten. Oh! brethren and sisters, let me urge each one of you that no one should be content without sharing this honor. I feel we all have an honor to participate in showing forth the death of Christ. Let us not, in sharing the honor, bring condemnation on ourselves. But I must hasten on. The fourth point is: —

IV. WHEN ARE WE TO DO IT?

The text says "often" — "as often as ye eat this bread." The Holy Spirit might have used the words "when ye eat," but he did not. He teaches us by implication that we ought to do it often. I do not think there is any positive law about it, but it looks to me as if the first Christians broke bread almost every day — "breaking bread from house to house." I am not sure that that refers to Communion, but in all probability it does. This much is certain, that in the early Church the custom was to break bread in memory of Christ's passion on the first day of every week, and it was always a part of the Sabbath's service when they came together to remember their Lord in this way. How it can be thought right to leave the celebrating of this ordinance to once a year or once a quarter I cannot understand, and it seems to me that if brethren knew the great joy there is in often setting forth Christ's death they would not be content with even once a month. But I leave that.

The other mark of time in the text is “till he come.” Then this service is to end. There will be no more Lord’s Suppers when Christ appears, because they will be needless. Put out the candle — the sun has risen. Put away the emblem — here comes Christ himself. But until he does come, this will always be a most fitting ordinance. I pleased myself with a thought I met with the other day. Our Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table and ate with his disciples, and he took the cup and he sipped it, and he passed it round. It is being passed round still. It has not got round the table yet, it is being passed on. For 1,800 years it has been passed from hand to hand. They have not all drunk yet; and you remember he, said, “Drink ye all of it” — all of you. Did he speak to all his elect that were to be born — to all the countless companies yet to come? I think he did, and it is going round: and by-and-bye, when all the people of God have participated in Christ, it will cease. The cup will never be emptied till then.

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

When the last has drunk of it, what then? It will come back into the Master’s hands, and then will be fulfilled that word of his, “I say unto you I will not henceforth drink of the juice of the vine till I drink it new in my heavenly Father’s kingdom.” And it is going round, brethren — that cup of glorious Christian fellowship of love to Christ, the cup that is filled with Jesus’ blood — it is passing round, and when it has reached his hand then we shall need no more the outward ordinance. But until then it is clear from the text that it is to be kept up. And I have a little dispute with some of you here present. You love the Lord, but you have never been baptized; you love Jesus, but you have never come to his table. Now let me say you are in opposition to Christ. He says, “Do this till I come”, you don’t do it. “Oh! but I am only one,” say you. To your measure of ability you have helped to make the lord’s Supper obsolete. Can you see that? If you have a right to neglect it, so have I — if I, so have all my brethren. Then there is an end to it. My dear brother, you are doing the best you can to make Christ forgotten in the world. I pray you by his own dying example and his express command, “This do ye in remembrance of me” — if ye have believed him, keep this, his commandment. If ye have not believed in him, then far hence! Ye have no right to take it. But if you have believed, I

beseech you stand not back for shame or fear, but eat and drink at his table till he come.

Time has gone too fast for me, and I must close. There is one lesson, however, that I cannot leave out. Until Christ come. We are taught our interim employment — what is to occupy us until Jesus comes. Beloved brethren, until Jesus comes we have nothing left but to think of him. Till Jesus comes the main thing we have to do is to think of and set him forth a crucified Savior. There is no food for the Church but Jesus; there is no testimony to the world but Jesus crucified. They have sometimes told us that in this growing age we may expect to have developed a higher form of Christianity. Well, they shall have it that like it; but Christ himself has left us nothing but just this, “Show my death till I come.” The preacher is to go on preaching a dying Savior; the saint is to go on trusting that dying Savior, feeding on him and letting his soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. There is nothing left us to occupy our thoughts, or to be the subject of our joy, as our dear dying Lord. Oh! let us feed on him. Each one, personally, as a believer — let him feed on his Savior. If he has come once, come again. Keep on coming till Christ himself shall appear. As long as the invitation stands let us not slight it, but constantly come to Christ himself and feed on him.

In conclusion, let every ungodly person here know that he has no part nor lot in this matter. Thy first business, sinner, is with Christ himself. Go thou and put thy trust in him. Oh! go this night. Thou mayest never have another night to go in. And then when thou best believed, then obey his command in baptism, and then also come to his table and show his death until he come. The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

REVELATION I.

Verses 1, 2. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

John was one who was of the same spirit as his Master. He lived in very intimate communion with his Lord, and, therefore, to him the choicest revelations were made. The Lord does not reveal his secrets to uncongenial minds. He that will do his will shall know of the doctrine, and he shall know all secret things. Oh! if we lived nearer to God, if we walked more in the love of Christ, how much more we might know and see; or, if we saw not visions, yet there are inward perceptions to the heart which God would grant us if we lived more in the light of his countenance.

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep these things which are written therein for the time is at hand.

It is not a book to be put on the shelf. There is practical teaching in it, It is not intended to lead us into vagaries of speculation, but it is meant for practical purposes. We are to keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand.

4, 5. John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come: and from the seven spirits which are before his throne: And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Think, dear friends, how this benediction may be fulfilled. “Grace be to you,” he says, “and peace.” And what are to be the fountains and springs of this peace? It is to come from God first, from him which is. All that God is, is a fountain of peace and grace to us. And from him which was — all that he has ever been, the eternal past, the changeless purposes, the divine predestination of the Infinite. There are springs of peace and grace here. And from him which is to come. All that God will ever be, all the manifestations of his power, his justice, his love, which the ages are yet to see all these are wells of grace and peace to God’s own people. I want you to think of this. And when your minds are disturbed, and you have need of peace, and when your heart is sinking and you have need of grace, come to God for both of these things, regarding him as him which is, which was, and which is to come. And there are seven spirits which are before his throne. The Holy Ghost, in whatever way he operates in any of his divine works — in all these he is the Comforter, the source of grace and peace to us. You need not be afraid of the Holy Spirit, even though he be the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, for he will burn up nothing in us but

what ought to be consumed, and will judge nothing but what ought to be judged and to be condemned; so that peace may come to us from the seven spirits which are before the throne; but specially grace and peace from Jesus Christ as the Faithful Witness. Whatever he bears witness to, it is full of grace and peace to believers, and he himself is the first begotten from the dead. Oh! his resurrection! what a wondrous fountain of grace and peace that is to us! And then his divine sovereignty — his rule over all providence and nature, the Prince of the kings of the earth — what grace and peace may every one of you who love him find there! At the thought of this, the divine writer turns from his benediction to a doxology.

5, 6. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto Clod and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Brethren, the very best work which we ever do on earth is to adore. You are blessed in prayer, but you are seven times blessed in praise. When you get to the doxology, it is the benediction made more sublime. The benediction takes wings and mounts into a celestial atmosphere, when you begin to adore and magnify him that loved you, and washed you from your sins. There is one thing that adoration does: it helps us to see: and when you close your eyes in adoration, you see more than when you have them open in any other way. I am sure of this, for the next line is: —

7. Behold he cometh with clouds;

John sees him. He adored, him. Strong Son of God, Immortal love, Whom though we have not seen thy face, Unceasing we adore. In that adoration we behold thee. “Behold he cometh with clouds.”

7. And every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.

What is more, adoration helps us to hear as well as to see. It supplies us with new senses. John hears this voice.

8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Happy man that thus in reverent worship hears God speaking to him in answer to his voice to God.

9. I John, who also am your brother,

How sweetly this sounds. This is a man that has seen and heard God. This is a man who is full of visions, who has beheld the broken seals and the poured out vials; the man that is familiar with the infinite. "I, John, who also am your brother."

9. *And companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patches, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

That is a wondrous linking, is it not, in this verse? — "the kingdom and patience." You must have the cross and the crown together. We get the kingdom of Christ, but not without the passion of Christ. There is the cross marked on all the treasure trove that we find in Christ. It is not genuine if it is not marked with the cross. "The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

10, 11. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:*

What evidence we have here of the divinity of Christ, for we shall see, as we read on, that it is Christ that is speaking here; and just now it was the Father which in much the same words said, "I am Alpha and Omega." We cannot always draw the line between the voice of God and the voice of the God-man, Christ Jesus, and we need not wish to do so, for Holy Scripture does not draw us up rigid, but it would have us believe it, all the same for that. Yet it is always accurate, always true, where it has shades of definition; for, after all, Christ is so truly God that whether it speak of him absolutely as God, or of him as God and man, Mediator, it matters little to us.

11-12. *And, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.*

It is so natural in us to want to see the place from which the voice proceeds.

12-16. *And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the peeps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his*

egos were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace: and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his month went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

I will not stop to explain those details. The picture is too sacred. Let it stand before you in its glory, and listen to these words.

17. *And when I saw him. I fell at his feet as dead.*

Oh! how the “I” dies when Christ is manifested! How we sink! And yet our joys shall rise unutterably, immeasurably high. I fell at his feet as dead.

17. *And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

There is where your comfort comes from — not from what you are, but from what he is. You are the last, but he — here is the point — he is the first and the last.

18, 19. *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell end of death. Write the things which thou hast seen,*

Come, lay aside thy fears. Thy fears disqualify thee from holding the pen. Thou hast scarcely dared to look. I am sure thou wilt not date to write until I strengthen thee.

19, 20. *And the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:*

The messengers, the ministers of the seven churches.

20. *And the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

God bless our reading to our rich instruction.

POWERFUL PERSUASIVES

NO. 3502

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:27-28.

I HAVE preached to you, dear friends, several times from the words, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is such sweetness in the precept, such solace in the promise, that I could fain hope to preach from it many times more. But I have no intention just now to repeat what I have said in any former discourse, or to follow the same vein of thought that we have previously explored. This kindly and gracious invitation needs only to be held up in different lights to give us different subjects for admiration. That it flowed like an anthem from our Savior’s lips we perceive, in what connection it was spoken we may properly enquire. He had just made some important disclosures as to the covenant relations that existed between himself and God the Father. This interesting revelation of heavenly truth becomes the basis upon which he offers an invitation to the toiling and oppressed children of men, and assigns it as a reason why they should immediately avail themselves of his succor. Such is the line of discourse I propose now to follow. Kindly understand me that I want to deal with the hearts and consciences of the unconverted, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to plead with them that they may at once go to Jesus and find rest unto their souls. I shall require no stories or anecdotes, no figures or metaphors, to illustrate the urgent necessity of the sinner and the generous bounty of the Savior. We will make it as plain as a pikestaff, and as sharp as a sword, with the intention

of driving straight at our point. Time is precious, your time especially, for you may not have many days in which to seek the Lord. The matter is urgent. Oh! that every laboring, weary sinner here might at once come to Jesus and find that rest which the Savior expresses himself as so willing to give! With all simplicity, then, let me explain to you the way of salvation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

The way to be saved is to come to Jesus. To come, to Jesus means to pray to him, to trust in him, to rely upon him. Each man who trusts in another may be said to come to that other for help. Thus to trust in Jesus is to come to him. In order to do this I must give up all reliance upon myself, or anything I could do or have done, or anything I do feel or can feel. Nor must I feel the slightest dependence upon anything that anyone else can do for me. I must cease from creature helps and carnal rites, to rest myself upon Jesus. That is what my Savior means when he says, "Come unto me." The exhortation is very personal. "Come unto me," says he. He saith not, come to my ministers to consult them. nor come to my sacraments to observe them, nor come to my Bible to study its teaching — interesting and advantageous as under some circumstances any or all of these counsels might be; but he invites us in the sweetest tune of friendship, saying, "Come to me." For a poor sinner this is the truest means of succor. Let him resort to the blessed Lord himself. To trust in a crucified Savior is the way of salvation. Let him leave everything else and fly away to Christ, and look at his dear wounds as he hangs upon the cross. I am afraid many people are detained from Christ by becoming entangled in the meshes of doctrine. Some with heterodox doctrine, others with orthodox doctrine, content themselves. They think that they have advanced far enough. They flatter their souls that they have ascertained the truth! But the fact is, it is not the truth as a letter which, saves anybody. It is the truth as a person — it is Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life, whom we need to apprehend.

Our confidences must rest entirely upon him. "Come unto me," saith Jesus; Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The exhortation is in the present tense. "Come" now; do not wait; do not tarry; do not lie at the pool of ordinances but come unto me; come now at once, immediately, just where you are, just as you are. Wherever the summons finds you, rise without parley, without an instant's delay. "Come." I know that the human mind is very ingenious, and it is especially

perverse when its own destruction is threatened. By some means or other it will evade this simple call. “Surely,” says one, “there must be something to do besides that.” Nay, nothing else is to be done. No preliminaries are requisite. The whole way of salvation is to trust in Jesus. Trust him now. That done, you are saved. Rely upon his finished work. know that he has meditated on your behalf. Commit thy sinful self to his saving grace. A change of heart shall be yours. All that you need he will supply.

*“There is life in a look at the crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee.”*

So sweet an invitation demands a spontaneous acceptance. Come just as you are. “Come unto me,” saith Christ. He does not say, “Come when you have washed and cleansed yourself.” Rather should you come to be cleansed. He does not say, “Come when you have clothed yourself and made yourself beautiful with good works.” Come to be made beautiful in a better righteousness than you can wear. Come naked, and let him gird thee with fine linen, cover thee with silk, and deck thee with jewels. He does not say, “Come when your conscience is tender, come when your heart is penitent, when your soul is full of loathing for sin, and your mind is enlightened with knowledge and enlivened with joy. But ye that labor, ye that are heavy laden, he bids you to come as you are. Come oppressed with your burdens, begrimed with your labors, dispirited with your toils. If the load that bends you double to the earth be upon your shoulders? just come as you are. Take no plea in your mouth but this — he bids you come. That shall suffice as a warrant for your coming, and a security for your welcome. If Jesus Christ bids you, who shall say you nay?

He puts the matter very exclusively. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.” Do nothing else but come to him. Do you want rest? Come to him for it. The old proverb hath it that betwixt two stools we come to the ground.” Certainly, if we trust partly in Christ and partly in ourselves, we shall fall lower than the ground. We shall sink into hell. “Come unto me” is the whole gospel. “Come unto me.” Mix nothing with it. Acknowledge no other obedience. Obey Christ, and him alone. Come unto me. You cannot go in two opposite directions. Let your tottering footsteps bend their way to him alone. Mix anything with him, and the possibility of your salvation is gone. Yours be the happy resolve: —

*“Nothing in my hands I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.”*

This must be your cry if you are to be accepted at all. Come, then, ye that labor, ye horny-handed sons of toil. Come ye to Jesus. He invites you. Ye that stew and toil for wealth, ye merchants, with your many cares, laborers ye are. He bids you come. Ye students, anxious for knowledge, chary of sleep, burning out the midnight oil. Ye labor with exhausted brains; therefore, come. Come from struggling after fame. Ye pleasure — seekers, come; perhaps there is no harder toil than the toil of the man who courts recreation and thinks he is taking his ease. Come, ye that labor in any form or fashion; come to Jesus — to Jesus alone. And ye that are heavy laden; ye whose official duties are a burden; ye whose domestic cares are a burden; ye whose daily toils are a burden; ye whose shame and degradation are a burden, all ye that are heavy laden, come and welcome. If I attach no exclusive spiritual signification to these terms, it is because there is nothing in the chapter that would warrant such a restriction. Had Christ said, “Some of you that labor and are heavy laden may come,” I would have said “some” too. Howbeit he has not said “some,” but “all” that labor and are heavy laden.” It is wonderful how people twist this text about. They alter the sense by misquoting the words. They say, “Come ye that are weary and heavy laden.” After this manner some have even intended to define a character rather than to describe condition, so they shut out some of those who labor from the kind invitation. But let the passage stand in its own simplicity. Let any sinner here, who can say, “I labor,” though he cannot say spiritually labor, come on the bare warrant of the word as he finds it written here; he will not be disappointed of the mercy promised. Christ will not reject him. Himself hath said it, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” And any man that is heavy laden, even though it may not be a spiritual burden that oppresses him, yet if he comes heavy laden to Christ, he certainly shall find relief. That were a wonder without precedent or parallel, such as was never witnessed on earth throughout all the generations of men, that a soul should come to Jesus, be rebuffed, and told by him, “I never called you, I never meant you; you are not the character; you may not come.” Hear, O heaven! witness, O earth! such thing was never heard of. No, nor ever shall it be heard of in time or in eternity. That any sinner should come to the Savior by mistake is preposterous. That Jesus should say to him, “Go your way; I never called for you,” is incredible. How can ye thus libel the sinner’s friend? Come, ye needy — come, ye helpless — come, ye simple — come, ye penitent — come, ye impenitent — come, ye who are the very vilest of the vile. If you do but come, Jesus Christ will receive you, welcome you, rejoice over you, and

verify to you his thrice blessed promise, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Now to the tug of war. It shall be my main endeavor to press the invitation upon you, my good friends, by the arguments which the Savior used.

Kindly look at the text. Read the words for yourselves. Do you not see that the reason why you are solemnly bidden to come to Christ is because: —

I. HE IS THE APPOINTED MEDIATOR.

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” God, even the Father, your Creator, against whom you have transgressed, has appointed our Lord Jesus Christ to be the way of access for a sinner to himself. He is no amateur Savior. He has not thrust himself into the place officiously. He is officially delegated. In times of distress, every man is at liberty to do his best for the public welfare; but the officer commissioned by his Sovereign is armed with a supreme right to give counsel or to exercise command. Away there in Bengal, if there are any dying of famine, and I have rice, I may distribute it of my own will at my own charge. But the commissioner of the district has a special warranty which I do not possess; he has a function to discharge; it is his business, his vocation; he is authorised by the Government, and responsible to the Government to do it. So the Lord Jesus Christ has not only a deep compassion of heart for the necessities of men, but he has God’s authority to support him. The Father delivered all things into his hands, and appointed him to be a Savior. All that Christ teaches has this superlative sanction. He teaches you nothing of his own conjecture. “What I have heard of the Father,” he saith, “that reveal I unto you.” The gospel is not a scheme of his suggestion. He reveals it fresh from the heart of God. Remember that the promises Christ makes are not merely his surmises, but they are promises with the stamp of the court of heaven upon them. Their truth is guaranteed by God. It is not possible they should fail. Sooner might heaven and earth pass away than one word of his fall flat to the ground. Your Savior, O sinner — your only Savior — is one whose teachings, whose invitations, and whose promises have the seal royal of the King of kings upon them. What more do you want? Moreover, the Father has given all things into his hands in the sense of government. Christ is king everywhere. God has appointed Christ to be a mediatorial prince over all of us — I say over us all — not merely over those who accept his sovereignty, but even over the ungodly. He hath given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he has given him. It is of

no use your rebelling against Christ, and saying, “We will not have him” — the old cry, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” How read ye in the second Psalm “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. “Christ is supreme. You will have either to submit to his scepter willingly, or else to be broken by his iron rod like a potter’s vessel. Which shall it be? Thou must either bow or be broken; make your choice. You must bend or break. God help you wisely to resolve and gratefully relent. Has the Father appointed Christ to stand between him and his sinful creatures? Has he put the government upon his shoulders, and given him a name called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty, the everlasting King? Is he Emmanuel, God with us, in God’s stead? With what reverence are we bound to receive him!

Moreover, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of mercy and goodness, are laid up in Christ. You recollect when Pharaoh had corn to sell in Egypt, what reply he made to all who applied to him, “Go to Joseph.” It would have been no use saying, “Go to Joseph,” if Joseph had not the keys of the garner; but he had, and there was no garner that could be opened in Egypt unless Joseph lent the key. In like manner, all the garners of mercy are under the lock and key of Jesus Christ, “who openeth, and no man shutteth; who shutteth, and no man openeth.” When you require any bounty or benefit of God, you must repair to Jesus for it. The Father has put all power into his hands. He has committed the entire work of mercy to his Son, that through him as the appointed mediator, all blessings should be dispensed to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. “Now, sirs, do you want to be saved? I charge you to say whether you do or not; for if you care not for salvation, why should I labor among you? If you choose your own ruin, you need no counsel; you will make sure of it by your own neglect. But if you want salvation, Christ is the only authorized person in heaven and earth who can save you. “There is no other name, given among men whereby we must be saved.” The Father hath delivered all things into his keeping. He is the authorised Savior. “Come unto me, then, “all ye that labor and are heavy laden.” This argument is further developed by another consideration: Christ is: —

II. A WELL-FURNISHED MEDIATOR,

“All things are delivered unto me,” he said, “of my Father.” Sum up all that the sinner wants, and you will find him able to supply you with all. You want pardon; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want change of heart; it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You want righteousness in which you may be accepted; Christ has it. You want to be purged from the love of sin; Christ can do it. You want wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is all in Christ. You are afraid that if you start on the road to heaven, you cannot hold on. Persevering grace is in Christ. You think you will never be perfect; but perfection is in Christ, for all believers, being saints of God and servants of Christ, are complete in him. Between hell-gate and heaven-gate there is nothing a sinner can need that is not treasured up in his blessed person. “It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” He is “full of grace and truth.” Oh! sinner, I wish I could constrain you to feel as I do now, that had I never come to Christ before, I must come to him now, just now. Directly I understand that: —

*“Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find.”*

Why, then, should I not come? Is it because I want something before I come? Make the question your own. Where are you going to seek it? All things are delivered unto Christ. To whom should you go for ought you crave? Is there another who can aid you when Christ is in possession of all? Do you want a tender conscience? Come to Christ for it. Do you want to feel the guilt of your sin? Come to Christ to be made sensitive to its shame. Are you just what you ought not to be? Come to Christ to be made what you ought to be, for everything is in Christ. Is there any, thing that can be obtained elsewhere and brought to him? The invitation to you is founded upon the explanation that accompanies it. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father”; therefore, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The argument is so exclusive, that it only wants a willing mind to make it welcome. Only let God the Holy Spirit bless the word, and sinners will come to Christ, for unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Now note the next argument. Come to Christ, ye laboring ones, because: —

III. HE IS AN INCONCEIVABLY GREAT MEDIATOR.

Where do I get that? Why, from this — that no man knows him but the Father. So great is he, so good, so full of all manner of precious store for

needy sinners. No man knows him but the Father. He is too excellent for our puny understanding to estimate his worth. None but the infinite God can comprehend his value as a Savior. Has anyone here been saying, “Christ cannot save me; I am such a big sinner”? You don’t know him, my friend you don’t know him. You are measuring him according to your little insignificant notions. High as the heavens are above the earth so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. You don’t know him, sinner, and no one does know him but his Father. Why, some of us who have been saved by him, thought when we saw the blessed mystery of his substitutionary sacrifice, that we knew all about him; but we have found that he grows upon our view the nearer we approach, and the more we contemplate him. Some of you have now been Christians for thirty or forty years, and you know much more of him than you used to do; but you do not know him yet; your eyes are dazzled by his brightness; you do not know him. And the happy spirits before the throne who have been there, some of them, three or four thousand years, have hardly begun to spell the first letter of his name. He is too grand and too good for them to comprehend. I believe that it will be, the growing wonder in eternity to find out how precious a Christ, how powerful, how immutable — in a word, how divine a Christ he is. in whom we have trusted. Only the infinite can understand the infinite. “God only knows the love of God,” and only the Father understands the Son. Oh! I wish I had a week in which to talk on this, instead of a few minutes! You want a great Savior? Well, here he is. Nobody can depict him, or describe him, or even imagine him, except the infinite God himself. Come, then, poor sinner, sunken up to your neck in crime, black as hell — come unto him. Come, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and prove him to be your Savior. The fact that no one knows how great a Savior he is except his Father may encourage you. Now for another argument. Come to him because: —

IV. HE IS AN INFINITELY WISE MEDIATOR.

He is a mediator who understands both persons on whose behalf he mediates. He understands you. He has summed and reckoned you up, and he has made you out to be a heap sin and misery, and nothing else. The glory of it is that he understands God, whom you have offended, for it is written, “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son,” and he knows the Father. Oh! what a mercy that is to have one to go before God for me who knows him intimately. He knows his Father’s will; he knows his Father’s wrath. No man knows it but himself. He has suffered it. He

knows his Father's love. He alone can feel it — such love as God felt for sinners. He knows how his Father's wrath has been turned away by his precious blood; he knows the Father as a Judge whose anger no longer burns against those for whom the Atonement has been made. He knows the Father's heart. He knows the Father's secret purposes. He knows the Father's will is that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him shall have everlasting life. He knows the decrees of God, and yet he says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give, you rest." There is nothing in that contrary to the decrees of God; for Jesus knows what the decrees are, and he would not speak in contradiction to them. He knows God's requirements. Sinner, whatever it is God requires of you, Christ knows what they are, and he is ready to meet them. "The law is holy, and just, and good," and Jesus knows it, for the, law is in his heart. Justice is very stern, and Jesus knows it, for Jesus has felt the edge of the sword of justice, and knows all about it. He is fully equipped for the discharge of his mediatorial office, and those that put their trust in him shall find that he will bear them through. Often, when a prisoner at the bar has a barrister who understands his work, and is perfectly competent for the defense, his friends say to him, "Your case is safe, for if there is a man in England who can get you through, it is that man." But my Master is an advocate who never lost a case. He has a plea at the throne of God that never failed yet. Give him — oh! give him your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's grace. Poor sinner, he is so wise an advocate that you may well come to him, and he will give you rest. But I must not weary you, although there is a fullness of matter on which I might enlarge. With one other argument I conclude: —

V. HE IS AN INDISPENSABLE MEDIATOR.

The only mediator, so the text says. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." Christ knows the Father; no one else knows him, save the Son. There is none other that can approach unto God. It is Christ for your Savior, or no Savior at all. Salvation is in no other; and if you will not have Christ, neither can you have salvation. Observe how that is. It is certain that no man knows God except Christ. It is equally certain that no man can come, to God except by Christ. He says it peremptorily; "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Not less certain is it that no man can please the Father except through Christ, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." No faith is worth having except the grace that is founded and based upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and him only. Oh! then, souls, since you are

shut up to it by a blessed necessity, say at once, “I will to the gracious Prince approach, and take Jesus to be my all in all.” If I might hope you would do this early, I could go back to my home and retire to my bed, praising God for the work that was done, and the result that was achieved. Let us reiterate again and again the gospel we have to declare, the very essence of the gospel it is which we proclaim. Trust your souls with Jesus, and your souls are saved. He suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all that trust him. If you rely upon him by an act of simple faith, the simplest act in all the world, immediately you so rely you are forgiven, your transgressions are blotted out for his name’s sake. He stands in spirit among us at this good hour, and says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden”; and he gives you these arguments, which ought to convince you. I pray they may. He is an authorized Savior, and a well-furnished Savior. He is the friend of God, and the friend of man. God grant you may accept him, and find the boon which he alone can bestow. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ROMANS 8.

Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

“No condemnation”: that is the beginning of the chapter. No separation: that is the end of the chapter. And all between is full of grace and truth. What a banquet this chapter has often proved to the souls of God’s hungry servants! May it be so now as we read it. No condemnation even now. Many doubts, but no condemnation. Many chastisements, but no condemnation. Even frowns from the Father’s face apparently, but no condemnation. And this is not a bare statement, but an inference from powerful arguments. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This is where they are. “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This is how they behave themselves, not under the government of the old nature, but under the rule of the divine Spirit of God.

2-4. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of*

sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but niter the Spirit.

None keep the law so well as those who do not hope to be saved by it, but who, renouncing all confidence in their own works, and accepting the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus, are moved by gratitude to a height of consecration and a purity of obedience which mere legalism can never know. The child will obey better without desire of reward, than the slave will under the dread of the lash, or in hope of a wage. The most potent motive for holiness is free grace. A dying Savior is the death of sin. As we have been singing, we strove against its power until we learnt that Christ was the way, and then we conquered it.

5. For they that are alter the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are alter the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Everything according to its nature. Water will rise as high as its source, but it will not naturally flow any higher. The great thing, then, is to be brought under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, and of that new nature which is the offspring of the Spirit. Then we try to rise up to our source, and we rise vastly nigher than human nature ever can under any force that you can apply to it. The new nature can do what the old nature cannot do.

6. For to be carnally minded

To have the mind of the flesh.

6. Is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Flesh must die. Its tendency is to corruption; but the spirit never dies. Its tendency, its instinct, is growth, advance, immortality.

7. Because the careful mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The old nature is hopelessly bad. There is no mending it. It *is* enmity, not merely at enmity; but it is absolutely enmity. It is not subject to God's law, and you cannot make it so.

8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

So long as we are under the dominion of the old nature, the depraved and-fallen nature, there is no pleasing God.

9. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

Oh! this is a very wonderful fact, that the Spirit of God should dwell in us. I have often said to you that I never know which of two mysteries most to admire — God incarnate in Christ, or the Holy Spirit indwelling in man; they are two marvelous things, miracles of miracles.

9, 10. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And it Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

The regeneration of the body, so to speak, is not performed in this life; Resurrection is tantamount to that. The body is still under the old law of death, and so we have pain and weakness, and we die; but the spirit, oh! how it triumphs, even in the midst of pain and weakness. “The Spirit is life, because of righteousness.” That will not die.

11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

So there is coming a time for your body to experience the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. He does not say that he will give you a new body. Do not believe this modern doctrine. But he shall quicken your mortal body; that is to say, the same body, which is now subject to death, and so is mortal, is to be quickened at the resurrection.

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh*

What do we owe the old nature? Nothing, surely. Give it a decent burial. Let it be buried with Christ in baptism. Let the Spirit of God come and renew it. But we owe it nothing, and we are not debtors to it.

13, 14. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

Your “universal fatherhood” is rubbish. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” and none others. This is the essential to sonship — that we should have the Spirit of God within us.

15, 16. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

That is, when we have the Spirit, when we are renewed in the Spirit of our minds, when we come into the domain of Spirit, and quit the tyranny of the flesh. Then the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

17. *And if children, then heirs;*

It is not, of course, so in human families. All children are not heirs; but it is so in the family of God.

17. *Heirs of God,*

What a heritage! God himself becomes our heritage. We are heirs to all that God has, and all that God is.

17. *And joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

The whole chapter is rather too long for our reading, so we will pass on to the 28th verse.

28. *And we know*

This is not a matter of opinion. This is scarcely a matter of faith. "We know." We are sure of it. We have proved it.

25. *That all things work together for good to them that love God,*

They all work. They work in harmony. They work for one purpose. That purpose is for good.

28. *To them who are the called according to his purpose.*

That is their private character, which God knows, and which he reveals to them in course of time.

29. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.*

This is their character, which they perceive, which others may in a measure perceive. We are to be like him then, conformed to his image; and if we be joint-heirs with him, what a joy it is that we are to be partakers of his nature, made like to him! Christ will be reflected, and in a measure repeated, in all his people; and this shall be the very glory of heaven, that, look which way you will, you shall see either Christ himself or his likeness in his people. If you have ever stood in a room that was full of mirrors everywhere, how wonderfully your own likeness has been repeated! And heaven shall be a mirror chamber, wherein Christ shall be seen in every one of his people. He did predestinate them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

30. *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified?*

That glorification we cannot see as yet. It is in the excessive brightness of the future, just as his divine election is in the brightness of the past. These are the two columns on either shore; but the swinging bridge in between is this — calling and justification. These are joined in one, stud if thou hast either of these, thou mayest know thy predestination and thy future glorification

31. *What shall we then say to these things?*

Oh! have you not often said that? When you have studied the plan of grace, the covenant of God, have you not said to yourself, “What can I say to all this? It is passing wonder; It exceeds the power of comprehension, for the greatness of this glory. What shall we then say to these things?” Well, we will say something practical that shall cheer our hearts.

31-33. *If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*

It may be read, “God that justifieth?” and properly may be read as a question.

34. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,*

He is the Judge. Will he who died condemn?

34. *Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

He alone is Judge. Has he done all this, and will he condemn us?

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

These have been tried on the saints for ages.

36. *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

But has this divided them from Christ? Hear them all, as with united voice they answer.

37, 38. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded,*

Somebody asked, “Pray, what persuasion may you be?”

Well, this is my persuasion.

38. *That neither death, nor life, nor angels,*

Good or bad.

38. *Nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,*

Hard and grinding as they may be.

38. *Nor things to come.*

Unknown mysteries dreaded.

39. *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

JOY IN SALVATION

SERMON NO. 3503

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 30TH, 1871.

“I will rejoice in thy salvation.” — Psalm 9:4.

I DESIRE to continue the topic of the morning, only we will look at another side of the same important matter.

We spoke this morning, as you have not forgotten, upon these words, “Your own salvation.” I trust most of us — would God I could hope all of us — were earnest about our own personal salvation. To those who are earnest this second text will be the complement of the first. They desire that their own salvation shall be secure; it is their own salvation when they obtain it; but here is the guide as to what is the right salvation — what our own salvation ought to be. It is not our own in another sense; it is God’s. “I will rejoice in thy salvation.” While it becomes our own by an act of faith, it is not our own so that we can claim any merit or take any part of the glorying to ourselves. The only salvation that is worth being our own is that which is God’s. “I will rejoice in thy salvation.” Having this morning somewhat at length explained what salvation is, showing that it was not a mere deliverance from wrath to come, but from the present wrath of God, and yet more essentially from sin, from the power of evil within us, there is no need that we should go over that again, I trust; but we shall begin by noticing the speciality which is in the text, dwelling upon the divine salvation. “I will rejoice in thy salvation.” So, then, we look at once at: —

I. A DIVINE SALVATION.

The salvation we have already spoken of is God's, and it is God's salvation in many ways. It was his in the planning. None but himself could have planned it. In his infinite wisdom he devised it. The salvation which is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, in the gospel is every part of it in all its architecture the fruit of divine skill. We may say, "Or with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and who taught him knowledge?" In every part the divine hand may be seen; it is of God's planning and ordaining, or ever the earth was. So is it of God's providing. You have salvation wrapped up in the gift of the person of Jesus Christ. All of it lies in Christ. Because he died, our sin is put away. Because he lives, we shall live also. And Christ is the pure gift of God. All salvation is in him, and, therefore, all salvation is thus procured by God. It is God's salvation. And what is more, God not only plans and procures, but he also applies salvation. I believe in free agency, but I never yet met with a Christian man who was able to say that he came to Christ of his own free will without being drawn by the Spirit of God. Whatever our doctrinal view may be, the experimental fact is the same in every case. All believers will confess that they are God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus. "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." There is a want of power. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." There is a want of will, and the Spirit of God, therefore, applies the salvation which God has planned, and which God has provided. And as the first application of this salvation is of God, so is it all the way through. I do not believe, dear brethren, that our religion is like the action of a clock wound up at first by a superior hand, and then left to go alone. No! every day the Holy Ghost must continue to work upon us, and in us, to will and to do according to God's good pleasure. And if you and I should ever get right up to the gate of pearl, and should hear the songs of the blessed within that gate, we should not be able to take the last step, but should turn back to our sin and folly even, if he that began a good work in us should cease to carry it on. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. He makes the rough draft of it, in conviction, upon our conscience; he goes on to complete the picture; and if there be one touch in the picture that is not of God, it is a blot upon it. If there be anything of the flesh, it will have to be wiped out; it is not consistent with the work of God. Of God is it in all respects. Now we know that this salvation is of God, not only because we are told that he planned it, and provided it, and applies it, but because it has the marks of God upon it. There is a certain line of poetry; I know it is Shakespeare's.

Well, you know, I cannot quite tell you why, but yet I am sure no one ever wrote exactly in that way. I am reading the Psalms through, and I read and I say, "That is David's." I observe certain critics who say, "No, this belongs to the time of the captivity." I am certain it does not. And why? Because there is a Davidic ring about it, you know. The son, of Jesse, and he alone, could have said such things. Now in salvation there are the marks of divine authorship. I once saw a painting by Titan at Venice, and he had written, "*Fecit, fecit Titian.*" He claimed it twice over, as if to make sure that someone else should not claim it. And God has put it three times over that there should be no doubt whatever that salvation is of God, and he must have the glory of it. Now observe the marks of God — what I may call the broad arrow of the King — set on salvation. It is full of mercy. Here is salvation for the blackest of sinners — salvation for all manner of sin — forgiveness for all manner of sin — salvation so full of grace that only God could have conceived it. "Who is a pardoning God like thee?" But this salvation is equally congenial with justice, for God never absolutely forgives a sin. There is always punishment for sin in every case. Jesus Christ, the Substitute, comes in and satisfies Justice before the word is spoken to the sinner, "Thy transgression is blotted out." In the salvation which God has provided on the cross by the death of his dear Son there is as much justice as there is mercy; and there is an infinity of both. Now this is God-like. Man, if he brings out one quality, usually clouds another with it; but God exhibits his character in harmonious completeness — as merciful as if he were not just, and as just as if he were not gracious. In the gospel, on this account, five see also divine wisdom. Whatever some may say about the doctrine of substitution, Christ is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. The way, so simple, yet so sublime, by which God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth, exhibits the infinite wisdom of the Most High.

But I won't keep you by mentioning all the divine attributes. It is certain they all shine in the gospel, nor can any tell which of the letters best is writ — the power, the wisdom, or the grace. They are all there, proving the salvation to be of God.

And there is one other matter. True salvation is of God because it draws toward God. If thou hast God's salvation, thou art being drawn towards thy heavenly Father, nearer and nearer every day. The ungodly forget God; the awakened seek God; but the saved rejoice in God. Ask thyself this question, Couldst thou live without God? The ungodly man would be

happier without God than he is with. It would be the best piece of news in the newspaper to thousands, if we could publish it to-morrow, that God was dead. To ungodly men it would be like ringing the bells of universal Joy; they would run riot after their own will. And where would the believer be? He would be an orphan. His sun would be blotted out; his hopes would be dead and buried. Judge by this whether thou art saved. If thou art saved, thou art drawn to God, thou seekest to be like God, thou desirest to honor God. If there be none of these things in thee, then I charge thee see to it, for thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. God have mercy upon thee! I need not further say that the salvation is of God, and God must have all the glory of it. All on earth who are saved, and all in heaven who are saved, will ascribe their salvation entirely to the ever blessed God, and join with Jonah, who in the very depths of the sea made this, his confession of faith, "Salvation is of the Lord." But now, secondly, our text (having noticed the divine salvation in it) has: —

II. AN OUTSPOKEN AVOWAL.

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here is someone springing out from the common crowd and saying, "I have heard of God's salvation; I will rejoice in it! I will rejoice in it! Some despise it. They hear it, and they turn a deaf ear. When they have listened to it longest, they are most weary of it. But I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here is a distinguished character, who is made so, doubtless, by distinguishing grace. Oh! I hope there are many of us here who could stand up and say — if this were the time and place — "Let others say what they will, and count the cross a thing to mock at, and Jesus Christ to be forgotten, I am his servant; I will rejoice in his salvation." There are some that rest in another salvation. We all did so once. But he who speaks in the text throws aside self-righteousness as filthy rags. He puts it all aside, and says, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." If I were righteous, I would not say so. Had I a perfect holiness, I would not mention it in comparison with the righteousness of Christ; but being an unworthy sinner, without a single merit of my own, I will not be so foolish as to patch up a fictitious righteousness, but I will rejoice in thy salvation. You see them there! — those worshippers of the scarlet woman — they are resting in their priest! He puts on millinery, blue, pink, scarlet, white, and I know not what — all kinds of little toys to please fools with. And there be some that rejoice in that salvation that comes from an "infallible" sinner — that comes from a sham priest of God. But we are looking to

Christ, who stands before the eternal throne and pleads the merits of his own blood. We say: —

*“Let all the forms that men devise
Assault our faith with treacherous art,
We’ll Can them vanity and lies
And bind the gospel to our heart.”*

“I will rejoice in thy salvation.” There may be some tonight to whom I shall speak who are rejoicing in God’s salvation through his abundant grace who have very little else to rejoice in. You are very poor. Ah! how welcome you are to this house! How glad I am that you have come. I feel it always a joy that the people have the gospel preached to them. Well, you have no broad acres, you have no gold rings on your fingers; you come in the garb of toil. Never mind, my brother, lay hold on eternal life and say, “I will rejoice in thy salvation.” Perhaps you are sick to-night — your poor weak body could scarcely drag itself up to the assembly of God’s people. Well, well, it is a heavy thing to have to suffer so, but if you cannot rejoice in a hale body, yet rejoice in his salvation. Look to-night to Jesus; put your trust in him alone, and you will have a sufficient well-spring of joy, if you have nothing else. Possibly some of you who lay hold on Christ and rejoice in him will have hard times of it at home your father will mock at you, your mother will not sympathise with you; your workmates to-morrow, if they hear that you are converted, will laugh, and jest, and jeer at you. What say you? Are you a coward? Will you back out of it because it demands a sacrifice? Oh! if it be so, then you are indeed unworthy of the name, and you count yourself so; but if you are what you should be, you will say, “Let them; laugh at me as they will, and spit upon me as they please, I will rejoice in thy salvation.”

*“If on my face for thy dear name,
Shame and reproach may be;
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For thou’lt remember me.”*

It takes some pluck, but we ought to have it in the cause of Christ. Your mean, miserable wretches that will only go out to follow Christ in sunny weather, and get them gone again when a cloud darkens the sky, deserve well the wrath that comes upon them. They are like the Nautilus, very well on the placid sea, but the first billow that arises they furl their sails and drop into the deep, and are seen no more. Oh! beware, beware, beware of

a sunny-weather religion; beware of a religion that will not stand the fire; but be you such that, if all the world forsook Christ, you would say, "I will rejoice in his salvation"; and if you were turned out of doors, if you were turned out of the world itself, and thought not fit, to live, you would yet be content to have it so, if you might be numbered with the people of God, and be permitted to rejoice in his salvation. Does this, as I try to speak it, awaken a holy emotion in any soul here? Is there someone who has been a stranger to my Lord who to-night can say, "I desire to rejoice in his salvation"? I cannot forget, when I sat as a young lad under the gallery of a little place of worship, hearing the gospel simply preached — the blessed moment when I was led to resolve to follow Christ. I have never been ashamed of having done so. I have never had to regret it. He is a blessed Master. He has handled me roughly lately, but he is a blessed Master. I would follow at his heels if only like a dog, for it is better to be his dog than to be the devil's darling. He is a blessed Master. Let him say what he will, and do what he will. Oh! is there no young man here, no youth, no child, no girl; is there no gray-headed one who will say, "I will rejoice in thy salvation" O eternal Spirit, come and touch some heart, and make this, their spiritual birthright, that they may say, "I — I — I will rejoice in thy salvation."

But we must pass on, for time presses. We have, in the third place, to consider in the text: —

III. A DELIGHTFUL EMOTION.

We have noticed the divine salvation, and the outspoken avowal; now we will notice the delightful emotion. "I will rejoice in thy salvation." It is an unfortunate thing that Christianity gets associated with melancholy. I will not forbid the banns, for they are not very near of kin, but I wish they were further apart every day. It is a good thing for the melancholy to become a Christian; it is an unfortunate thing for the Christian to become melancholy. If there is any man in the world that has a right to have a bright, clear face and a flashing eye, it is the man whose sins are forgiven him, and who is saved with God's salvation. In order for any man, however, to rejoice in God's salvation, he must, first of all, know it. There must be an intelligent apprehension of what it is. Next, he must grasp it by an act of faith as his own. Then, having grasped it, he must study it to know the price at which it was bought, and all the qualities — the divine qualities that follow from it. Then he must hold it fast, and seek to get out the sweetness from it.

What is there in God's salvation that should make us rejoice? I do not know what to select, for it is all joy and all rejoicing. It is enough to make our heart to ring with joy to think that there should be a salvation at all for such poor souls as we are. We may well hang out all the streamers of our spirits, and strew the streets of our soul with flowers, for King Jesus has come to dwell there. Ring every bell; give him a glorious welcome. Let all the soul be glad when Jesus enters and brings salvation with him, for the salvation of Christ is so suitable that we may well rejoice in it. Dear brother, if you are saved, I know the salvation of Christ suited you. It did me — exactly — it was made on purpose for me. I am as sure of it as if there were no other sinner to be saved. It was the gospel that brought power to the weak, nay, it brought life to the dead; it brought everything to those that had nothing; it is just the sort of gospel for a penniless, bankrupt sinner like myself. We rejoice in the suitability of the gospel; we rejoice in the freeness of it. We have nothing to pay; we have no price to pay, neither of promise, nor of anything that was our own. Salvation was freely given to us in Christ Jesus. Let us rejoice in it, then. Oh! rejoice in the richness of that salvation. When the Lord pardoned our sins, he did not pardon half of them, and leave some of them on the book, but with one stroke of the pen he gave a full receipt for all our debts. When we went down into the fountain filled with blood, and washed, we did not come up half-clean, but there was no spot nor wrinkle upon us — we were white as driven snow. Glory be to God for such a rich salvation as this. And he did not in that day save us with a perhaps and a chance salvation that set us on a rock, and say, "Keep yourself there — you must depend upon yourselves", but this was the covenant he made with us, "A new heart also will I give thee, and a right spirit will I put within thee." It was a complete salvation, which would not permit a failure. The salvation, which is given to the soul that believes is on this wise, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." I believe the perseverance of the saints to be the very gem of the gospel. I could not hold the truth of Scripture if this could be disproved to me, for every page seems to have this upon it, if nothing else, that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." In this my soul rejoices, that I have a salvation to preach to you which, if you receive it, will effectually save you if your hearts are given to Christ, and will keep you, and preserve you, and bring you into the eternal kingdom of his glory. I will rejoice in the certain and abiding character of

that salvation. Oh! there is enough in the salvation of Christ to make heaven full of bliss; there is enough to make us full of praise. Let us take up the theme; let us talk by the way to one another about it; let us talk to sinners about it; let us recommend religion by our cheerfulness. Levity be far from us, but happiness let it be the happiest sphere in which we live if we have little else to rejoice in, we have enough here. Whatever may be our condition or prospects, we may still rejoice in God's salvation, and let us not fail to be filled with this most blissful emotion.

And now I must close. The text has in it a word of the future which we must not quite overlook. Here is a joyful gospel, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." You may read it if you like, "I shall" — "I shall" or "I will" — it would be quite right. The Hebrew has no present. It seems to have given up all tenses — like God himself who was, and is, and is to come. I shall rejoice in thy salvation. Now here is:

IV. A BLESSED PROSPECT. You may live to grow old; well, we shall never grow weary of Christ. If we are his people, we shall never have any cause to part from him; "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I could bring up to this platform an aged brother whom all of you would know, who has infirmities and has age creeping upon him, but there is not a happier soul in this house than he; and when I had made him speak to you, I could bring you many more aged women too, and I would ask them what they think of Christ, and I am sure they would say with greater emphasis than I can, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." I almost wish my grandfather were alive and behind me to-night, for on one occasion I preached with him in the pulpit, and when I came to speak of experience he pulled my coat-tail and came to the front, and said, "My grandson can tell you that he believes it, but I can tell you experimentally," and on the old gentleman went with it. Well, many an aged Christian can tell you he has rejoiced in God's salvation. He does rejoice, and, instead of age making the joy of his youth to become dim, it has mellowed and sweetened the fruit, which was sweet even at the first. Oh! that we may, when these hairs grow hoar with years, and the snows of many winters lie white upon our head, may we still rejoice in God's salvation. But then, whether we reach old age or not, there is one thing that is certain — we shall assuredly die, and when we come to die, what shall we do? I know what you are thinking of. You say, "I should groan." Ay, sinner, you are thinking of the friend that is wiping away the clammy sweat from the brow and those closed eyes. Now those may never occur. We often hear them mentioned in reference to dying beds, but they

are not so constantly there as to be, necessary. And if they were there' if we did lose sight itself before life fails — what then? Why, the vision of the Christ, who is our salvation, and in whom we rejoice, shall then be more gloriously clear and radiantly beautiful, because the sights and sounds of earth have vanished from us.

Now, instead of looking at these outward parts of dying, think of this, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." When I parted from our dear brother, Cook, a few days ago, he could not say much. He was very, very weak, but what he did say was just this, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is all." Well, I talked, and read, and prayed, and so on, and when we had done, he simply said, "The blood — the blood, the blood — that is all my hope." Why, he looked as calm in prospect of dying as any of you do in sitting here, and was as delighted with the hope of being where Jesus is as ever bride was at the coming of the marriage day. It was delightful to see the blessed calm and peace that was upon that man of God. And when I come to die, whoever I may be, however little my standing in the Church of God is, if I am in Christ, I will rejoice in his salvation; I will make the dark valley ring with his praises; I will make the river of death itself to roll back as the Red Sea did of old, with my triumphant songs; I will enter heaven with this upon my heart and upon my lip, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and power, and dominion, and glory for ever and ever!' And, brethren, if that is what we may do in dying, this is what we shall do for ever and ever, "I will rejoice in thy salvation." Millions of ages, throughout all the cycles of years that interpose ere Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and then onward, even through eternity, this always shall be our own ground of rejoicing, "I will rejoice in thy salvation."

Now I cannot come and stand at the door and speak to everyone as the congregation withdraws, but if it were possible I should like to stand there and shake the hand of everyone that has been in the house to-night, and say, "Well, friend, how fares it with you?" Can you say, 'I will rejoice in thy salvation?' If I cannot do that, I wish it were possible to speak in the silent shades of night to you when you awoke, so that you might hear a voice ringing in your ears, "Do you rejoice in God's salvation?" Perhaps some of you may have come a long distance across the sea. You may be by-and-by on shipboard again. It may be that you will be in peril, or it may be that afterwards you shall be in sickness. Well, may this evening's congregation in this day of July rise up before your minds, and if you forget

the preacher (and that will not matter), yet if you hear a voice that says, “Can you rejoice in God’s salvation?” I hope that, even if it is twenty years to come, it may then be as the voice of God to your soul, and bring you to the Savior. But better far would it be if you would come to him tonight and you may. May the Spirit of God bring you! Whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life. The whole of the gospel is wrapped up in Christ’s message, which he has sent by his apostles, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” To you each this — this — is the word, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” God add his own blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

1 THESSALONIANS 5.

Verses 1, 2. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*

The great point is that it comes — will certainly come, and it will come when it is least expected. There are certain signs given, by which the righteous shall know of its appearing, but all study of dates and fixing of the time is contrary to the very spirit of the Christian dispensation. We are to abide, always looking for it, believing it may come today, believing it may not come today — believing that the secret of the time is with God. Ye do err if ye say it shall be this or that season; ye equally err if ye say it shall not be then. Let it remain as it is, a secret in the heart of God, ye yourselves always girt, exiting it to come.

3. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

Sudden and acute shall be the terror of the ungodly when the Lord Jesus in flaming fire shall be manifested.

4. *But ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

You are brought out of darkness into his marvelous light. Your element is light. “Ye are all the children of light”; “ye are not in darkness that the day

should overtake you as a thief.” You know the signs, and, being watchful, you will observe them when the hour cometh.

5, 6. *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

It is the proper and fitting season for it. That the children of darkness should slumber is no wonder. They are the children of a sleepy time. Ye are the children of the day; if ye sleep, ye will be acting contrary to your nature.

7. *For they theft sleep, sleep in the night? and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.*

People were a little more decorous in the Apostle’s day than they are now, for there are some who are drunk in the any now-a-days, and though we have certainly improved in some things, we seem to have gone back in this. But, at any rate, drunkenness may seem suitable to benighted persons, but it is not suitable to those who profess to have the light of God’s grace.

8. *But let us, who are of the day, be sober; putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

We are of the day, but it is a day of battle. Put on armor, therefore. Be as soldiers that are covered with a panoply. Especially take care of your heart — put on the breastplate. Faith and love are the sacred protection for this. Take care that ye have both. Take care of your head — that also is a vital part; put on the helmet. Hope will do that. A good hope in Christ Jesus will guard you from many violent attacks that will be made upon your judgment.

9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

See there is no ordination to condemnation. Believing in Christ, we have the evidence that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the spirit and obedience, and sprinkling of blood.

10, 11. *Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

It is a good church of which we can say this, especially if we can say it of all the members that they edify one another. Living stones in a living temple should seek to build each other up. May we all try to have a sacred commerce in our knowledge, and other gifts as one trading with another. All may enrich and edify one another. “As also ye do.” Why did he tell them to do it, then, if they were doing it? Answer — that they might keep on doing it. The horse that runs best may still be the better for a spur.

12, 13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*

Consider them in your prayers; give them all the help you can; do not be strangers to their office, and to the burden which it brings. God has set them over you. Regard them in that light. Esteem them very highly, not as masters, as though they were lords, but as being over you.

“Esteem them highly in love for their works’ sake.”

13. *And be at peace among yourselves.*

There is an end to church prosperity when there is an end of peace.

14. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly,*

There are some that never will be ruled; their very idea of being a Christian is that they shall do just as they like. It is a somewhat happy circumstance that there are sects where they can do so. There are formed now-a-days thee little knots of people who will have no rule and church government, and who meet to edify one another. Though they speedily go to pieces, it is perhaps the better for the churches that they are quit of them.

14. *Comfort the feeble-minded,*

They want cheering. You needed it once; return the benefit you have received. Do not be out of patience with them for being so foolish. If their minds be feeble, you cannot expect much better from them.

14. *Support the weak,*

Give them something to cling to. As some climbing plants put out their tendrils and need to be helped up, so may you be a prop to these climbers.

14. *Be patient toward all men.*

Think of what patience God has with you. “Be patient toward all men.”

15. *See that none render evil for evil unto any man;*

Not in any case. The world advises you to pay a man in his own coin, but if he pays you bad coin, he is wrong, and if you pay him bad coin there will be two wrongs. Do not do so.

15, 16. *But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore.*

You have always something to rejoice in; make the world ring with Christian music.

17. *Pray without ceasing.*

Praise and prayer are fit companions. You will soon leave off rejoicing if you leave off praying. By ejaculations, keep up your prayers while at your books. You will not disturb your avocations by continuing still in supplication and prayer. That provender hinders no man’s journey.

18. *In every thing give thanks;*

Try to do so for everything, and if you cannot do it, in everything give thanks for something else — when you are in circumstances which do not excite your thankfulness just then.

18. *For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

God wills it. This moved the Crusaders to the war. Let this suffice to move you in thanksgiving.

19. *Quench not the spirit.*

Do not hinder his movements in yourself; do not try to hinder them in others. If any man hath a gift which he might use to edification, do not discourage him, but rather encourage him to get more grace. God may find him opportunities of making use of it. Quench not the Spirit.

20. *Despise not prophesyings.*

If they are vain and false, despise them if you will, but that prophecy especially which deals with the Word of God, for the Word here does not signify merely prophecies of the future — it is often used of regular preaching. Despise not anyone who speaks in God’s name. He may speak

with blunders of grammar — forget them; if he be correct in his teaching of divine truth, if he speaks to your heart, if he warns you, if he warns under the Spirit of God, never despise him.

21. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

That first sentence is got to be quite a proverb, but that last, I believe, is taken away, which is another instance of the common truth that half the truth is a lie. You must give it all or none. “Prove all things, is mischievous teaching, unless you “hold fast that which is good.” And, after all, in the very first sentence it is not so much “Prove *all* things,” as “*Prove* all things” — that is, take nothing on trust. Do not believe it because you are told so. Search the Scriptures; test what you have received, but when you have tested it, do not go about to be for over proving it. Hold it fast; grip it; grapple it to you as an ox to the stall. Hold fast that which is good.

22. *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

By which is not meant as some read it, “from everything that somebody likes to say looks like evil.” This would be to mar the Christian liberty. But wherever evil puts in an appearance, when it appears to be good, when it has been dressed out — for the word may refer to a Roman spectacle, or grand procession. Avoid evil even when dressed out in its best, when it comes on in all its gallant show to attract you. Avoid every species and kind of evil — that might almost be the translation — abstain from it altogether.

23. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In the Christian man there is a trinity. His nobler nature is that which he got when he was regenerated, and it is his spirit. His soul he has got, in common with other men. His body he has in common with animals. All, however, must be fully consecrated to God. I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.*

What a word of good cheer that is. Sanctification often seems to be a thing far off, but he will do it. He that called will perfect. The work which his wisdom began, the arm of his strength will complete.

His pro-praise is yea and amen. God never did forget yet.

25. *Brethren, pray for us.*

Because sometimes people think that those of high spiritual attainments do not need their prayers, Remember, if they have a higher position, they have greater dangers.

26. *Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.*

This was the token of friendship in the East. To attempt to import it to the West would be not only absurd, but wicked. I may properly read them, "Greet all the brethren with a hearty shake of the hand; keep up the outward form of fellowship, for if you don't you will soon forget the fellowship itself." The kiss was the Oriental custom; it was to be kept up. The shake of the hand is our Western custom. Let it be kept up. And I delight to see it when Christians meet, and cordially greet each other after the custom of their land.

27. *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren*

The Pope would charge you that it be read to nobody; but who is he? It seems that this Epistle was intended to be read by all the Church, and so also the whole Bible. It is said it is not safe to trust it with the brethren; it is not safe to trust them without it; it is not safe to keep back God's Word from any man. Let the whole Book be read, and I am sure the more read the better, especially if the last verso be true of every reader.

28. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

FOLLOWING CHRIST

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“And Ittai answered the king, and said, as the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.” —
2 Samuel 15:21.

SOME men have a very remarkable power of creating and sustaining friendship in others. David was a man brimming over with affection — a man, notwithstanding all his rough soldier-life, of an exceedingly tender heart — a man, I was about to say — the word was on my tongue — a man of vast humanity. I mean, there was a great deal of manhood about him. He was all that other men are, had suffered their sorrows, and had tasted their joys, and, there fore, I suppose it was that he had a large power of attraction about him, and brought others to himself.

But there is one Man more than man, whose attracting influence is greater than that of all men put together. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ we see gentleness, meekness, and tenderest affection, and we see the most hearty sympathy with everything that belongs to manhood. Such a vast heart has the Master, such boundless, disinterested affection, such human sympathy; so near is he to every one of us in his life, and in his experiences, that he attracts the sons of men to himself, and when he is lifted up he draws men unto him, and afterwards, by the cords of his love, he draws them unto himself. It is in the hope that some here may feel the sweet attractions of Christ that I have selected this text, anxiously praying that

some here may so give themselves to Christ's never to leave him: and that others who have already done may be confirmed in their solemn resolution that, in whatsoever place their Master, the Son of David, the King, shall be, there also will they be as his servants, whether in life or in death.

Now this resolution, if any here have formed it, and I know many have — this resolution that surely in what place the Lord Jesus shall be, whether in death or in life, even there will we, his servants, be, in the first place, is: —

I. A GOOD RESOLUTION — one which can be supported by abundant reasons.

Let me say, in opening out this assertion, that Jesus deserves of all who have really tasted of his grace such faithful service, such unswerving following in all cases and under all circumstances. Who else has ever done for us what Jesus has? Our mother brought us forth, but he has given to us a second birth. Our mother candled us upon her knee, but he has borne us all the days of old, and even to hoar hairs will he carry his people. We have had many kindnesses from friends, but never such love as Jesus showed when, we being his enemies, he yet redeemed us with his most precious blood. Think of these three words, and try to measure what they mean — Gethsemane — Gabbatha — Golgotha. Let those three words awaken your adoring memories. Gethsemane — with its garden and bloody sweat for you. Gabbatha — with its scourging, its mocking, its shame and spitting for you. Golgotha — with its cross and the five flowing wounds, and all the bitterness of the divine wrath, and the torment of death itself, for you. Men have been known to give away their lives cheerfully for some great military leader whose genius has commanded their admiration, but they were fools to throw their lives away, after all, for these men had done but little or nothing for them to make them their servants and slaves. But this Man, my brethren, if we had a thousand lives, and were to give them all, yet would deserve more of us, for he hath redeemed us from going down into the pit, saved us from flames that never shall be quenched, and from a pit that is darkness itself. By the eternal woe from which the blood of Christ hath uplifted us, let us, who believe that we have been redeemed from hell, consecrate ourselves for ever to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. His cross is despised; let us be despised with it, for he bore shame for us. His truth is counted a lie; let us be willing to be regarded as liars, for he had reproach cast on him. Sometimes to defend his cause has required the loss of all things; be it ours, if needs be, to lose all things for

him who gave up all — and what an all that was! — the bliss of heaven, and a life itself for us, that he might redeem our souls. The deserts of Jesus are such that it would need an angel's tongue to tell them out, even though it were but in brief catalogue. Look at him in what he is himself as his Father's darling. Look at his character; was there ever such another? Survey the beauties of his person — were there ever such charms commingled before? Think of his life, and of his death, and of what he is doing still before the throne, and surely you will feel that it is but right and just that, with Jesus, You should enter into the ship and, with him, sail the ocean over, be it rough or be it smooth.

Moreover, brethren, to keep close to Jesus Christ is right. It is in itself to keep close to integrity, for the Lord Jesus never stepped out of the right path. He never asks any of his followers to do anything which be a breach of the right, or which will make them turn aside from uprightness. If we could put our feet down exactly where his feet went down, even though we had to walk up to Calvary itself, it would be our duty so to do, for his path was perfect rectitude, and in him was no sin. We challenge heaven, with its omniscience, to detect a flaw in him. We challenge hell, with its malice, to discover in him an aught that is amiss. Lovers of the right and of the true, ask grace that you may be as he was. You cannot be more eminent for virtue than he. You cannot serve your God better. You cannot do better than keep close to every step that he has taken, and, whether in life or in death, to follow him. It is right, then, because he deserves it; it is right, again because in itself it is according to the eternal rules of equity.

And, my brethren, there is another argument why we should cleave to Jesus, and it is this — wherefore should we leave him? Can anybody suggest a reason why the lover of Christ should turn from him? Polyearp was asked that he should curse Christ, and he replied, "Wherefore should I curse him? "The, assembly in the amphitheatre could give no answer to that; all hell could never give a reply to that. What hath he done, what hath he done that we should leave him? What can he have done, and what is there that the world can offer that would ever repay us for leaving him? Could we so false, so traitorous prove as to turn away from Christ, what should we gain? A little pleasure, gone in a moment, like thorns that crackle beneath the pot. What should we lose, my brethren? We should lose the joy of life; we should lose our support in tribulation; we should lose our hope in death; we should lose heaven, to inherit nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever. I cannot conceive a bribe heavy enough to

weigh against him; I cannot imagine an honor bright enough to compare with him. I cannot conceive a disgrace that can be black enough to compare with the disgrace of deserting him. The silver mine of Demas is a poor reward for selling his Master. All the wealth of India, could it be poured into one's lap, were but a mockery of a soul that damned itself by casting away its confidence in Christ. To whom should we go, Master; to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. To leave Christ would be the meanest thing of which any could be capable. I suppose the devil himself, with all that he has ever done, has never been able to compass a wickedness that would equal the wickedness, if it were possible, of a truly gracious soul deliberately deserting Jesus for the world, for such a soul knows the hollowness of this world's joys; such a soul knows something of the sweetness of Jesus; such a spirit has been with him, and has learned of him, has had the enlightenments of his grace, has learned the faithfulness of his promise and the love of his heart. Oh! could such a thing be, could the Lord's grace so utterly leave a believer that he should turn out an apostate after all, there is need to dig another hell, as much lower than hell as hell is lower than the earth; there is need to kindle yet more furious flames; seven times hotter might the furnace be heated for such an apostate. Glory be to God, it shall not be.

*“Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins
The work which wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy never forsakes.”*

But I speak thus to let you see how reasonable how abundantly necessary it is that we should cling close to Christ in life and death, and that where he is there we should be. There is no need to reason further, as the time is brief, and so let us notice now, in the second place, that: —

II. THIS RESOLUTION, THOUGH GOOD IN ITSELF, SHOULD BE MADE WITH GREAT DELIBERATION, SINCE IT WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE TRIED.

Ah! young brother, you to-day can sing, as others did: —

“Tis done, the great transactions done”;

and you sang and felt a joy in singing that last verse: —

*“High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear”*

but do you know your weakness? If there were no temptation from without, you are fickle enough in yourself. Ah! we might sooner trust the wind or rely upon the glassy waves of the ocean than trust our own frail resolutions. We are changeable, we are false; our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Let him that putteth on his harness take care not to boast as him that putteth it off. There are dangers ahead and many trials. All is not gold that glitters. Firm resolutions are not always kept; yea, let me add they are never kept if they are made, in your own strength; they will go most surely, and you that promised to stand fast will soon turn aside.

But, in addition to our own fickleness, we must expect many things to try this resolution. There will be, with some of you, the jeers and sneers of those you work with. They will call you ill names. Perhaps they have began it already. Well, but you do not know what they can invent. The Christian soldier has a gauntlet to run. The Christian worker in many a large factory has to endure a lifelong martyrdom. Men will invent all sorts of gibes and jeers against a believer in Christ, and it is fine sport to pelt a Christian. Can ye cleave to your Lord, then? Oh! if you cannot, you do not know him, for he is worth ten thousand times ten thousand sneers, and you should count it a joy to be permitted to bear a scoff for him. Now are you in your measure partakers with the noble host of martyrs. You cannot in these softer days earn the ruby crown of martyrdom, but you have, at least, the trial of cruel mockings. Bear up manfully, and meet their mockery with your holy bravery and patient endurance.

And you will have, probably, a worse trial than that, and that is to see those who professed to go with you, as you thought, turn aside. Oh! to young Christians, this is very staggering. Those of us who are older feel this to be a very peculiar cross in church life, to be associated with those who are cold-hearted and dead while they profess to be Christians, who, after all, ere long betray their hypocrisy; but to young people it seems often almost staggering. If such a man is not a good man, who can be? Is there anything at all in religion if such a man, after all, should turn out to be a deceiver? Oh! but, dear brethren, if you love Christ, you will not turn aside because some of his friends have forsaken him, for a true friend sticks

closer then. Like this good man Ittai, that we are speaking of, you will say, “I never thrust myself on David before; I kept in the background, but now that this rascally Ahithopel has left him, I will go now and offer him my kind and affectionate greetings.” It ought always to make you who love Christ become bolder when these villains turn aside, for now you should say that it behoves every honest man to play the man and come to his friend. If these turn tail, then should the true-hearted lead the van for Christ and for his truth, and if it should even come to pass that a standard-bearer should desert his flag, spring forward, young man, and grasp it in the stead of him, but never because of that turn aside from your Lord.

Alas! brethren, you may expect, perhaps, to have sterner trials than these. If you resolve to cling to Jesus Christ with constancy, you must expect to have many trials. God loves to try his people that he may get glory out of their trials, and I am sorry to say I have known some who in the depths of poverty, when it has suddenly come upon them like an armed man, have felt as if religion itself could not support them, and they have actually given up their profession. It is poor Christianity that cannot bear the loss of all things. Now you may be poor yet, and you may be sore sick, but may you have such faith as that you may be able to say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” It is no gold if it will not stand the fire, and it is no grace if it will not bear affliction.

You may expect to have great depression of spirit within. Some of us know what this is very, very frequently. There are times when the joy of religion is gone, and our soul is in the dark, and yet is feeling after God, blessed be his name; but this is the pinch, to believe in an angry Christ, to hold to his hand and never let him go, though that hand should seem to pull itself away; to lodge with Christ when he gives you no supper; to go and sleep in Christ’s bed when he has not made it, but left it hard for you; to say, “With my desire have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit will I seek thee early.” May you have faith like that faith, that will not, under any difficulties, turn aside from Christ.

Thus you see, then, that this resolution will be a tried one, and between here and heaven God knows what trials will befall us. But again: —

III. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE CARRIED OUT.

What I have said might tempt you to declare that you would not try it, but it may be carried out. There are thousands, tens of thousands upon earth

who have been with Jesus wherever he has been throughout the whole of their lives, and will be with him in death, and after death; and there are millions — there they stand — wearing their white robes and waving their palms. Listen; you may almost hear their song. These are they that overcame; they endured unto the end; they came through great tribulation, and washed their robes in the Lamb's blood, and, therefore, are they before the throne of God. What was done, in them may be done in you.

But how was it, then, that they held on and kept close to their Lord? Answer — it was not in their own strength; it was the Holy Spirit, who day by day preserved them, led them in knowledge and true holiness, purged them from sin, and at last made them to enter upon the heritage of the perfect. There was not a single moment in which they persevered apart from the Spirit's strength. Poor human nature at its best must start aside like a broken bow. 'Tis only grace that holds a single Christian, and well and truly do we sing in that hymn: —

*“'Tis grace that's kept me till this day,
And will not let me go.”*

Now, subject to the power of the Holy Spirit, the way to accomplish our resolve to be with Christ as his servants for ever, is, first of all, to be much in prayer. If you cannot persevere with God, you are not likely to persevere in contest with man. More prayer, beloved, many of you want. As your temptations grow, let your prayers become more intense and full of fire, and conquer hell by assaulting heaven. You shall prevail against all temptations if you can prevail with God.

Remember, too, that joined to that prayer there must be much holy fear. “Happy is the man,” says Solomon, “that feareth always” — not the fear that is distrustful and suspicious of God, but the fear that is distrustful and more than suspicious of self; the fear that is conscious of inward weakness and depravity, that dares not into temptation go, but asks to have its eyes turned aside from beholding vanity, lest the look should lead to the desire, and the desire should engender the act.

With holy fear there must be much careful walking. He that would persevere to heaven must not hope to go there pell-mell helter-skelter, heedless, careless, thoughtless as to his daily life. There must be self-examination, self-inspection, watchfulness incessantly. An arrow may pierce thee between any joint of thy armor unless thou hold the shield of

faith to catch its barbed shaft, and quench its barbarous flame. God grant thee grace to walk carefully and humbly with thy God.

To persevere in grace we must seek to use all the means of grace that can assist us — not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; not neglecting either private or public prayer; using what grace we have if we expect to get more; doing what we can for God, as we expect him to do all for us; in fine, working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. If these things be in you and abound, they shall be the means of preserving you, and you shall be among the happy number that shall sing, “Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joys unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” And now, fourthly and lastly: —

IV. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED IN AN EMPHATIC SENSE.

Understand me, for here it is that I wish to appeal to believers in Christ. This man Ittai said, “Surely in what place that my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there also will thy servant be.” You can follow Christ in a general way in the activities of Christian life, and so on, but there is a peculiar way of following him. You can get, by God’s grace, very near your Master, and by still greater grace you can keep near to him, and keep near to him all your lives. I have never been able to hope for perfection in the flesh, but I believe that even Christian ought to strain after even perfection itself. I am afraid we have fixed the standard of what a Christian may be a deal too low; of what a Christian should be it would not be possible to fix the standard too high. It is not needful for a Christian to be sometimes with Christ, and sometimes to lose fellowship. It is not necessary for a Christian to be full of doubts and fears. I met an elderly Christian some years ago who is now in heaven, whose word certainly I could never dare to have doubted, who told me that by the space of forty years he had never had a doubt of his own acceptance in the Beloved, and though he had had many troubles and trials, he did not know that his communion with Christ had once been interrupted. I marvelled at him, but I marvelled a great deal more at myself that I had not tried to get into the same place. Why not? If you are straitened, it certainly is not in your God; you are straitened in your own bowels. He never gave you legitimate cause to doubt him, nor did he ever give you a reasonable excuse for forsaking fellowship with him. Let us, oh! let us aim at keeping as near to Jesus as

John did, and not, like Peter, follow afar off. Let it be the great prayer of our lives:

*“Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live.”*

Let us ask that our communion may be kept up in business hours as well as in the private closet, that we may walk with Christ on the Exchange and in the street, as well as in the Tabernacle, or in the public engagements of worship. Why need we leave him, Certainly he will not leave us. Oh! that we may cling to him closely, cling to him and hold him fast. I like the saying of a dying negro boy, who was asked why he felt so happy in the thought of going to heaven. and he said, “I want to go to heaven principally because Jesus is there.” “Well,” said they, “but do you always want to be with Jesus, then, and with nobody else?” “Yes,” said he, “I only care to be where Jesus is. “But suppose Jesus were to leave heaven?” Said he, “I would go with him.” “But suppose Jesus went to hell, what then?” “Ah!” said the boy, “but there could not be any hell where Jesus was; I would go with Jesus wherever he might go.” Oh! that we had that kind of spirit, and that desire ever more, not to be self-seeking, nor world-seeking, nor getting our joy out of common pleasures, nor hunting after comfort where it cannot be found in these low-land joys; but let us seek to be on the wing with our Master, up aloft, dwelling in the land of communion. where Jesus lets out his very heart to his people, and reveals himself to them as he cloth not unto the world. The Lord give to this church many of those favored men and women, whose communion shall be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Oh! it is the happiest, holiest, safest, richest. most useful kind of life. God grant it to you.

But oh! dear friends, there are some here to whom all this talk is nothing for they have never taken up the cross of King Jesus at all. Do you know it is very seldom I come into this pulpit, very seldom indeed, without my seeing here and there that mournful color which indicates that another person has departed this life? We are so numerous that there are two or three deaths every week, and sometimes five or six, and as I happen to know when each one is taken away I am continually reminded of the mortality of my congregation — never twice alike — never under any circumstances — always some here that will never be here again or were not here before; always some here who are just on the brink of the grave. Now I speak to you to-night who may, though you know it not, be on the

brink of the grave, and I shall ask you to put to yourselves this question, How will it fare with you when you pass into the spirit-world, and stand before your God, when you are not reckoned as a friend of Christ, but have to take your stand among his enemies? You would not wish to take that place even to-night. You are halting between two opinions; but, my dear friend, that halting of yours must come to an end very soon, or otherwise death will decide it, and where death finds you judgment will leave you, and hell will continue you. Oh! I pray you lay hold on eternal life, and this night cast in your lot with Christ. Oh! he is the brightest leader ever soldier had. He is the fairest Prince under whom anyone could serve. His cause is such as will ennoble you. To fight under his banner makes each private soldier into a prince, ennobles each one into a king. Before thou canst serve him, remember thou must be washed by him. There is a fountain filled with blood; if thou dost trust him, that blood will make thee white as snow. If thou dost trust him now, his Holy Spirit will give thee grace to enlist in his army, and to continue a faithful soldier until thou shalt lay down thy battle with thy life, and cease at once to fight and live, and enter into the victory for ever and ever. By the horror of Christ's defeated foes, among whom I would not have you numbered; by the glory of Christ's victorious friends, among whom I would fain see you muster, look unto Christ and live to-night, and may he help you to do so. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 106.

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD, O give thanks unto the LORD: for he is good tot his mercy endureth for ever.*

In this Psalm we have the history of God's people turned to practical account. I have heard of some very unwise persons, who have said. "I do not care about the histories of Scripture. I do not profit by them." Tell me, dear friends, what other Bible had David hut the history — the first five books? And what more wonderful teaching can there be than is contained in this Psalm. which is the essence of the history, "Praise ye the Lord" — or Hallelujah to Jah? Hallelujah is praise to God.

2-5. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can show forth all his praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth*

righteousness at all times. Remember me, O LORD. with the favor that thou hearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation: That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

If I may fare as God's people fared. I will be well content, and if God himself will come and bring me salvation. I shall have all that I want. Is that your thought now, dear hearer? Then utter the prayer, and may the Lord answer it while you are yet in your seat.

6. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

Three times is the confession of sin here made. It is a good beginning when we can begin with confessing sin. I wish that some people had begun there, when they took up with religion; but they too often jump into it, and I am afraid that they will jump out of it again. That harvest which does not come of ploughing is one which will never fill a barn, and that salvation which does not come from a sense of sin will never come to much.

7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;

They saw them; they were surprised by them; but they could not make them out, could not tell what God was at when he smote the Egyptians. A want of understanding of divine truth is a very fatal want.

7. They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;

What we do not understand we soon forget.

7. But provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

They had not been long out of Egypt; they had scarcely eaten the bread that they brought out of their ovens, but they began to doubt God. They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.

8. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

He could not save them for their own sake, but he saved them for his own name's sake.

9. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through depths, as through the wilderness.

The bottom of the sea was made as dry and as easy for their feet as the plains of the wilderness, and God led them through.

10-12. *And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words: they sang his praise.*

It is almost a sarcasm. They believed when they saw. When the promise was fulfilled, then they believed it. Ah! my dear hearers, are there not some of you of whom the same might be said — I mean some people of God? You believe as far as you can see; and that is not believing at all. Let us trust God, whether or no. Red Sea or no Red Sea, let us believe the praise of God, and make sure that it will be true.

Then believed they his words; they sung his praise.

13. *They soon forgot his works:*

They were in a hurry to forget.

13-15. *They waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.*

They had quails to eat. They had the food that they bogged for, but their hearts were starved; their souls were famished. Ah! me, what people they were!

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.*

They began to pick holes in their character. Good men that lived for them, and were ready to die for them — they began to spit upon them.

17-20. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burnt up the wicked, They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.*

See! they had been in Egypt. They had seen the Egyptians worship the god Apis in the form of a bull, so that they must needs have a bull too. I daresay that they said, “The bull is an emblem of strength. We do not

worship the image; the image is only used to help us to think of the power of God.” But God forbids us to worship him under any image of any sort. “Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, nor in the earth beneath. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.” All images, pictures, crucifixes — the whole (rut) of them are abhorrent and abominable to God. We must *have* nothing to do with them as helps to worship, for they are not helps. They are destroyers of the worship of God. But, you say to me, “You tell us that it was a bull.” Yes, and, in contempt, the man of God here calls it a calf. You cannot be too disrespectful to objects of idolatrous worship. They may be esteemed by others, but do not show any kind of respect to them yourself; but if there be a name that you can give them that is full of sarcasm, let them have it.

21-23. *They forgot God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*

They had found fault with Moses, yet Moses stood forward as intercessor, and through his pleading their lives were preserved. You see, again, what a sinful people they were. Ah! indeed they were! Look in this looking-glass and see yourself.

24, 25. *Yea. they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and harkened not unto the voice of the LORD.*

This murmuring in your tents is a very obnoxious thing to God. Always grumbling and complaining. “It is an Englishman’s privilege,” says one. Mind it does not turn out to be an Englishman’s ruin, for God cannot endure that we should be always murmuring at his providence.

26-28. *Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifice of the dead.*

They tried to practice necromancy — to have communion with spirits; they tried to learn the dark science and the black art; and this also God abhors.

29, 30. *Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was staged.*

In his hot zeal he ran the spear through two who were rebelling against God. He did it with all his might, and sometimes it is a kindness to a people to deal severely with them. Sin is not to be treated with white kid gloves. It has to be dealt with sometimes with a mailed hand. Phineas did this.

31, 32. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore. They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:*

Poor Moses who loved them, and lived with them, yet lost his temper.

33. *Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips*

What a people to have to do with! Who would wish to be Moses, and who would wish to be a minister?

34, 35. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning, whom the LORD commanded them. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.*

They did not keep themselves separate. They would go and join this lot and that lot. They mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

36-39. *And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.*

“What a dreadful people,” say you. These were God’s chosen people, Israel; the best people in the world at that time; and yet how could they be much worse? Oh! what a God of mercy God is to deal with such people at all!

40-43. *Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen: and they that hated them ruled over them. Their*

enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

Listen to this.

44, 45. *Nevertheless he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.*

You would have thought that he would have been provoked beyond endurance, but, after all he had smitten, he still had a tender heart towards them.

46-48. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.*

A MIRACLE OF GRACE

NO. 3505

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.”
— 2 Chronicles 33:9-13.

MANASSEH was born three years after his father's memorable sickness. You will remember that Hezekiah was stricken with a mortal disease, and Isaiah, the prophet, come to him and said, “Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.” He appears to have been startled and appalled at the tidings, and gave vent to his feelings with bitter tears. Evidently he was afraid at the time to face death. He had probably been indulging a worldly spirit; and besides this, it lay as a heavy burden upon his heart that he had no son whom he should leave as his successor in the kingdom. In deep distress of soul, accordingly, he turned to the wall and prayed to the Lord. With piteous weeping and earnest pleading he besought that his life might be spared. His prayer was heard, his tears were seen, and his petition was granted by God. His days were prolonged by fifteen years. In the third year of those fifteen years his son Manasseh was born to him. Had he known, methinks, what sort of a son would have risen

up in his stead, he might have been content to die, rather than to be the father of such a persecutor of God's people, and such a setter up of idolatry in the land. Alas! full often we know not what we, pray for. We may be covetous of an apparent boon which would prove to be a real curse both to ourselves and to thousands of others. You prayed, mother — yea, prayed fervently — for the life of that dear babe whom God was pleaded to take away from you. You cannot know what disposition the child would have shown, what temptations would have befallen it, or what consequences would have come of its life. Could some parents have read the history of their children from the day of their birth, they might rightly have wished that they had never been born. We had better leave such matters with God, and submit to his sovereign will. He knows better than we do, for he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Thank God, these affairs are not in our own hands. They are in far better and wiser keeping than ours.

Manasseh's mother was named Hephzi-bah, a beautiful name. I wonder whether Hezekiah gave her the name because she was his delight, or because his gratitude inspired it, as he was then himself delighting in his God. I can scarcely think that at such a time he would have chosen one who had not also chosen God; therefore, let us think of her as a godly woman. But in that case she could have had little enough delight in her son; and sometimes, I should think, when she saw him pursuing the people of God with the sword, and sinning with a high hand, she must have been ready to say, "Call me no more Hephzi-bah, but call me Marah, for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me." It is not always that the thing which makes us glad to-day will make us glad to-morrow likewise. Let children be accounted a heritage of the Lord. They are the joy of our hearts and the flowers of our homes. But what will they be to us when the gay, guileless, sportive days of their childhood have run out? Unless God sends his blessing with them, the increase of our families may be the sorrow of our lives. Evil passions and propensities develop themselves in our children with their growth, and if the grace of God does not subdue their sinful disposition, we may have to rue the day that they were born. Manasseh's name signified "forgetfulness." I hope his father did not forget his training, and leave him to those young courtiers who always hang about kings' palaces, and are pretty sure to instil into a young prince's mind more vanity than virtue, and bespeak his favor and patronage for the popular party. There was a superstitious section in those days, cultivating idolatry and

pouring contempt on the Evangelical brethren, whose cause his father, Hezekiah, had espoused so earnestly and defended all his days. That new religion, imported from among the heathen, had its meretricious attractions. Was there not a great deal to please the eye in its pageant, and much to charm the ear in its worship? The beautiful artistic work in the statuary of its idols, and the fine display of pomp in all the ceremonies — did not these appeal to a cultivated taste? The old-fashioned puritanical order of worshipping at one temple, where the service was bald, and where there was scarcely anything to be seen except by the priests themselves, was becoming effete. Would it not be better to go with the times, take up with Baalim and Ashtaroth, do homage to the sensuous proclivities of the common people, and make friendly alliances with nations holding other creeds? I should not wonder but they talked to the young man in that fashion, and he — oblivious of what God had done for his sire and forgetful that in the long history of the house of Judah the people had always been smitten when they turned aside to idols and that they only prospered when they clave to the living God fell into the snare, and sinned with a high hand.

I shall introduce him to you first as a loathsome monster of guilt; then, secondly, I shall show you how the hand of God followed him till he became a piteous spectacle of misery; after which — blessed be God! — we shall have to mount into a clearer atmosphere, when we point him out to you as he became afterwards, a miracle of grace; and in fine we shall have to admire him as a delightful picture of genuine repentance. We must begin by considering him as:

I. A LOATHSOME MONSTER OF GUILT.

I cannot imagine that any one of my hearers can have been so great a sinner as Manasseh. I shall not attempt to draw a parallel between him and anyone else. Still, I should not wonder if some of you may be led to draw some such parallel for yourselves. If you do so, I pray the Lord to give you such a sense of your own guilt as shall constrain you to seek pardon.

Deep was the crime, and daring was the impiety of Manasseh, in size that he undid all the good work of his pious father. What Hezekiah had painfully wrought at the web he began to unravel as fast as he could. That which the father built up for God the son pulled down; and that which the father had cast down because it was evil the son at once began to reconstruct. I must confess I have known sons do the like. Because, they

have hated their father's piety, as it has been a restraint upon their sin, they have vowed that if it ever came into their power to do as they liked, there should be a change in the household. As I passed a certain house this week a friend said to me, "Many a prayer-meeting has been held in that farmhouse. People used to come for miles round there to meet and pray." "Is that a thing of the past?" said I; "are no prayer meetings held there now?" "Oh! no," he replied; "the father died, and his reprobate son came into the property. A prayer meeting, indeed! No. He defied his mother to attempt such a thing; and after having stripped her, and stripped the little estate of all there was that was worth the having, he has gone away, and has not been heard of for many a year. As far as he could, he tore down everything that belonged to his father that reminded him of his God." Mr. Whitefield used to tell of a wicked son who said he would not live in the same house that his father had inhabited, for he said that every room in the house stunk of his father's religion, and he could not bear it. There are men who after such manner devise mischief. But ah! young man, you cannot sin in that atrocious way without incurring extraordinary guilt. It will be remembered that you sin against the light; it will be recollected at the last great day that you were prayed for — that you were instructed in the right way; nor will you sin so cheap as others — others, did I say? I means such as, when they transgress, only follow an evil example, and run in the path which their parents taught them. Oh! how I grieve over ungodly young men who treat their father's God with dishonor and despite.

Manasseh's sin was aggravated by the fact that he chose to follow the very worst examples. Though he had in his father one of the best patterns of purity, that would not do, but he must cast about him to see whom he could imitate. Upon whom think ye, did he light? Why, upon Ahab — the Ahab Of whom God had said that he would cut off every one of his house, and not leave one remaining; a threat which had been executed, for the blood of Ahab had been licked by dogs in the field of Naboth, and Jezebel, his wife, had been devoured of dogs. Yet this young man must needs choose Ahab to be his pattern, so he set up Baalim, even as Ahab had done of old. The like folly I have known to be committed by young men in these days. It may be there are those here who have not found anybody that they could imitate, until at last they sought out some licentious individual, perhaps, of years gone by, whom they have elected to be their leader. Why, half the youth of England used, at one time, to be infatuated with Lord Byron. The glare of his genius blinded them as to the terrible hue of his

character and the atrocity of his conduct, so they followed headlong in his track, because, forsooth, he was a great man and a poet. Affecting wit, they bid defiance to pure morals. Alas! for the men whose sentiments, whose language, and whose actions betray the hardihood and the daring of vicious characters they are prone to emulate! Though they know better, they deliberately choose the worst models that they can copy from. What extravagance man will perpetrate in sin!

But this Manasseh sought out for himself unusual and outlandish sins. Bad as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the host of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship, and this man must needs import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new. He set up the image Ashra, which you may, perhaps, have seen on the slabs that have been brought from Nineveh: a tree bearing souls, intended to represent all the host of heaven. He carved this in the house of God, and set it up for worship. We read in the prophets that the people used to stand in front of the temple and bow before the rising sun, worshipping the hosts of heaven. He was not satisfied with common sin. We have known sinners of this class; they are not content merely to sin as others do; they are ambitious to invent some fresh sin. Like Tiberius, who offered a prize if somebody would find him out a new pleasure, they want to discover a new species of impiety, which shall draw attention to themselves. They must be singular in whatever they attempt; even if it comes to being singularly wicked. Such was Manasseh. He could not be satisfied to run in the race with others, and mingle with the ill-fashion of his times; swiftly as they would fly, he must distance them all.

Beyond this, he insulted God to his face. Here, perhaps, his sin culminates. It was not enough to build idol temples for idol worship, but he must needs set up the idols and their altars in the Temple of Jehovah. Such arrogance, as we think of it, makes our blood chill. And ah! one trembles to tell it, not a few men have thus invoked upon their bodies and their souls the curse of the Almighty. So desperately have they been set on transgression, that they have lifted their hand and defied their Maker. Had he not been God — the God of all patience — he would have resented their defiance, and have suddenly smitten them down to hell; but being God, and not man, he has borne with them. He is too great to be stirred by their insults. He has put it by, and let it lie still, winking alike at their ignorance and their assumption. for a while, until their iniquity shall be full; and then, in his justice, will he visit it upon their head. There are not a few in our great city who continually do all that they can to provoke God, and to show how little

they reverence him how utterly they ignore his claims on their homage. They will go out of their way to introduce blasphemies into their common conversation, and to express their disgust and contempt for everything chaste and comely, sacred and godly. Such was Manasseh. He set up the altars of the false gods in the house of the living God.

Is not his character black enough? Nay, we have not laid on the thickest touches yet. We are told he made his children to pass through the fire; that is to say, he passed them between the red-hot arms of Moloch, that they might belong for ever as long as they lived, to that fiendish deity. If we do not aver that men do this now-a-days, they fall little short of the same cruelty and crime. Many a man teaches his child to drink arduous spirits; trains him to habits which he knows will lead him to drunkenness; does his utmost to pass the child through the red-hot arms of the spirit-fiend, Else Moloch of the present time. Many a man has taught his child to blaspheme. If he has not deliberately purposed it, he has actually effected it, fully conscious that he was so doing. What was his example but a deliberate lesson? Ay; there are people who seem to take delight in the sins of their children, Laughing at the iniquities they have instructed their own sons to perpetrate. Do I address a father who, for many years, has never attended a place of worship on the Sabbath — who has often gone home reeling drunk, and, though somewhat reformed himself, sees his own son plunging into every vice that he was himself once habituated to? Let me ask you, Do you wonder at it? Do you wonder at it? You have passed your children through the flames; what marvel that they were singed, and that the smell of fire is upon them? Oh! it is a crying sin that men will not only go to hell themselves, but they must needs drag their children with them. Many a man has not been satisfied to be ruined but he must ruin some young woman who, perhaps, once had religious convictions. He becomes her husband, and forbids her to attend the house of God. As for his children, they may, perhaps, be sent to the Sunday School to get them out of the way in the afternoon, yet any good they might learn there is soon dissipated by the scenes and sounds they witness and hear under the roof of their home. Why, multitudes in this city — we know it, and they must know it themselves — are ruining their children, deliberately compassing their perdition. Is this a small sin, an insignificant mistake in their training? I trow not.

Moreover, Manasseh proceeded further, for he made a league with devils. There were, in his day, certain persons who professed to talk with departed

spirits, supposing that the devil had the means of communicating with them about things to come. Now, whether this fellowship with familiar spirits is a delusion and a lie, as I suspect it is, or whether there may be a mystery of Satan involved in it, I do not know; but certain it was that Manasseh tried to get as near the devil as he could. If he could get him to be his friend he was well content to make a covenant with hell, so that it might answer his purposes. Let him have good luck; little did he care for God. He would consult a wizard. Superstition led him to that, but the good Word of God he utterly despised. And there are some that have done this — some here, perhaps. I will not suppose they have lent themselves to those silly superstitions, or resorted to those deceitful or deceived mediums who perform in the dark. I should think, in these modern times of popular education, anyone is fit to be confined in a lunatic asylum who is beguiled by that snare. Intelligence should protect you from imposture. But there be those who, if the devil would help them, would be glad enough to shake hands with him, and say, “Hail, fellow; well met!” If they do not entertain the devil, it is no fault of theirs. They have set the table for him, and furnished the house, and made themselves quite ready for any evil spirit that chooses to come to them. Oh! what iniquity this is! They will not have God; they will have Satan. They cast off the great Father in heaven, but the archenemy of souls — with him they make a covenant, and contract a league. Could sin go much farther shall this? It could, and it did; for this man led the whole nation astray. Being a king, he had great power, and he used his authority and exerted his influence to induce his subjects to follow his pernicious course. I often wonder what will be the horror of a man that has lived in gross sin when, in the next world, he meets those that he betrayed and seduced into iniquity, when he begins to see, in the murky gloom of that intolerable pit, a pair of eyes which somehow or other seem to hold him fixed and fast. He recognises them; he has seen them somewhere before, and those eyes flash fire into the soul as though they would utterly consume him, and a voice says, “A thousand curses on thee! Thou art he that led me first into sin—enticed me from a virtuous home, and from godly associations, to become thy partner in iniquity. A blast be on thee evermore!” What company they have to keep in that place of torment! How they will gnash their teeth at one another in dreadful rage, each one charging the other with being his destroyer! Oh! there is remorse enough in store for a man who ruins himself, but who can tell the pangs that shall scourge his soul who betrays his fellow-creatures, and precipitates them into everlasting ruin? Verily, dear friends, we stand aghast at the picture of

such a man as Manasseh, he set no bounds to his sin. He sinned with both hands greedily, and when the messengers came from God to tell him of it, he was angry with them. Tradition says that he sawed the prophet Isaiah in halves for daring to reprove him. But it is not from tradition, but from revelation, we learn that he made Jerusalem to swim with blood from one end to the other, putting to death all those that would not go in his ways and follow his devices. Persecution of the saints of God is a scarlet sin, that calls aloud to heaven for vengeance. Manasseh was guilty of this, among other crimes. I am sick at heart, and my tongue is weary of the story. Let me turn to another branch of the narrative. This terrible monster of iniquity presently became: —

II. A SINGULAR SPECTACLE OF MISERY.

A few words will suffice to describe it. The Assyrian king sent his captain, one Tartan, who besieged the city till it was devastated, and the king fled. It would appear that he hid himself in a thorn brake, and was dragged out from it, and fettered and manacled with heavy irons. There remains a representation at the present time of some Jewish king — we cannot be sure it was Manasseh — who was dragged before the King of Babylon. At any rate, it represents what was done to Manasseh, whether the like treatment befell any other Jewish king or not. He has two rings — a ring on each ankle, and a heavy bolt between them, and his hands are fastened in the same manner. He is brought before the king at Babylon. There he seems to have been cast into prison, and kept in confinement. The cruelties of the Assyrian monarchs are attested by the memorials upon their own palace walls; therefore, I can fully credit the story told; by Jerome, that this Manasseh was himself put into a brazen vessel, and subjected to the most intense heat, the Assyrian king abusing him for having passed his own child through the fire in the same manner. That he was kept for many a long month in a dark and dreary dungeon, with only sufficient bread and vinegar given him to sustain his life, appears certain. He must have been wretched to the last degree: his crown gone, his kingdom devastated, his subjects put to unheard — of miseries, We are told that the judgment which God executed upon the land was such that it made the both ears of him that heard of it to tingle. The king must, therefore, have experienced some indescribable afflictions from the hands of the tyrant of Assyria. Ah! sinner, though thou harden thyself in thy transgressions, thou wilt not go unpunished. A bitter end awaits thee. Reckless as thou art, young man, thy father's God will not always be mocked. You have persecuted your wife

and your friend, but their unhappiness will return ere long to your own bosom. There will come an end to your arrogance, and a beginning to your recompenses. Oh! I wish your iniquity would come to an end soon, and that it might end with your conversion. If it does not come to that end, your outlook is gloomy indeed, for your total destruction will complete the course you are running.

Perhaps I am addressing somebody who has been living in heartless sin until he has become entangled in helpless misery. In this crowd you seem as if you were pointed out, for your heart is ready to break with anguish. Your property is lost, your health is broken up, your character is blasted; you are a mere wreck, a waif, a stray upon the dark sea. There is none to have compassion upon you. You are a castaway. Even your old companions have forsaken you. The devil himself seems to have cast you adrift. You are abandoned, and you might cry out and sound your own death knell. "Lost! lost! lost!" Well, now, I have a message from God to you. I am come to speak to you, in the name of the Lord, about this man Manasseh, in the hope that it may be also concerning yourself true — that after having been a prodigy of sin, and a spectacle of misery, you may now become as, in the third place, Manasseh became: —

III. A MONUMENT OF GRACE.

Oh! I do not wonder at Manasseh's sin one half so much as I wonder at God's mercy. There was the man in the prison. He had never thought of his God except to despise his prerogative, and offend against his laws, till he was immured in that dungeon. Then his pride began to break; his haughty spirit had to yield at last. "Who is Jehovah, that I should serve him?" he had often said. But now he is in Jehovah's hand. Lying there half-starved in the prison, a crushed man, he begins to cry, "Jehovah, what a fool I have been! I have stood out against thee until at length thy sovereign power has arrested me. and thy infinite justice has begun to avenge my crimes. What shall I do? Where shall I hide from thy wrath? How can I escape? Is it possible to obtain thy pardon?" He began to humble himself; God's Spirit came and humbled him more and more; he saw how foolish he had been, how wicked his character, how cruel his conduct, how abominable. Thus he spent his days and nights, in weeping and in lamentation. It was not the prison he cared so much about. His soul had gone into iron bondage. Then it suddenly flashed across his mind that perhaps God might have mercy on him, so he began to pray. Oh! what a trembling prayer that first prayer was.

Methinks Satan said to him, "It is no use your praying, Manasseh. Why, you have defied the living God to his face. He will tell you to go to the idol gods you have served, repair to the images you have set up, and bow before the hosts of heaven you have been wont to worship, and see what they can for you." Nay; but in this awful despair he felt he must pray; and surely the first prayer he breathed must have been, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And in his deep abasement, he continued still to pray and plead with God. And that dear Father of ours who is in heaven heard him. If ever you can bring him a praying heart, he will bring you a forgiving message. As soon as he saw his poor child broken down, and confessing his wrong, he took pity on him, heard, and answered him, and blotted out his sins like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. I think I see Manasseh, with his morsel to eat, never enough to stay his hunger, and his little drops of vinegar, saying to himself, "Ah! I don't deserve this!" He would thank God even for that starving allowance in the depths of his cell, feeling that it was mercy that let him live. "Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" And so it came to pass that he was delivered.

The King of Assyria, for State reasons which I need not mention, determined to put this king on his throne again. He thought that he had broken him down, and humbled him enough; that he would make a good viceroy and a faithful lieutenant, and that he would be afraid to rebel again, so one bright day he opened wide Manasseh's dungeon, and told him he was going to send him back to Jerusalem. And when he told him that, then Manasseh knew that Jehovah, he was God. This conclusion was forced upon him by the mercy he obtained. "Who," he would say, "but the Most High God could have brought me out of this horrible pit, have released me from the power of this tyrant king, or moved his heart to relent, and have compassion on me?" As he rode back to Jerusalem, how his heart would be breaking with gratitude! I think I see him when he first got within sight of the walls of that temple which he had so recklessly profaned. Surely he threw himself upon his face, and wept sore, and then arose and blessed the name of the Lord that had forgiven all his trespasses. And when he entered Jerusalem, and the people gathered round him, what must the greetings have been? Where are those courtiers that had been his companions, that led him into sin? Do they come whining round him? What a rebuff they will get! How will he exclaim, "Get you gone. I am another man. I do not want your company or your counsel." Are there any of those poor people standing in the background — the people that used to meet to pray and

worship Jehovah, faithful among the faithless found — such as had been wont to hide away their Bibles because they were hunted and harried from one retreat to another — a small remnant, that had escaped the fangs of the persecutors — did they came forward? How he could look at them, and say, “Ah! you servants of Jehovah, you are my brethren. Give me your hands; for I, too, have found from heaven, and I am, like you, a child of God.” I warrant you there was singing in Jerusalem that night amongst the feeble band of the steadfast believers; and there must have been music in heaven too, for the fiery angels must have rejoiced in a conversion that seemed so unlikely, so incredible.

“What, Manasseh saved? Manasseh — that bloodhound — is he transformed, by the renewing of his mind, into a lamb of God’s flock? What he, the red-handed persecutor — has he become a professor of the faith he once destroyed?” Ah! yes. Well might Bishop Hall say, “Who can complain that the way of heaven is blocked against him, when he sees such a sinner enter? Say the worst against thyself, O clamorous soul! Here is one that murdered men, defied God, and worshipped devils, yet he finds the way to repentance. If thou be vile as he, know that it is not thy sin, but thy impenitence, that bars heaven against thee. Who can now despair of thy mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted?” I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash bridge, near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight should break it down, although hundreds of tons weight were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear any man say, “I have committed so much sin, that God cannot pardon it,” I think his folly is far greater. Look at this huge train that went over that bridge. Behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the bridge, and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded teem of wills which is rolling over it. Ah! no, it bears up, and so would it bear the weight if all the, Sins that men have done should roll across its arches. Christ is “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” I do not know where to cast my eyes for the person to whom this message is directed. That he is somewhere in this assembly I entertain no doubt. So I speak to some sister who, in an unguarded hour, left the path of virtue, and since then has pursued a course of shame? I pray you accept the message. I deliver it to you. The greatest sin, the utmost guilt, the most incredible iniquity, the

most abominable transgressions, can be forgiven, and shall be blotted out. The Redeemer lives; the sacrifice has been offered; the covenant is sealed. Turn now to the Lord with purpose of heart. Confess the sins. Abjure thyself. Trust in the infinite mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, his Son. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Our closing reflection is that Manasseh became: —

IV. A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

At once he ceased to do evil. He went straightway to the temple and pulled down the idols. How I would like to have been with him, and have had a hand in demolishing them. Down went the images; then over went the altars; every stone was dragged right out of the city, and flung away. God grant that every image in England may yet be pulled down, battered to pieces, and the small dust thereof flung into the common sewers. May that which is an utter abomination before heaven stir a righteous indignation on earth. Oh! that our land may be so godly that no respect for fine arts may suffer her to tolerate foul impieties! Manasseh made haste to undo the mischief he had done. This is what every converted man tries to do. All the evil he has ever caused he tries to stay; he takes vengeance on his former devices; against them he lifts both his hands, raises his voice, and exerts his influence.

Nor did this suffice; Manasseh began forthwith to do good. Right speedily he began to repair the altar of the Lord, and to restore the services of God and the ordinances of the Temple to their original purity, according to the divine statutes. So when a man is truly converted, he will be anxious to join himself to the Lord's people, and support the institutions of his house. Nor did Manasseh smother his gratitude, but he presented thank-offerings to God. He was not unmindful of the devout acknowledgments that were due for the great mercy he had received. Like that other great sinner, whose gratitude is recorded in the gospel — the woman who brought an alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and brake it — like her, methinks, he loved much because he had had much forgiven.

And, then, being established in his kingdom, he proceeded to use his high influence for holy purposes. He ruled his subjects in the fear of the Lord; and made the law of his God to be the law of the land, renouncing all strange gods, and adhering rigidly to the book by inspiration given. Oh!

that God would incline the heart of some penitent sinner here at once to bring forth this fruit of conversion! What a change there would be in his house! What a difference his family would see! What an altered man he would appear in his daily avocation, whether he be employer or employed! He would be seeking the conversion of those whom he formerly led astray. Those he once scoffed at, and called by evil names, would become his choicest companions. “Can God do this?”, says one. Oh! my dear hearers, the God that can forgive great sin can also change hard hearts. Cry to him. If you are unsaved, may his Spirit lead you to seek salvation now. Stay not for to-morrow’s sun. If you are saved yourself, may that blessed Spirit lead you to pray for others, and seek their present and eternal welfare. Watch unto prayer. Let your own faith in God stimulate you to believe that all things are possible. Never give them up, never give them up. Are you a mother — you do not know how prevalent your intercessions may prove. I wonder whether poor Hephzi-bah was alive when Manasseh was converted? She had grieved over him, doubtless, in his young days. Well, if she did not live to see the fruit of her prayers, yet her prayers lived, and her tears were repaid with rich interest. There is many a mother’s son whose heart will be turned to God long after his mother’s bones have been laid in the churchyard. The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it. Thy son will yet be brought to glory through thy prayers. Pray on, brethren and sisters, pray on for those whose sins and sorrows lay heavily on your heart. Pray on, and God will hear you. O poor sinners, the mercy of God is the antidote for man’s despair. Believe in his mercy. Look for his mercy. Cast yourselves upon his mercy, and you shall find his mercy unto everlasting life. God grant it for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

MARK 10:46-52

Let us listen to the record of one of our Lord’s most striking miracles.

Verses 46, 47. *And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

If he could not see, he could hear, and he made good use of his hearing. If thou hast not every spiritual ability, yet, soul, dost thou use such ability as thou hast? Thou canst hear the gospel. Then search into the Word, and labor to understand it. Art thou doing that? Alas! men talk of what they cannot do, but they are not doing what they can.

48. *And many charged him that he should hold his peace:*

“Hush! Be quiet! Do not disturb him! Hear what an eloquent sermon he is delivering.” Ay, but he thought of his Door blind eye, and of the only hope he now had before him of having them opened.

48, 49. *But he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee*

How soon they changed their hotel The very persons that would have kept him back now help him on. Ah! when Christ speaks to his people, if they have been indifferent about the good of men, they also grow warm in heart, and they are ready to help and take interest in the case.

50. *And he, castings array his garment,*

Throwing off his old beggar’s cloak.

50, 51. *Rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus angered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.*

He knew what he wanted, which is more than some people do. It is better, however, to know what is wanted by the soul — even the salvation of God.

52. *And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.*

Christ’s cures do not take many minutes. When he comes to save, he saves men at once. He says, “Light be,” and there is light.

WHAT SELF DESERVES

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*“Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities,
and for your abominations.” — Ezekiel 36:31.*

IT HAS been the supposition of those who know not by experience that if a man be persuaded that he is pardoned, and that he is a child of God, he will necessarily become proud of the distinction which God has conferred upon him. Especially if he be a believer in predestination, when he finds that he is one of God's chosen, it is supposed that the necessary consequence will be that he will be exceedingly puffed up, and think very highly of himself. This however, is but theory; the fact lies quite another way; for if a man be truly subjected to the work of grace in the heart, and if he be then brought to trust in Jesus, and to see his sin put away by the great sacrifice, instead of being lifted up, he will be exceedingly cast down in his own sight, and as he goes on to perceive the singular mercy and peculiar privileges which God's grace has bestowed upon him, instead of being exalted, he will sink lower and lower in his own esteem, until, when he shall make a full discovery of divine love, he will become nothing, and Christ will be all in all. Mercy never makes us proud. As mercy is given to the humble, it has a humbling effect. Wherever it comes, it makes a man lie low before the throne of the heavenly grace, and leads him to ascribe all honor and glory to the God from whom the mercy comes.

It appears from our text that when Israel shall be forgiven her long years of departure from God, one of the effects of the mercy will be that she will

loathe herself, and that same effect has already been produced in some of us, to whom God's abounding mercy has come. In fact, in every man here who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, there has been one uniform experience upon this matter — we have been led to loathe ourselves in our own sight for all the sin we have done before the Lord our God. I shall try to go into this matter, trusting to be rightly guided to say fitting and useful words at this time.

First, my brethren, what is it that we have come to loathe in ourselves?; secondly, why do we loathe it?; and thirdly, what is the necessary result in us, or should be, of this self-loathing? First, then: —

I. WHAT IS IT THAT THE PARDONED SINNER LOATHES?

You will perceive that he is a pardoned sinner. The verse is inserted here in a position where it plainly belongs to those whom God has renewed in heart, whose sins are forgiven, who are fully justified and accepted. It is consistent with the full enjoyment of salvation to loathe yourself. This is the strange paradox of the Christian faith. He who justifies himself is condemned, he who condemns himself is justified. He who magnifies himself, God breaks down and casts in pieces; he who throws, himself prostrate before the throne of God's justice, he it is that God lifteth up in due time. What is it, then, that we loathe in ourselves to-day?

Our reply is, first of all, we loathe every act of our past sin. Look back, ye that have been brought to Jesus; look back upon the past. Your lives have differed. Some here have, by God's mercy, been kept from gross outward sin before their conversion; others have run wantonly into it to great excess of riot. Whichever may have been our pathway before conversion, we do now unfeignedly loathe all the sin of it, whether it were the open sin or the sin of the heart. Especially do we loathe tonight those sins which we excused at the time (which we did excuse afterwards). because we said, "Others did so," because we could not see we did any hurt to our fellow-men thereby. We loathe them because, if they did not relate to man, but only to God, it was the more vicious of us that we should rebel altogether against him. "Against thee thee only, have I sinned," is a part of the bitterness of our confession to-night. There were some sins that were sweet to us at the time: we rolled them under our tongue, poisonous though they were. and we called them sweet morsels. We would revolt against them to-night with abhorrence. Begone, ye damnable sins! By your very sweetness to me, I detect you. Fool that I must have been that such a

thing as thou, could have been sweet to me. What eyes must I have had to have seen any beauty in thee! How estranged from God to love the things so foul and vile! We would recall to-night those greater sins of our life, sins perhaps which entangled others. sins which we perpetrated in the face of knowledge, after many warnings, desperate, atrocious sins. Oh! what mercy that we were not cut down while we were living in them! We turn them over and remember them, not, I trust, as some do, I am afraid, when they speak of their past lives, as if they were talking about their battles and they were old soldiers — never mention your sins without tears. Do not write much about them, if at all; it is best to do with them as Noah's sons did with their father's nakedness, go back and cast a mantle over all. God has forgiven them. Remember them only that you may repent, and that you may bless his name, but never mention them without loathing them — utterly loathing them as if they were disgusting to your spirit, and you could not speak of them without the blush mantling on your cheek.

My brethren, in addition to loathing every act of sin, I think I can hope, if our acts are right, we do, through God's mercy, loathe all the sins of omission. I will put them in this form. The time we wasted before our conversion. Perhaps some of you were not brought to Christ until you were thirty, or forty, or fifty years of age. It is a very, very happy circumstance to be saved while yet you are younger — a case for eternal thankfulness but let us think of the time we wasted, precious time, in which we might have served God, time in which we might have been learning more of him, studying his Word, and making ourselves more fit to be used by him in after years. How much of our time ran to waste! I would especially loathe wasted Sabbaths. Some of us wasted them at home in idleness; some wasted them abroad in company. others of us wasted them in God's house. I would loathe my elf for having wasted Sabbaths, under sermons, hearing as though I heard them not — joining in devotions in the posture, and not in the heart. And what is this but to break the Sabbath under the very garb of keeping it? — thinking other thoughts and caring for other things while eternal matters were being proclaimed in my hearing. Oh! let us loathe ourselves to think that even twenty years should have gone to waste, much more thirty, or forty, or fifty years even sixty — should have been suffered to glide by, bearing nothing upon their bosom but a freight of sin, carrying nothing to the throne of God that we would wish to have remembered there. Those of us who have been converted to God would this night loathe every refusal which we gave to Christ. in those

days of our unregeneracy. Dost thou remember, my brother in Christ, those early knockings at the door of thy heart by a gentle mother's word, or was it a father, or was it perhaps a Sunday School teacher, or perhaps some dear one now in glory? Oh! that ever I should have refused the Savior, had he but presented himself to me but once! Infatuation not to be excused, to close the heart against even one of these! But many times! Some of us were very favorably circumstanced. Our mother's tears fell thick and fast for us when we were children. She would pray with us; when we read the Scriptures with her, she talked to us. Her words were very faithful, very tender, and her child could not help feeling them, but waywardly he pushed aside the tears, and still forgot his mother's God. Then you know with many of us the entreaties of our youth melted into the instructions of our riper years. Do you not remember many sermons under which Christ has knocked with his pierced hand at the door of your heart? You that sit here from time to time, I know the Lord does not leave you without some strivings of heart; at least, I hope he does not I do pray the Master to help me to put the word so that it may disturb you, and not let you make a nest in your sins, but as yet you have said "No" to Christ, and given him the go-by, even until now. As for such as are now saved, I am sure they have among their most bitter pangs of regret this, that they should ever at any time, and that they should so often and so many times have said to the Savior, "Depart from me; I will not know thee, neither do I desire thy salvation." And if, my brethren, in addition to having refused Christ, we have come into actual collision with him by setting up our own Pharisaic estimate of ourselves, we ought to loathe ourselves to-night. We did say in our heart, "I am good enough." The filthy rags of our own righteousness have had the impertinence to compare with the fair white linen of Christ's righteousness. We thought we could put away our own sins by some method of our own, and that cross, which is heaven's wonder and hell's terror, are despised so as to think we could do without it. We might well loathe ourselves for this, if we had never committed any other transgression than this. Oh! foul pride, oh! base and loathsome pride that can make a sinner think he can do without a Savior, and so presumptuously imagine that Christ was more than was needful, and the cross was a work of supererogation.

Did any of us go further than this? And did we ever commit persecuting acts against Christ and his people? Perhaps some of you did, and now you are his servants. You laughed at that Christian woman; why, you would go

down upon your knees now if you could find her, to beg a thousand pardons, now you know her to be a child of God. You did then act very harshly and severely towards one who was a true lover of the Savior. Perhaps you spoke opprobrious words, or did worse. As Cranmer put his hand into the fire and said, "Oh! unworthy right hand," because it had written a recantation of Christ and his truth years before. I am sure you would say it now if you have written one unkind word, or said one ungenerous word concerning a believer in Christ. And oh! if you have ever openly blasphemed, I know you loathe yourself, standing here to-night, to think those lips once cursed God, and, joining in the prayer-meeting with your prayers, to think that those lips once imprecated curses upon your fellow-men. I know your feeling must be one of very deep prostration of spirit. And even if we have not gone so far, we feel, as you do, that we loathe ourselves for our iniquities and for our abominations. Thus might I continue to speak to your hearts, but I trust, my brethren, it will be needless to do so, for you do already loathe yourselves for your sins.

Let me close this first part of the subject by just remarking that there are some persons here who, if the Lord should ever convert them, would ever have a strong loathing for themselves. I mean, first, hypocrites. There are such in this church, there never was a church without them. They come to the communion table, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter. We know of some that have been here Sabbath after Sabbath, and they are habitual drunkards, undiscovered by us — who intrude themselves into the assemblies of the faithful, and yet at the same time make much mock and sport of our holy religion. Oh! if you are ever saved, what heart-breakings you will have! How you will hate yourselves! I shall not say one hard word about you, but I do pray God's grace will make you feel a great many hard things about yourself, and while you look up into the dear face of the crucified, and find pardon there, may you afterwards cover your face with shame, and weep to think of the mercy you have found. So, too, those who once professed Christ and have gone away altogether — they may be here. I should not wonder but what in this throne there are some that used to be religious people — put on an appearance and did run well. Now for years they have neglected prayer. That woman, once a church member, married an ungodly husband, and many a bitter day she has had since then, and to-night she has strayed in here. Ah! woman, may God bring thee back and thou wilt loathe thyself for having given up Christ for the love of a poor dying man. And others that have gone into the world for Sunday trading,

or for some sort of gain, given up Christ, like Judas, who betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver. Oh! if you are ever saved, you will hate yourselves. I am sure this will be your cry within yourself, "Savior, thou hast forgiven me, but I shall never forgive myself; thou hast blotted out my sins like a cloud, but I shall always remember them, and lay very low at thy feet all my praises while I think of what thou hast done for me." Yes, and you there have a dear one that is a persecutor, a blasphemer, an opposer of the gospel, an infidel; may you become one of those who shall abundantly loathe yourself when you shall taste of the rich, free mercy of God. Thus I have set forth what it is that a man loathes; but let me remark it is not merely his actions he loathes, but himself, to think that he could do such things. He loathes the fountain to think that it could yield such a stream; he loathes his own evil nature, the deep corruption and depravity of his heart, to think he should be so ungrateful and treat the Lord of mercy in so ungenerous a way. But now we must turn to the second part of the subject.

II. HOW IS IT, AND WHY, THAT PARDONED SOULS DO LOATHE THEMSELVES?

Reply first. Their nature is changed. God, in conversion, makes us new men. We are not altered, improved, or mended, but a new life is given us; we become new creations in Christ Jesus. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us to be born again, and as that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and it hates the old corrupt nature, loathes it, and fights against it to the death. And further, the moving cause for loathing ourselves is the receipt of divine mercy. "Oh!" saith the soul when it finds itself forgiven, "did I rebel against such a God as this! What! has he struck out all my sins from the roll, cast them all behind his back, and does he declare that he loves me still? Then wretch that I am that I should have revolted and rebelled against such a God as this." It is just as John Bunyan puts it. There is a city besieged, and they determine that they will fight it out to the last. They will make every street to run with blood but what they will hold it out against the king who claims the city for himself; but when his troops march up and set their ranks around the city, and it is all surrounded, the trumpet sounds for a parley, and the messenger comes forward with the white flag, and they find to their surprise that the conditions offered are so honorable, so generous, so much to their own advantage, that the king appears not to be their enemy at all, but, in fact, to be their best friend. He will enlarge their liberties far above what they were. He will beautify their city — it was mean before. He

will come and dwell in it; he will make it the metropolis of the country; he will give it markets; he will give it all it wanted. “Why,” saith John Bunyan, “whereas before they were going to fortify the walls and die to a man, they fling open the gates, and they are ready to tumble over the walls to him, they are so glad to find that he treats them so generously.” And it is, even so with us when we find that he blots out our sin, that he is all love and all compassion, we yield to him at once, and then shame comes, to think that it should ever have been needful for us to yield, that we should ever have taken up arms against him at all. It is a beautiful incident in English history when one of our kings was carrying on war against his rebellious son. and they met in battle, and the son was, just about to kill the father, when the father’s visor was lifted up and he saw that it was his father whom he was about to kill. So the sinner, fighting against his God, thinks he is his enemy, but on a sudden he beholds it is his own Father that he has been fighting against, and he drops the weapon of his rebellion, feeling ashamed that he should have rebelled against such mercy and such favor. That is why we are ashamed, and I do pray that some here may be ashamed in the same way, for I think I hear Jehovah bewailing himself to-night. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Your God is good, be ready to repent and be forgiven; rebel no more.

Now after the receipt of divine mercy has brought in this feeling, the feeling is continued and promoted by everything that happens to us. For instance, every doctrine a Christian man learns after he is converted makes him loathe himself. Suppose he learns the doctrine of election. “What!” saith he, “was I chosen of God from before the foundation of the world, and did go after filthiness and uncleanness with this body? Was I dishonest and a liar, and yet loved of God before the stars began to shine?” That doctrine makes a man loathe himself. Then he learns the doctrine of redemption, and he reads, “These are they that are redeemed from among men” — a special and particular redemption. Did Jesus then die for me, as he did not die for all? Had he a special eye to me in that sacrifice of himself upon the cross? Oh! then I will smite my breast to think there ever should have been such a hard heart towards a Savior who loved me so. There is no doctrine but what, when the heart learns it, the spirit bows down with deep shame to think it ever should have rebelled. So it is with every fresh mercy the Christian enjoys. Surely he wakes up every morning with a fresh

mercy, but especially at peculiar times when our prayers have been heard, when we have been rescued out of deep distress, we lift up our eyes to heaven, and as we bless God for all his favors to us we say, “And can it be that I was once a rebel, in arms against such a God as thee? My God, my Father, did I ever blaspheme thy name? Did I ever read thy Book as a common book? Did I ever neglect thy mercy, Savior? Then shame on me when thou hast ever been so good, so kind to me.” And as the Christian grows in grace and mounts to more elevated platforms of experience, this self-loathing gets deeper when the spirit bears witness with him that he is a child of God. When he rises as a child to feel that he is an heir, and that, being an heir, he claims his heritage to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, the more he sees of God’s marvellous kindness to him, the more he looks back to his past life and to the depravity of the heart within, and he says, “Shame on thy head; cover thy face with confusion; silence me before thee, oh! thou Most High, to think that after such mercy as this I should have remained so ungrateful to thee.” And I suppose that as long as the Christian lives, and the further he goes in the grace of God, the deeper he goes in a disestimate of himself; it will ever be so until, as he gets to the gates of heaven, among all his joys and the growing sense of divine favor, there will be a still deeper sense of repentance for all the transgressions of his heart.

And now I shall need your attention still a few moments longer while I dwell upon the third and last point. When a soul is thus made to loathe itself: —

III. WHAT FOLLOWS?

Well, there follows, first of all, self-distrust. A man who remembers what he has been, and has a due sense of what his sin was, will never trust himself again. He thought at one time that he could resist sin; he imagined that it would be possible for him to fight against iniquity, and by daily perseverance to make something of himself. Now he has fallen so often, he has proved his own weakness so thoroughly, that all he can do now is just to look up to God, and ask for strength from on high. He cannot by any possibility rest in himself; his own weakness is so thoroughly proved. A man who knows what he used to be is conscious of what his former estate was, and will by no sort of means rely upon his own strength for a single hour. “Lead us not into temptation” will be his constant prayer, and “Deliver us from evil” will follow close upon it. When I see a man going

into sinful company, a Christian professor going on to the verge of sin and saying, "I shall not fall, I can take care of myself," I feel pretty certain that that man's experience is a very flimsy one, and that it is altogether a very grave question whether he ever was pardoned and has tasted of divine grace; for if he had, he would have known what it was to loathe himself a great deal more, and to distrust himself more.

The next result in a man will be that he will not serve himself any longer. Before, he could have lived for his own honor, but now he has such a disestimate of himself that he must have a different object. Spend my life for my own honor and glory? "No," saith he, "I am not worthy of it. I, who could blaspheme heaven, or could live so long an enemy to God — I serve such a monster as myself! No! By God's grace, I will serve him who has changed my nature, forgiven my sin, and made me to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Self-loathing is quite sure to make a man have a better object than that of seeking to honor myself."

And then a man who has once loathed himself will never loathe his fellow-men. He will be free from that pride which is found in many, which disqualifies them for Christian service, because they do not know the hearts of sinners, and do not enter into communion with them. I have known some who fancy there ought to be a great distance between themselves and what they call common people; who talk of sin as though it were a strange thing, in which they had no participation, they themselves having been highly elevated above ordinary folks. Oh! we know of some that would scorn the harlot, and look down upon a man whose character has been once destroyed, and think he never ought to be spoken to again. The Christian loathes himself for not having had pity on others. He knows how readily his feet might have gone in the same way; how easily, too, he might have fallen. even to the same extent, if circumstances had been the same with him as with them, and, as far as he can, he seeks to uplift them. The man who is once as he should be, thrusts his arm to the elbow in every mire to bring up one of God's precious jewels. He has put off the kid gloves of self-sufficiency, so he works like a true laborer. He knows what Christ has done for him — how Jesus poured out his very heart's blood for his redemption — and he feels he cannot do too much, if by any means he can pluck a single firebrand from the flame. Brethren, it is good to loathe ourselves. for it makes us have sympathy with others.

Yet, once again, this self-loathing in every case where it comes makes Jesus Christ very precious, and makes sin very hateful. Whoever bathed himself at all sees how Jesus Christ has been a great Savior, and he admires and adores him. You know you measure the height of the Savior's love by the depth of your own fall. If you don't know anything about your ruin, you won't be likely to prize much the remedy. A man that has got a desperate disease, and is dealt with by the physician, if he does not know what the disease is, is not able to feel the measure of gratitude, even if he is healed, that another man would, who knew how fatal the disease was in itself. If I think I am not poor, if I be befriended, I shall not have that gratitude which a bankrupt would have had if he had nothing left, to whom someone had generously given a large estate. No! a sense of need helps us to glorify God. Amongst the saints, and when on earth, the sweetest voices are those that have been made sweet by repentance. Amongst those that sing in heaven, and sing with the most sweet and lofty praise to God, are those who bless the grace that lifted them up from the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set their feet on a rock and established their goings. This blessed shamefacedness, which Christ gives us, is not to be avoided; may we have it more and more, and it shall be a fit preparation for the service of God on earth and the enjoyment of his presence in heaven.

And now, dear friends, it will be a very suitable season for every Christian just to look back and let his shame for many things mantle on his cheeks. Oh! how little progress have we made in the divine life through all the years! We call each year a "year of grace," but we might call it a year of sorrow. "The year of our Lord," we call it! Too often we make it the Year of ourselves. God save us for not living to him, working more for him, and growing more like him! Let us close every year with repentance, not because the sin abides, for, blessed be God, it is all forgiven — we are saved. Before the sin was perpetrated, Christ carried it into the sepulcher where he was buried; he, cast it there; it cannot be laid against us to condemn us, yet do we hate it, and yet do we loathe ourselves to think we have fallen into it. But would not this also be an admirable opportunity to show how we hate sin by seeking to bring others to Christ? Do watch for other souls. As you prize your own, seek the conversion of others, and God grant that you may bring many to Jesus.

And you that are not saved, oh! suffer not this occasion to pass, let not the days go by without your seeking for that mercy which God so fully gives through his only-begotten Son. Then when you receive it you will be

ashamed, and you, too, will magnify the grace that pardoned even you. God bless you, dear friends, very richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ROMANS 8:15-31.

Verse 15. *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;*

You did receive it once. You needed it. You were in sin, and it was well for you when sin became bondage to you. It was grievous, but it was salutary; but you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.

15. *But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Does your spirit cry in that way tonight? Even if you be in the dark, yet if you cry for your Father, you will soon be in the light. There is no need to be distressed with any form of doubt so long as the Spirit makes this continual breathing, "Abba, Father, show thyself to me. Do what thou wilt to me. Let me taste thy love. Let me at least bow under thy hand."

16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

We should not have that spirit else. Our spirit feels the spirit of adoption, and so there is a double witness, the witness of our spirit, and the witness of God's Spirit, that we are the children of God. In the mouth of these two witnesses the whole shall be established.

17. *And if children, then heirs;*

That does not follow in other cases, but it does in the case of the family of God. In a man's family, only one son can be an heir; but in God's family, of all is it declared "if children, then heirs."

17. *Heirs of God,*

Not only heirs *to* God, but heirs *of* God. God himself is the heritage of his people; he belongs to them now, as an eternal endowment. "Heirs of God."

17. *And joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

We are to take the rough and the smooth, the bitter and the sweet, with Christ; and who will make any demur to that? If we are to be heirs with Christ, we do not wish to split the inheritance in pieces. Nay! we will take the cross as well as the crown — the reproach as well as the honor.

18. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

He had just mentioned the sufferings. They are too little. They are mere specks in the sun. They are too small to be weighed in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory which God has prepared for us.

19. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestly, of the sons of God.*

So great is to be the glory of God's children that all the world is waiting for it. Every creature stands on tip-toe, looking for the coming of Christ and the manifestation of the redeemed. What must be the greatness of this thing which the whole creation has learned to expect?

20-21. *For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Became the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

We were in bondage, and we have come out in a measure into the liberty of the children of God. Now the world in which we live is in sympathy with us, and it is part under bondage because of sin, but it is only temporary bondage. There will come a day when the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God — a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

22. *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

Deep groans are in the world. Have you not heard of earthquakes? Do you not know how the whole world is in a tremor? There is something coming, and all the world is groaning for that coming. God makes the universe to be like an instrument of music played upon by the fingers of mortal men: so that when they are sorrowful, the world is sorrowful, and when they go forth with joy and are led forth with peace, then the moun-rains and the hills shall break forth before them into singing, and all the trees of the field

shall clap their hands. “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

23. *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

As yet the body is under bondage. The body is dead because of sin: hence those headaches — this palpitation of the heart — this heaviness of the clay which incases us: but by-and-bye, as the material world is to be delivered from its bondage, so shall these bodies also pass away from all the encumbrance of weakness, and disease, and death, into a better state.

24. *Far we are saved by hope:*

As yet.

24-25. *But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

What a lesson that is, and how seldom do we learn it! Oh! in this present state our main duty is, “Then do we with patience wait for it.” You want to have your cake and keep it. but you cannot eat it and keep it too. With patience wait for it. There see some fruits of the earth that are not ripe yet. You lay them by in store, and there are many good things that God has laid by in store for his people, and he says to us, “With patience wait for it:” Oh! but you would fain have heavenly joy on earthly ground. It would be a sorry misfit if it were so. But God keeps time and season, and there is harmony in his music. You shall have earthly sorrow on earthly ground, and you shall have heavenly bliss on the heavenly shore: but not till then. We do with patience wait for it.

26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;*

Especially our infirmities in prayer. I think that if anywhere our infirmities come out, it is in prayer: even the strongest are, on their knees, comparatively weak. How few there are among us that prevail with God. as Elias did! We ought to do so. We need, none of us, stop short of the fullest stature of a man in Christ Jesus. and a man of full stature in Christ would surely carry the keys of heaven’s treasury at his girdle. He would

have but to ask, and to receive — to seek and to find. May the Spirit help our infirmities.

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

See what little worlds we are. Microcosms, — to use a harder word; for as there are groanings and travailings in the whole creation, so are there such in the little world of our own heart. Only nature's travail is but natural; but our travail is supernatural. It is the Spirit himself groaning within chosen breasts with groanings that cannot be uttered.

27. *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

When we ourselves hardly know the mind of the Spirit, he that searches all hearts knows it. When we feel as if we could not pray, yet the Spirit of God makes intercession in us, and the great Father reads the purport of the intercessions, and blesses us, not according to our knowledge of our own prayer, but according to his knowledge of what the Spirit means by those prayers. Have you never noticed that holy men of old sometimes spoke much greater things than they thought they should, for the Spirit of God in them spoke by them more than they themselves understood; and I believe that it is so in prayer. Oh! oftentimes the groaning, wrestling believer may have no inkling of the full purport of his own prayer, but he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28. And we know

Now we are getting upon a dear old passage which reads like music. There is no eloquence in the world that ever touches the eloquence of the Apostle here.

28. *That all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

I do not like to hear this text quoted, as I often do, only in part — only half of it. "All things work together for good," say people. "Oh! yes; somehow or other, good will come of it." It does not say so here. It says, "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called

according to its purpose.” A special purpose and object of God for a special people. And if you do not belong to this people, things are not working together for your good. No; but you may find that they will work together for your banishment from life and from the presence of God. Take your heed to this. The stars in their courses fight against you, if you fight against God; and the very earth groans and complains of bearing up your weight if you are a rebel against the Most High. You must, first of all, be reconciled so as to love God, and the eternal purpose must be wrought in you by your effectual calling from out of the world, or else you must not dare to intrude into the holy sanctuary of my text. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Of course, they do, for God loves them. “To them that are called according to his purpose.” Of course, they do, for that purpose which called them is not consistent with anything, but a purpose of infinite love to them. The great eternal purpose encompasses all things that happen, and bends all to the grand object of the good of the called ones.

29-30. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

He spoke of it as if it were done because it is so sure, so certain to be done; he puts it down as a fact.

31. *What shall we then say to these things?*

Ah! indeed, what shall we say? If we had the tongues of men and angels, what could we say? Well, we will say this much at any rate.

31. *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Those afflictions that we read of just now — these reproaches which we share with Christ — what of them? They are not worth calling anything. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

OUR LORD'S SOLEMN ENQUIRY

NO. 3507

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 7TH, 1872.

*“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God,
why hast thou forsaken me?” — Matthew 27:46.*

IF any one of us, lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ had been anywhere near the cross when he uttered those words, I am sure our hearts would have burst with anguish, and one thing is certain — we should have heard the tones of that dying cry as long as ever we lived. There is no doubt that at certain times they would come to us again, ringing shrill and clear through the thick darkness. We should remember just how they were uttered, and the emphasis where it was placed, and I have no doubt we should turn that text over, and over, and over in our minds. But there is one thing, I think, we should never have done if we had heard it — therefore, I am not going to do it — we should never preach from it. It would have been too painful a recollection for us ever to have used it as a text. No; we should have said, “It is enough to hear it.” Fully understand it, who can? And to expound it, since some measure of understanding might be necessary to the exposition — that surely were a futile attempt. We should have laid that by; we should have put those words away as too sacred, too solemn, except for silent reflection and quiet, reverent adoration. I felt when I read these words again, as I have often read them, that they seemed to say to me, “You cannot preach from us,” and, on the other hand, felt as Moses did when he put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the

burning bush, because the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Beloved, there is another reason why we should not venture to preach from this text, namely, that it is probably an expression out of the lowest depths of our Savior's sufferings. With him into the seas of grief we can descend some part of the way; but when he comes where all God's waves and billows go over him, we cannot go there. We may, indeed, drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism, but never to the full extent; and, therefore, where our fellowship with Christ cannot conduct us to the full, though it may in a measure — we shall not venture; not beyond where our fellowship with him would lead us aright, lest we blunder by speculation, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Moreover, it comes forcibly upon my mind that though every word here is emphatic, we should be pretty sure to put the emphasis somewhere or other too little. I do not suppose we should be likely to put it anywhere too much. It has been well said that every word in this memorable cry deserves to have an emphasis laid upon it. If you read it, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I marvel not that my disciples should, but why hast thou gone, my Father, God? Why couldst thou leave me?" there is a wondrous meaning there. Then take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I know why thou hast smitten me; I can understand why thou dost chasten me; but why hast thou forsaken me? Wilt thou allow me no ray of love from the brightness of thine eyes — no sense of thy presence whatsoever?" This was the wormwood and the gall of all the Savior's bitter cup. Then God forsook him in his direst need. Or if you take it thus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" there comes another meaning. "Me, thy well beloved, thine eternal well beloved, shine innocent, thy harmless, thine afflicted Son — why hast thou forsaken me? "Then, indeed, it is a marvel of marvels not that God should forsake his saints, or appear to do so, or that he should forsake sinners utterly, but that he should forsake his only Son. Then, again, we might with great propriety throw the whole force of the verse upon the particle of interrogation, "Why." "My God, my God, why, ah! why hast thou forsaken me? What is thy reason? What thy motive? What compels thee to this, thou Lord of love? The sun is eclipsed, but why is the Son of thy love eclipsed? Thou hast taken away the lives of men for sin, but why takest thou away thy love, which is my life, from me who hath no sin? Why and wherefore actest thou thus?"

Now, as I have said, every word requires more emphasis than I can throw into it, and some part of the text would be quite sure to be left and not

dealt with as it should be; therefore, we will not think of preaching upon it, but instead thereof we will sit down and commune with it.

You must know that the words of our text are not only the language of Christ, but they are the language of David. You who are acquainted with the Psalms know that the 22nd Psalm begins with just these words, so that David said what Jesus said; and I gather from this that many a child of God has had to say precisely what the Lord Jesus, the first-born of the family, uttered upon the cross. Now as God's children are brought into the same circumstances as Christ, and Christ is considered the exemplar, my object to-night will be simply this — not to expound the words, but to say to believers who come into a similar plight, Do as Jesus did. If you come into his condition, lift up your hearts to God, that you may act as he did in that condition. So we shall make the Savior now not a study for our learning, but an example for reproduction. The first out of these points in which, I think, we should imitate him is this: —

I. UNDER DESERTION OF SOUL, THE LORD JESUS STILL TURNS TO GOD.

At that time when he uttered these words, God had left him to his enemies. No angel appeared to interpose and destroy the power of Roman or Jew. He seemed utterly given up. The people might mock at him, and they might put him to what pain they pleased; at the same time a sense of God's love to him as man was taken from him. The comfortable presence of God, which had all his life long sustained him, began to withdraw from him in the garden, and appeared to be quite gone when he was just in the article of death upon the cross; and meanwhile the waves of God's wrath on account of sin began to break over his spirit, and he was in the condition of a soul deserted by God. Now sometimes believers come into the same condition, not to the same extent, but in a measure. Yesterday they were full of joy, for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, but to-day that sense of love is gone; they droop; they feel heavy. Now the temptation will be at such times for them to sit down and look into their own hearts; and if they do, they will grow more wretched every moment, until they will come well nigh to despair; for there is no comfort to be found within, when there is no light from above. Our signs and tokens within are like sundials. We can tell what is o'clock by the sundial when the sun shines, but if it does not what is the use of the sundial? And so marks of evidence may help us when God's love is shed abroad in the soul, but when that is done, marks of evidence stand us in very little stead. Now observe our Lord. He

is deserted of God, but instead of looking in, and saying, "My soul, why art thou this? Why art thou that? Why art thou cast down? Why dost thou mourn?" he looks straight away from that dried-up well that is within, to those eternal waters that never can be stayed, and which are always full of refreshment. He cries, "My God." He knows which way to look, and I say to every Christian here, it is a temptation of the devil, when you are desponding, and when you are not enjoying your religion as you did, to begin peering and searching about in the dunghill of your own corruptions, and stirring over all that you are feeling, and all you ought to feel, and all you do not feel, and all that. Instead of that look from within, look above, look to your God again, for the light will come there.

And you will notice that our Lord did not at this time look to any of his friends. In the beginning of his sufferings he appeared to seek consolation from his disciples, but he found them sleeping for sorrow; therefore, on this occasion he did not look to them in any measure. He had lost the light or God's countenance, but he does not look down in the darkness and say, "John, dear faithful John, art thou there? Hast thou not a word for him whose bosom was a pillow for thy head? Mother Mary, art thou there? Canst thou not say one soft word to thy dying son to let him know there is still a heart that does not forget him?" No, beloved; our Lord did not look to the creature. Man as he was, and we must regard him as such in uttering this cry, yet he does not look to friend or brother, helper or human arm. But though God be angry, as it were, yet he crieth, "My God." Oh! it is the only cry that befits a believer's lips. Even if God seems to forsake thee, keep on crying to him. Do not begin to look in a pet and a jealous humor to creatures, but still look to thy God. Depend upon it, he will come to thee sooner or later. He cannot fail thee. He must help thee. Like a child if its mother strike it, still if it be in pain it cries for its mother; it knows her love; it knows its deep need of her, and that she alone can supply its need. Oh! beloved, do the same. Is there one in this house who has lately lost his comforts, and Satan has said, "Don't pray"? Beloved, pray more than ever you did. If the devil says, "Why, God is angry; what is the use of praying to him?" he might have said the same to Christ — "Why dost thou pray to one who forsaketh thee?" But Christ did pray "My God" still, though he says, "Why dost thou forsake me?" Perhaps Satan tells you not to read the Bible again. It has not comforted you of late; the promises have not come to your soul. Dear brother, read and read more; read double as much as ever you did. Do not think that, because there is no light coming to you,

the wisest way is to get away from the light. No; stay where the light is. And perhaps he even says to you, “Don’t attend the house of God again; don’t go to the communion table. Why, surely you won’t wish to commune with God when he hides his face from you.” I say the words of wisdom, for I speak according to the example of Christ; come still to your God in private and in public worship, and come still, dear brother, to the table of fellowship with Jesus, saying, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, for I have nowhere else to trust; and though he hide his face from me, yet will I cry after him, and my cry shall not be “My friends,” but “My God”; and my eye shall not look to my soul, my friends, or my feelings, but I will look to my God. and even to him alone. That is the first lesson, not an easy one to learn, mark you — easier to hear than you will find it to practice, but “the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” The second lesson is this — observe that: —

II. THOUGH UNDER A SENSE OF DESERTION, OUR MASTER DOES NOT RELAX HIS HOLD OF HIS GOD.

Observe it, “My God” — it is one hand he grips him with; “My God” — it is the other hand he grasps him with. Both united in the cry, “My God.” He believes that God is still his God. He uses the possessive particle twice, “My God, my God.”

Now it is easy to believe that God is ours when he smiles upon us, and when we have the sweet fellowship of his love in our hearts; but the point for faith to attend to, is to hold to God when he gives the hard words, when his providence frowns upon thee, and when even his Spirit seems to be withdrawn from thee. Oh! let go every thing, but let not go thy God. If the ship be tossed and ready to sink, and the tempest rages exceedingly, cast out the ingots, let the gold go, throw out the wheat, as Paul’s companions did. Let even necessities go, but oh! still hold to thy God; give not up thy God; say still, notwithstanding all, “In the teeth of all my feelings, doubts, and suspicions, I hold him yet; he is my God; I will not let him go.”

You know that in the text our Lord calls God in the original his “strong one” — “Eli, Eli” — “my strong one, my mighty one.” So let the Christian, when God turns away the brightness of his presence, still believe that all his strength lies in God, and that, moreover, God’s power is on his side. Though it seemed to crush him, yet faith says, “It is a power that will not crush me. If he smite me, what will I do? I will lay hold upon his arm, and

he will put strength in me. I will deal with God as Jacob did with the angel. If he wrestle with me, I will borrow strength from him, and I will wrestle still with him until I get the blessing from him.” Beloved, we must neither let go God, nor let go our sense of his power to save us. We must hold to our possession of him, and hold to the belief that he is worth possessing, that he is God allsufficient, and that he is our God still.

Now I would like to put this personally to any tried child of God here. Are you going to let go your God because you have lost his smile? Then I ask you, Did you base your faith upon his smile? for if you did, you mistook the true ground of faith. The ground of a believer’s confidence is not God’s smile, but God’s promise. It is not his temporary sunshine of his love, but his deep eternal love itself, as it reveals itself in the covenant and in the promises. Now the present smile of God may go, but God’s promise does not go; and if you believe upon God’s promise, that is just as true when God frowns as when he smiles. If you are resting upon the covenant, that covenant is as true in the dark as in the light. It stands as good when your soul is without a single gleam of consolation as when your heart is flooded with sacred bliss. Oh! Come then to this. The promise is as good as ever. Christ is the same as ever; his blood is as great a plea as ever; and the oath of God is as immutable as ever. We must get away from all building upon our apprehensions of God’s love. It is the love itself we must build on — not on our enjoyment of his presence, but on his faithfulness and on his truth. Therefore, be not cast down, but still call him, “My God.”

Moreover, I may put it to you, if, because God frowns, you give him up, what else do you mean to do? Why, is not it better to trust in an angry God than not to trust in God at all? Suppose thou leavest off the walk of faith, what wilt thou do? The carnal man never knew what faith was, and, therefore, gets on pretty fairly in his own blind, dead way; but you have been quickened and made alive, enlightened, and if you give up your faith, what is to become of you? Oh! hold to him then.

*“For if shine eye oi faith be dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee
And Israel’s God thy strength shall be.”*

Don’t give him up.

Moreover, if faith give up her God because he frowns, what sort of a faith was it? Canst thou not believe in a frowning God? What, hast thou a friend who did the other day but give thee a rough word, and thou saidst, "At one time I could die for that man," and because he gives you one rough word, are you going to give him up? Is this thy kindness to thy friends? Is this thy confidence in thy God? But how Job played the man! Did he turn against his God when he took away his comforts from him? No; he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." And do you not know how he put it best of all when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"? Yes, if thy faith be only a fair-weather faith, if thou canst only walk with God when he sandals thee in silver, and smooths the path beneath thy feet, what faith is this? Where didst thou get it from? But the faith that can foot it with the Lord through Nebuchadnezzar's furnace of fire, and that can go walking with him through the valley of the shadow of death — this is the faith to be had and sought after, and God grant it to us, for that was the faith that was in the heart of Christ when forsaken of God. He yet says, "My God."

We have learnt two lessons. Now we have learnt them — (we have gone over them, but have we learnt them?) — may we practice them, and turn to God in ill times, and not relinquish our hold. The third lesson is this: —

III. ALTHOUGH OUR LORD UTTERED THIS DEEP AND BITTER CRY OF PAIN, YET LEARN FROM HIS SILENCE.

He never uttered a single syllable of murmuring, or brought any accusation against his God. "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There! look at those words. Can you see any blots in them? I cannot. They are crystallised sorrow. but there is no defilement of sin. It was just (I was about to say) what an angel could have said, if he could have suffered; it is what the Son of God did say, who was purer than angels, when he was suffering. Listen to Job, and we must not condemn Job, for we should not have been half so good as he, I daresay; but he does let his spirit utter itself sometimes in bitterness. He curses the day of his birth and so on; but the Lord Jesus does not do that. There is not a syllable about "cursed be the day in which I was born in Bethlehem, and in which I came amongst such a rebellious race as this" — nor not a word, not a word. And even the best of men when in sorrow have at least wished that things were not just so. David, when he had lost Absalom, wished that he had died, instead of Absalom. But Christ does not appear to want things altered. He does not say, "Lord, this is a

mistake. Would God I had died by the hands of Herod when he sought my life, or had perished when they tried to throw me down the hill of Capernaum." No; nothing of the kind. There is grief, but there is no complaining; there is sorrow, but there is no rebellion. Now this is the point, beloved, I want to bring to you. If you should suffer extremely, and it should ever come to that terrible pinch that even God's love and the enjoyment of it appears to be gone, put your finger to your lip and keep it there. "I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Believe that he is a good God still. Know that assuredly he is working for thy good, even now, and let not a syllable escape thee by way of murmuring, or if it does, repent of it and recall it. Thou hast a right to speak to God, but not to murmur against him, and if thou wouldst be like thy Lord, thou wouldst say just this, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" But thou wilt say no more, and there wilt thou leave him, and if there oome no answer to thy question thou wilt be content to be without an answer.

Now again, I say, this is a lesson I can teach, but I do not know if I can practice it, and I do not know that you can. Only, again, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," and he will enable us when we come to "lama sabachthani" to come so far, but not to go farther — to stop there with our Lord. The fourth lesson which, I think, we should learn is this: —

IV. OUR LORD, WHEN HE DOES CRY, CRIES WITH THE INQUIRING VOICE OF A LOVING CHILD.

"My God, why, ah! why hast thou forsaken me?" He asks a question not in curiosity, but in love. Loving, sorrowful complaints he brings. "Why, my God? Why? Why?" Now this is a lesson to us, because we ought to endeavor to find out why it is that God hides himself from us. No Christian ought to be content to live without full assurance of faith. No believer ought to be satisfied to live a moment without knowing to a certainty that Christ is his, and if he does not know it, and assurance is gone, what ought he to do? Why, he should never be content until he has gone to God with the question, "Why have I not this assurance? Why have I not thy presence? Why is it that I cannot live once I did in the light of thy countenance" "And, beloved, the answer to this question in our case will sometimes be, "I have forsaken thee, my child, because thou hast forsaken me. Thou hast grown cold of heart by slow degrees; grey hairs have come upon thee, and thou didst not know; and I have made thee know it to make thee see thy backsliding, and sorrowfully repent of it." Sometimes the

answer will be, “My child, I have forsaken thee because thou hast set up an idol in thy heart. Thou lovest thy child too much, thy gold too much, thy trade too much; and I cannot come into thy soul unless I am thy Lord, thy love, thy bridegroom, and thy all.” Oh! we shall be glad to know these answers, because the moment we know them our heart will say: —

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee.”*

Sometimes the Lord’s answer will be, “My child, I have gone from thee for a little to try thee, to see if thou lovest me.” A true lover will love on under frowns. It is only the superficial professor that wants sweetmeats every day, and only loves his God for what he gets out of him; but the genuine believer loves him when he smites him, when he bruises him with the bruises of a cruel one. Why, then we will say, “O God, if this is why thou dost forsake us, we will love thee still, and prove to thee that thy grace has made our souls to hunger and thirst for thee.” Depend upon it, the best way to get away from trouble, or to get great help under it, is to run close in to God. In one of Quarles’s poems he has the picture of a man striking another with a great nail. Now the further off the other is, the heavier it strikes him. So the man whom God is smiting runs close in, and he cannot be hurt at all. O my God, my God, when away from thee affliction stuns me, but I will close with thee, and then even my affliction I will take to be a cause of glory, and glory in tribulations also, so that thy blast shall not sorely wound my spirit.

Well, I leave this point with the very same remark I made before. To cry to God with the enquiry of a child is the fourth lesson of the text. Oh! learn it well. Do practice it when You are in trouble much. If you are in such a condition at this time, practice it now, and in the pew say, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Search me and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Now the fifth observation is one to be treasured up: —

V. THAT OUR LORD, THOUGH HE WAS FORSAKEN OF GOD, STILL PURSUED HIS FATHER’S WORK — the work he came to do. “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But, mark you, he does not leave the cross; he does not unloose the nails as he might have done with a will; he did not leap down amidst the assembled mockers, and scorn them in return, and

chase them far away. but he kept on bleeding, suffering, even until he could say, "It is finished," and he did not give up the ghost till it was finished. Now, beloved, I find it, and I daresay you do, a very easy and pleasant thing to go on serving God when I have got a full sense of his love, and Christ shining in my face, when every text brings joy to my heart, and when I see souls converted, and know that God is going with the Word to bless it. That is very easy, but to keep on serving God when you get nothing for it but blow — when there is no success, and when your own heart is in deep darkness of spirit — I know the temptation. Perhaps you are under it. Because you have not the joy you once had, you say, "I must give up preaching; I must give up that Sunday School. If I have not the light of God's countenance, how can I do it? I must give it up." Beloved, you must do no such thing. Suppose there were a loyal subject in a nation, and he had done something or other which grieved the king, and the king on a certain day turned his face from him, do you think that loyal subject would go away and neglect his duty because the king frowned? No; methinks he would say to himself, "I do not know why the king seemed to deal hardly with me. He is a good king, and I know he is good, if he does not see any good in me, and I will work for him more than ever. I will prove to him that my loyalty does not depend upon his smiles. I am his loyal subject, and will stand to him still." What would you say to your child if you had to chasten him for doing wrong, if he were to go away and say, "I shall not attend to the errand that father has sent me upon, and I shall do no more in the house that father has commanded me to do, because father has beaten me this morning"? Ah! what a disobedient child! If the scourging had its fit effect upon him, he would say, "I will wrong thee no more, father, lest thou smite me again." So let it be with us.

Besides, should not our gratitude compel us to go on working for God? Has not he saved us from hell? Then we may say, with the old heathen, "Strike, so long as thou forgivest." Yes, if God forgives, he may strike if he will. Suppose a judge should forgive a malefactor condemned to die, but he should say to him, "Though you are not to be executed as you deserve, yet, for all that, you must be put in prison for some years," he would say, "Ah! my Lord, I will take this lesser chastisement, so long as my life is saved." And oh! if our God has saved us from going down to the pit by putting his own Son to death on our behalf, we will love him for that, if we never have anything more. If, between here and heaven, we should have to say, like the elder brother, "Thou never gayest me a kid that I might make merry

with my friends.” we will love him still; and if he never does anything to us between here and glory, but lay us on a sick bed, and torture us there, yet still we will praise and bless him, for he has saved us from going down to the pit; therefore, we will love him as long as we live. Oh! if you think of God as you ought to do, you will not be at ups and downs with him, but you will serve him with all your heart, and soul, and might, whether you are enjoying the light of his countenance or not. Now to close. Our Lord is an example for us in one other matter. He is to us our type of what shall happen to us, for whereas he said, “Why hast thou forsaken me?”: —

VI. HE HAS RECEIVED A GLORIOUS ANSWER.

And so shall every man that, in the same spirit in the hour of darkness, asks the same question. Our Lord died. No answer had he got to the question, but the question went on ringing through earth, and heaven, and hell. Three days he slept in the grave, and after a while he went Into heaven, and my imagination, I think, may be allowed if I say that as he entered there the echo of his words, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” just died away, and then the Father gave him the practical answer to the question; for there, all along the golden streets, stood white-robed bands, all of them singing their redeemer’s praise, all of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb; and this was a part of the answer to his question. God had forsaken Christ that these chosen spirits might live through him; they were the reward for the travail of his soul; they were the answer to his question; and ever since then, between heaven and earth, there has been constant commerce. If your eyes were opened that you could see, you would perceive in the sky not falling stars, shooting downwards, but stars rising upward from England, many every hour from America, from all countries where the gospel is believed, and from heathen lands where the truth is preached and God is owned, for you would see every now and then down on earth a dying bed, but upwards through the skies, mounting among the stars, another spirit shot upward to complete the constellations of the glorified. And as these bright ones, all redeemed by his sufferings, enter heaven, they bring to Christ fresh answers to that question, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” And if stooping from his throne in glory the Prince of life takes view of the sons of men who are lingering here, even in this present assembly, he will see to-night a vast number of us met together around this table, I hope the most, if not all, of us redeemed by his blood and rejoicing in his salvation; and the Father points down to-night to this Tabernacle, and to thousands of similar scenes where believers cluster around the table of fellowship with their

Lord, and he seems to say to the Savior, “There is my answer to thy question, ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’”

Now, beloved, we shall have an answer to our question something like that. When we get to heaven, perhaps not until then, God will tell us why he forsook us. When I tossed upon my bed three months ago in weary pain that robbed me of my night’s rest, and my day’s rest too, I asked why it was I was there, but I have realized since the reason, for God helped me afterwards so to preach that many souls were ingathered. Often you will find that God deserts you that he may be with you after a nobler sort — hides the light, that afterwards the light of seven suns at once may break in upon your spirit, and there you shall learn that it was for his glory that he left you, for his glory that he tried your faith. Only mind you stand to that. Still cry to him, and still call him God, and never complain, hut ask him why, and pursue his work still under all difficulties; so being like Christ on earth, you shall be like Christ above, as to the answer.

I cannot sit down without saying just this word. God will never forsake his people for ever. But as many of you as are not his people, if you have not believed in him, he will forsake you for ever, and for ever, and for ever; and if you ask, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” “you will get, your answer in the echo of your words, “Thou hast forsaken me.” “How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?”! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

*“But if your ears refuse
The language of his grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race;
The Lord in vengeance drest
Shall life his hand and swear,
‘You that despised my promised rest
Shall have no portion there.’”*

God grant it may never be so with you, for Christ’s sake. Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

LUKE 23:1-16.

Verse 1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.*

Our Lord had been taken to the tribunal of Annas and of Caiaphas, and so the whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate. The first two tribunals were ecclesiastical and religious. There they charged him with crimes against the law. Now they take him to Pilate, and bring accusations against him, concerning Caesar and the Roman Government. "The whole multitude of them arose and led him unto Pilate."

2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

A wily charge. It was the duty of the ruler of the province to protect the province from any rebellion against Caesar; so they put it the, "He perverts the nation, forbids to give tribute to Caesar."

3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?

It must have seemed a strange question to himself, as he saw the poor emaciated form of Jesus of Nazareth standing before him. "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

3. And he angered him and said, Thou sayest

"It is even so."

4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

He took him aside and conversed with him, and perceived that his kingdom was not of a kind that would interfere with Caesar. As he looked at him, he found that it was not a matter which really could concern the great Roman Empire. It was in no danger from him. Pilate said to the chief priests and the people, "I find no fault in this man."

5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

He caught at that.

6, 7. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction,

For Herod was ruler of Galilee.

7. *He sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.*

By which he answered two purposes. First, he would get out of the scrape himself; and secondly, he would compliment Herod by acknowledging that, as the man was a Galilean, he was under Herod's jurisdiction. What devices men have to escape from responsibility! This vacillating Pilate knew the right, and did it not. He would be very glad to avoid coming to any decision about it at all.

8, 9. *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.*

Now was Christ the Lamb — the sheep before her shearers who is dumb. He did answer Pilate a little, There was a little that was good about Pilate, vacillating as he was; but Herod had not a trace of anything upon him upon which the good seed could possibly take root; so he answered him nothing.

10, 11. *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.*

This robe was probably white, sparkling, splendid. It tended to mock him. It set the example to Pilate and his men to clothe him in a scarlet robe, and mock him yet again. There is a contagiousness about an evil example.

12. *And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

Behold how sinners will agree when Christ is to be slaughtered. They shake hands together when he is to die.

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers*

and the people. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

But what duplicity! If he is innocent, release him, but do not scourge him. If he is guilty, crucify him, but do not balk about releasing him. When men are wrong at heart, when they come to a resolution, it is self-contradictory. There is nothing more inconsistent than sin. It is an image whose head may be of gold, but the feet are always of clay. You cannot make sin hang together, and the verdict of one who is undecided and has two minds is always a very vicious one. "I will chastise him and release him."

LIGHT AT EVENING TIME

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“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” — Zechariah 14:6-7.

AS WE read the Scriptures, we are continually startled by fresh discoveries of the magnificence of God. Our attention is fixed upon a passage, and presently sparklets of fire and glory dart forth. It strikes us; we are struck by it. Hence these bright coruscations. Our admiration is excited. We could not have thought that so much light could possibly lie concealed within a few words. Our text thus reveals to us in a remarkable manner the penetration, the discernment, the clear-sightedness of God. To our weak vision the current of human affairs is like twilight. It is not altogether dark, for it is broken with some gleams of hope. Nor is it altogether bright, for heavy masses of darkness intervene. It is neither day nor night. There is a mingle-mangle of good and evil, a strange confused mixture, wherein the powers of darkness contend with the powers of light. But it is not so with God. With him, it is one clear day. What we think to be confusion, is order before his eye. Where we see advance and retrogression, he sees perpetual progress. We full often bemoan our circumstances as altogether disastrous, while God, who seeth the end from the beginning, is working out his ordained purpose. Our God maketh the clouds to be the dust of his feet, and the winds to be his chariot. He sees order in the tempest and the whirlwind. When the bosom of earth heaves with earthquake, he hears music in every throb and when earth and heaven seem mingled in one wild disorder and storm, his hand is in the midst of all, so marking, that every particle of matter should be obedient to his settled laws, and that all things

should work together to produce one glorious result. “Things are not what they seem.” Oh! how good it is for us to know that this world’s history is not so black and bad as to our dim senses it would appear. God is writing it out, sometimes with a heavy pen; but when complete, it will read like one great poem, magnificent in its plan, and perfect in all its details. At the present hour there may be much in the condition of our country to cause anxiety or even to create alarm. And it is not hard to point certainly to many things that seem to augur no good. But there always were evil prophets. There always have been times and crises when dark portents favored unwelcome predictions. But thus far the fury of every tempest has been mitigated; a sweet calm has followed each perilous swell of the ocean, and the good old ship has kept afloat England’s flag — we fondly believe:

*“The flag that’s braved a thousand years,
The battle and the breeze,”*

will not be run down yet. We thank God that the history of our deliverances supplies us with fair omens of an ever-gracious Providence. Let us comfort ourselves with the belief that there is a future of peace and prosperity within her borders and of influence for good among the nations of the world for Britain and British Christians.* Then let each man brace up his sinews for the fight, and struggle for the right. Bright days are assuredly in store for those who lift the standard and unfurl the flag of righteousness and truth. “At evening time it shall be light.” Even now it is “one day” which is known to the Lord.

As our time is brief, I mean to confine your attention to one clause of the text, “At evening time it shall be light.” It seems to be a rule in God’s dispensations that his light should break upon men gradually; and when it appears about to suffer an eclipse it will brighten up and shine with extraordinary lustre. “At evening time it shall be light.” Of this mode of God’s procedure we will take five illustrations.

I. LET REVELATION SUPPLY US WITH THE FIRST.

When God first revealed himself to the sons of men, he did not come to them in a blazing chariot of fire, manifesting all his glorious attributes. The sun in the Tropics, we are told, rises on a sudden. The inhabitants of those regions know none of our delightful twilight at dawn or evening, but the curtain rises and falls abruptly. This is not the way in which God has

revealed himself to us by degrees, softly, slowly, he lifts the veil. Thus has God been pleased to make himself known. He took in his hand a flaming, torch when the world was dark. Without a single ray of comfort, and he lit up the first star that ever shone over the wild waste of the world's wilderness. That star was the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In the light of that promise our first parents and their immediate descendants were cheered in their daily toil. Seth and Enoch walked with no other light that we know of but that. There is no record of any promise beside, which they had received from the Lord. By-and-bye, as years revolved, God lit up another star, and then another and another, till at last Holy Scripture became like our sky at midnight-studded all over with greater and lesser luminaries, all brightly manifesting the glory of God.

Still it was night. Though there was a little light, there was a prevalence of darkness. All through the Jewish dispensation, the sun did not shine. There was only cold, but beautiful in its season, silver moonlight. Heavenly truths were reflected in shadows; the substance was not visible. It was an economy of cloud and smoke, of type and symbol, but not of light and day of life, and immortality. For all the light that "o'er the dark her silver mantle threw," the saints of those times were glad and grateful; but how much more cause for joy and gratitude have we on whom the golden sun has shone! Star after star had been lit up in the heavens by the inspiration of Moses, and Samuel, and David, and all the prophets, till dark and deep the night began to fall, till sable clouds gathered dense with direful auguries. and at length a wild tempest was heard thundering in the sky. Isaiah had completed the long roll of his prophecy; Jeremiah had uttered all his lamentations. The eagle wing of Ezekiel soared no longer. Daniel had recorded his visions and entered into rest. Zechariah and Haggai had fulfilled their mission, and at last Malachi, foreseeing the day that should burn as an oven, and beyond it the day when the Sun of righteousness should arise with healing in his wings, closed that volume of testimony. That was midnight. The stars seemed to be dying out, like as withered fig-leaves fall from the tree. There was no open vision; the Word of God was scarce; there was a famine of the bread of life in those days. And what then? Why, you all know. At evening time it was light. He who had long been promised suddenly came into his temple, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. The world's darkest hour had come, when there was born in Bethlehem, of the house of David,

Jesus, the Kin, of the Jews, and the Savior of men. Then the day dawned, and the day-spring from on high visited us, precisely at that darkest hour, when men said, "God has forsaken the world, and left it to pine away in everlasting gloom". Let that serve for a first illustration of light at evening time, notable as a fact, and worthy to be recollected. This, too, is precisely the way in which God acts: —

II. IN THE CONVERSION OF INDIVIDUALS.

God's laws on a great scale are always the same as his laws on little scale. A pretty little rhyme, that many of you are familiar with, endorses this statement.

*"The very law that moulds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source
That law preserves the world a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course."*

The same law which controls a planet affects a grain of dust. As God caused revelation to arise gradually, and, growing clearer and clearer, to become clearest when it seemed about to expire, so in the experience of each individual, the dawn precedes the day. When the light of divine grace first visits a man, it shines with feeble beam. Man by nature is, like a house shut up, the windows of which are all boarded over. Grace does not open every window jet once and bid the sun stream in upon weak eyes accustomed to darkness. It rather takes down a part of a shutter at a time, removes some obstruction, and so lets in, through chinks, a little light, that one may be able to bear it by degrees. The window of man's soul is so thickly encrusted with dirt, so thoroughly begrimed, that no light at all can penetrate it, till one layer is taken off, and a little yellow light is seen; and then another is removed, and then another, still admitting more light, and clearer. Was it not so with you who are now walking in the light of God's countenance, Did not your light come to you by little and little? Your experience, I know, confirms my statement, and as the light came, and you discovered your sin, and began to see the suitability of Christ to meet your case, you hoped that all was going on well. Then peradventure, on a sudden, the light seemed altogether to depart. You were cast into the thick darkness into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and you said, "Oh! now my lamp is put out for ever! I am cast out from God's presence! I am doomed beyond the hope of mercy! I shall be lost for ever and ever!" Well now, Christian, ask yourself what came of this? When you were thus

broken, sore broken in the place of dragons, and your soul suffered the wreck of all its carnal confidence, what then? At that evening time the light shone clearer with you than it had ever before. When darkness veiled your mind, you looked to Christ, and were lightened with the true light. Despairing of yourself, you cast yourself into the arms of Christ, and you had that peace of God which passeth all understanding, and still keeps your heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

May be I am addressing some who have been for a long while the subjects of such humbling influences, breaking them down. You had hoped things were going pretty fairly with you, and you trusted that at the last you would come out into clear sunshine. But oh! how disappointed you feel! You never felt so wicked, never knew that you were so desperately rebellious. Your heart is hard and stubborn; you feel as if there was a mutiny in your breast. “Surely,” you say, “such an one as I am never can be saved; it is a hopeless case.” Oh! my brother, very hopeful to our view is that which appears so hopeless to you.

*“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.”*

Are you emptied of all merit, goodness, and hope in yourselves? Then your redemption draweth nigh. When you are cleared out and turned upside down, then eternal mercy greets you. Trust Christ. If you cannot swim, give yourselves up to the stream, and you shall float. If you cannot stand, give yourselves up to him, and he will bear you as on eagles’ wings. Give up yourself. There, let it die; it is the worst enemy you ever had. Though you relied upon it, it has been a delusion and a snare to you. Now, therefore, throw the whole weight and burden of your life of sin and folly upon Jesus’ Christ, the Sin-bearer, and this shall be the time of your deliverance, so the darkest hour you ever knew shall give place to the brightest you have ever experienced. You shall go your way rejoicing, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. A third illustration may be found in: —

III. THE DELIVERANCES WHICH A COVENANT GOD WORKS FOR AN AFFLICTED PEOPLE.

The same rule which we have already observed will hold good here — at evening time it shall be light. No child of God can be very long without

trouble of some kind or other, for sure it is that the road to heaven will always be rough. Some visionaries have been talking of making a railroad to the city. With this view, they would fill up the Slough of Despond, run a tramway right through the middle of it, and construct a tunnel through the hill Difficulty. I would not advise any of you to be shareholders in the company, for it will never answer. It will bring thousands to the river of Death, and swamp them there, but at the gates of the Celestial City not a passenger will ever arrive by that route. There is a pilgrimage, and a weary pilgrimage too, which must be taken before you can obtain entrance into those gates. Still, in all their trials, God's people always find it true that at evening time it shall be light. Are you suffering from temporal troubles. You cannot expect to be without these. They are hard to bear. This, however, should cheer you, that God is as much engaged to succor and support you in your temporal, as he is in your spiritual interests. Beloved, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Not a sparrow falls on the ground without your Father knowing it. Well, now, taking quite a material view of the question, you are of more value than many sparrows. You may be very poor, yet be very, very dear to your Father in heaven. Your poverty may reduce you to the utmost pinch, but that will be the time of your sweetest relief. The widow woman at the gates of Zarepta could hardly have been more wretched than when she had gone out to gather a few sticks — she says two — enough, I suppose, to cook the handful of meal and the few drops of oil, with which to make the last morsel for herself and for her son. Ay, poor soul! At that very moment the prophet of God came in — not while there was much meal or much oil, but just as they were all spent. He came to tell her that the barrel of meal should not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain, and famine ceased in the land. God's people in Egypt were not brought out until the rigour of their bondage had become too bitter to bear. When it was intolerable, the Lord redeemed them with a strong arm and a high hand. You may, my dear hearer, be so tried that you think nobody ever had such a trial. Well, then, your faith may look out for such a deliverance as nobody else ever experienced. If you have an excess of grief, you shall have the more abundant relief. If you have been alone in sorrow, you shall, by-and-bye, have a joy unspeakable, with which no stranger can intermeddle. You shall lead the song of praise, as chief musicians, whose wailings were most bitter in the abodes of woe. Do cast your burden on God. Let me beseech those of you who love him, not to be shy of him. Disclose to him your temporal griefs. For you, young people, you remember I have just prayed that you

might early in life learn to cast your burden upon God. Your trials and troubles, while you are at home under your father's roof, are not so heavy as those that will come when you begin to shift for yourselves. Still, you may think them heavier, because your older friends make light of them. Well, while you yet remain at the home of your childhood, acquire the habit of carrying your daily troubles and griefs to God. Whisper them into your Heavenly Father's ear, and he will help you. And why should you men of business try to weather the storm without your God? 'Tis well to have industry, shrewdness, and what is called self-reliance — a disposition to meet difficulties with determination, not with despondency: —

*“To take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.”*

Still, the only safe, the only happy course for merchant or tradesman is to commit his way unto God, with a simple, child-like faith, taking counsel at the Scriptures, and seeking guidance in prayer. You will find it to be a blessed way of passing through the ordinary routine of daily anxieties, and the extraordinary pressure of occasional alarms and panics, if you can but realize your sacred privileges as disciples of Christ in the midst of all your secular duties.

Or are our trials of a spiritual character? Here full often our trials abound, and here, too, we may expect that at evening time it shall be light. Perhaps some of you pursue the road to heaven with very few soul-conflicts. Certainly there are some who do not often get through a week without being troubled on every side—fighting without, and fears within. Ah! brethren, when some of you tell me of your doubts and fears, I can well sympathise with you, if I cannot succor you. Is there anywhere a soul more vexed with doubts, and fears, and soul-conflicts than mine? I know not one. With heights of joy in serving my Master, I am happily familiar, but into very depths of despair—such an inward sinking as I cannot describe—I have likewise sunk. A more frequent, or a more fearful wretchedness of heart than I have suffered it is not likely any of you ever felt. Yet do I know that my Redeemer liveth, that the battle is sure, that the victory is safe. If my testimony be worth aught, I have always found that when I am most distressed about circumstances that I cannot control, when my hope seems to flicker where it ought to flare, when the worthlessness and wretchedness of my nature obscure the evident of any goodness and virtue imparted to me or wrought in me, just then it is that a sweet spring of cool

consolation bubbles up to quench my thirst, and a sweet voice greets my ear, "It is I; be not afraid." My witness is for the Master, that, though he may leave us for a little, it is not for long. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy have I gathered thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting mercy will I have pity upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. "Oh! believer, stay yourself upon God when you have nothing else to stay upon. Do not rely upon appearances; above all, do not listen to the suggestions of a murmuring, hardened spirit; do not credit the insinuations of the infernal fiend who, when he finds you downhearted, be it from sickness of body or anxiety of mind, is sure then to whisper some disparaging thoughts of God. What though the suggestion strikes your heart that the Lord has forsaken you, that your sins cannot be forgiven, that you will fall by the hand of the enemy, hurl it back. You know whence it came. Depend upon it, though heaven and earth go to wreck, God's promise will stand. Should hell break loose, and demons innumerable invade this earth, they shall not go one inch beyond their tether. The chain that God has cast about them shall restrain them. Not an heir of heaven shall be left to the clutch of the destroyer. Nay, his head shall not lose a hair without divine permission. You shall come out of the furnace with not a smell of fire upon you. And being so eminently preserved, in such imminent peril, your salvation shall constrain you to bless God on earth, and bless him to all eternity, with the deepest self-humiliation and the highest strains of gratitude and adoration. So, then, both in our temporal and spiritual concerns, at evening time, when the worst has come to the worst, it shall be light. When the tide has ebbed out the farthest, it will begin to flow in. When the winter has advanced to the shortest day, we shall then begin to return to spring. Be assured that it is so, it has been so, and it shall be so. To the very end of your days you may look for light at evening time. And now may I not appeal for a fourth illustration of the same truth to some of our friends who have come to: —

IV. THE EVENING TIME OF HUMAN LIFE?

This is often a delightful time, when the shadows are drawn out, and the air is still, and there is a season of preparation for the last undressing, and of anticipation for the appearing before the King in his beauty. I envy some of our brethren, the more advanced saints. Although old age brings its infirmities and its sorrows, yet they have found that brings with it the mellow joys of a matured experience, and a near prospect of the coming glory so near, so very near to their actual realisation. John Bunyan's

picture of the Land Beulah was no dream, though he calls it so. Some of our aged brethren and sisters have come to a place of very peaceful repose, where they do hear the songs of angels from the other side of the stream, and the bundles of myrrh from the mountains of Bethen they bear in their bosoms. I know you find, my dear friends, that at evening time it is light to you, very light. You were called by grace when you were young. Bright was your day-dawn; a precious dew from the Lord fell upon you in the morning. You have borne the burden and heat of the day. You feel like a child that has grown tired. You are ready to say, "Let us go to sleep, mother; let us go to sleep." But meanwhile, before you close your eyes you are conscious of such divine refreshment, of such love and such joy shed abroad in your hearts, that you find the last stage of the journey to be blessed indeed, waiting and watching for the trumpet-call that shall bid you come up higher. Your light is brighter now than ever it was before. When you come at length to depart, though it will be "evening time" in very truth, it will be "light." You have watched the sun go down sometimes. How glorious he is at his setting! He looks twice as large as he did when he was high up in the sky, and if the clouds gather round him, how he tints them all with glory! Is there anything in all the world so magnificent as the setting sun, when all the colors of heaven seem poured out upon earth's sky? It does not fill you with gloom, for it is so radiant with glory. Such, now, shall your dying bed be. To those who watch you, you shall be an object of more sacred interest than ever you were before. If there be some pains that distress you, and some temptations that harass you, they shall be but the clouds which your Master's grace and your Savior's presence shall gild with splendor. Oh! how light, how very light, it has been at evening time with some of our beloved friends! We have envied them as we have beheld the brightness gleaming from their brows in their last expiring moments. Oh! their songs! You cannot sing like them. Oh! their notes of ecstasy! You cannot understand the bliss unspeakable, as though the spray of the waves of heaven dashed into their faces, as though the light of the unclouded land had begun to stream upon their visage, and they were transfigured upon their Tabor before they passed into their rest!

Never fear dying, beloved. Dying is the last, but the least, matter that a Christian has to be anxious about. Fear living—that is a hard battle to fight; a stern discipline to endure; a rough voyage to undergo. You may well invoke God's omnipotence to your aid. But to die, that is to end the strife, to finish your course, to enter the calm heaven. Your Captain, your Leader,

your Pilot is with you. One moment, and it is over: "A gentle wafting to immortal life." It is the lingering pulse of life that makes the pains and groans. Death ends them all. What a light, oh! what a transparent light it must be when the spirit immediately passes through the veil into the glory-land! In vain the fancy strives to paint the vision of angels and of disembodied spirits, and, above all, the brightness of the glory of Christ the Lamb in the midst of the throne! Oh! the joy of that first bowing before the Mercy-seat! Oh! the rapture of that first casting the crown at his feet who loved us and redeemed us! Oh! the transport of that first folding in Immanuel's bosom, that first kiss with the kisses of his mouth, face to face! Do you not long for it? May you not say, "drop rapidly, ye sands of time! Fly round, ye axles of the running years, and let his chariot come, or let our soul soon pass, and leave her mortal frame behind, to be for ever with the Lord!" Yes, "at evening time it shall be light." Turning now from these personal reflections, we seek our last illustration in the mysterious unfolding of destiny, for it is our firm belief that: —

V. IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD AT LARGE this saying shall be verified, and it shall come to pass that "at evening time it shall be light."

Darkness has prevailed for a long time, nor does the prospect grow much brighter at present. The noble enterprise of our great missionary societies is not altogether unrequited. The prayers and efforts of a long succession of godly men are not to be accounted vain and fruitless, but we commonly feel more cause to lament than to exult. How little is the world lit up with the light of God yet! Are there more saved souls in the world now than there were a hundred years after Christ's death? I do not know that there are. A greater surface is covered with the profession of Christianity now, but at that time the light was bright where it did shine. I am afraid to say what I think of the gloom that is hanging in thick folds of cloud and scud, over the nations of the earth. Still the oracle cheers my heart, "At evening time it shall be light." Some men prophesy that it will not be so. Long ages of delay make them grow impatient. This impatience provokes questioning. Those questions invariably tend to unbelief. But who shall make void the promises of God? Are not nations to be born in a day? Will the wild Arab never bow before the King of Zion? Shall not Ethiopia stretch out her arms to God? As children of the day, doth it not behove us to walk in the light of the Lord? Divine testimony has more weight with us than the conjectures of benighted men! Christ has bought this world, and he will have it in possession from the river even to the ends of the earth. He has redeemed it,

and he will claim it for his own. You may rest assured that whatever is contained in the scroll of prophecy shall be fulfilled according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Notwithstanding any difficulties you may have in interpreting the seals or the trumpets of the Apocalypse, You have no room to doubt that Jesus Christ will be acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords over this whole world, and that in every corner and nook of it his name will be famous. To him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Do not be troubled by seers or soothsayers. Rest patiently. "Of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." As for you, your business is to work for the spreading of his kingdom, to be continually scattering the light you have, and praying for more, to be waiting upon God for more of the tongue of fire, for more of the baptism of the Eternal Spirit, for more vital quickening power. When the whole Church shall be wakened up to a spirit of earnestness and enterprise, the conversion of this world will be speedily accomplished; the idols will then be cast to the moles and the bats; anti-Christ shall sink like a millstone in the flood, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Talking but the other day upon missionary affairs with one who understands them well, he said, "Sir, we have enough missionaries in India now, of all sorts, for the evangelisation of India, if no more were sent out, provided that they were the right men." Oh! God, call, qualify, send for the right men; baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire; and make them fit instruments to do, to dare, to die, but withal to conquer. Bethink you, brethren, how, when Christ began with twelve men, he shook the earth, and now that Christians are numbered by tens of thousands, do ye tell me that the glory of God is not to be revealed, and the conquest of the world is not to be completed? I am afraid the Church is getting downhearted. She holds her banner low; she marches to the fight with bated breath and tremulous spirit. She will never win thus with craven heart. Oh! that she had more faith in her God! Then would she be "clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." If she would expect great things, she would see great things. Nations would be born in a day if we believed it and myriads would flock, like doves, to their windows if we did but look for it, work for it, and bless God for such a measure of

encouragement as we have. “At evening time it shall be light.” Accept this as a prophecy. Believe it on the highest warranty. Hope for it with the liveliest anticipation. So may ye live to see it. And unto God shall be the praise, world without end. Amen.

* “Reference is made here to a circumstance which caused the English public some passing anxiety; but a few days sufficed to disperse the cloud, and in a few months it was obliterated from people’s memory.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ZECHARIAH 11:4; 12:1-4.

Verse 4. *Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;*

This is a deep prophecy. It may be interpreted concerning many events, but I think it primarily refers to the departure of the people of Israel from God, and their rejection of Christ. It has to do with the first coming of Christ, and the way in which they cast off the great Shepherd, and he cast them off, so that Israel was simply spoiled and scattered throughout the whole earth. The teachers of those days were false to their service.

5. *Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich, and their own shepherds pity them not.*

They bound heavy burdens upon them, grievous to be borne, but they touched them not with one of their fingers. The Scribes and Pharisees were false shepherds, and had clean departed from God in the day of our Lord.

6. *For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor’s hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.*

Christ gathered a few round him who were his true sheep, who knew his voice, and these he fed; they were the flock of the slaughter. They, most of them, died a martyr death, and they were the poor and despised among men.

7. *And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.*

The “Beauty” is the loving-kindness of the presence of God; “thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” By “Bands” we understand binders, the unity of the flock; that which kept the people together. These are the two staves — the two staves with which the good shepherd blessed his flock when he is with them.

8. *Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.*

There is a mutual loathing between God and ungodly men. They, to whom Christ came, were of this character; they loathed him. and he could not endure them. See how he cried to them, “Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites; woe unto you teachers of the law.” There was a solemn division between them, and the people themselves called after their shepherds, and we are like them, so that they took up stones again to stone him, and he, with many tears, was forced to pronounce woe upon them.

9-11. *Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off: and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD*

The national covenant, as far as Israel was concerned, was broken, and they were cast off and driven from their land. Oh! the sufferings of Israel in those days! The stories were enough to melt the heart of a stone. The great sins of the ages, and, worst of all, the great sin of rejecting Christ, brought upon that people such a doom that we know not where to find its parallel in all the annals of mankind. Still, notice there was always a people that the great Shepherd looked after; “so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.”

12, 13. *And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and it not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.*

You know how this came to pass, and literally came to pass in that day, when the betrayer cast down the price of his blood, and they bought therewith the potter's field to bury strangers in. This is what Israel did with her great Shepherd — with the Messiah.

14. Then I cut assunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

They became a scattered people henceforth.

15. And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

Hard clubs and swords, and such like things, unfit for sheep.

16, 17. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor teed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

These were the shepherds to which Israel was left when they rejected Christ. They did nothing for the people; they were a curse to them, and they themselves were blinded; their own power failed. Well now, what took place actually with regard to Israel takes place with regard to any church that casts off Christ and his teaching; it becomes an and-Christ; and all has surely been fulfilled in the great and-Christian system, which is not dead even yet, which destroys and injures; and this day its arm is clean dried up, and its right eye is utterly dimmed. We have a terrible description of what God will do to these who turn away from him.

ZECHARIAH 12.

Verses 1-4. *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day saith the LORD. I*

will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

When God comes to defend his own, then, however despised the people may be, however despised Israel may be, God will make it to be a cup of trembling to them. He will make it to be a burdensome stone which they cannot endure, and they will be glad to be rid of it. I remember a story in one of the legends of the old saints concerning a holy woman who was taken away from her place of retreat by the ungodly, with a view of forcing her into sin. The legend runs that as they carried her, she was quite unable to resist their power, but she became heavier and heavier, so that they could not carry her and were obliged to set her down, and then she went back to where she was; and I believe that the legend pictorially sets forth what happens when a true child of God is carried captive by temptation and sin. By-and-bye, God comes and makes them to be a burdensome stone, and they are obliged to lay them down.

COMING TO CHRIST

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“To whom coming.” — 1 Peter 2:4.

IN THESE three words you have, first of all, a blessed person mentioned, under the pronoun “whom” — “To whom coming.” In the way of salvation we come alone to Jesus Christ. All comings to baptism, comings to confirmation, comings to sacrament are all null and void unless we come to Jesus Christ. That which saves the soul is not coming to a human priest, nor even attending the assemblies of God’s saints; it is coming to Jesus Christ, the great exalted Savior, once slain, but now enthroned in glory. You must get to him, or else you have virtually nothing upon which your soul can rely. “To whom coming.” Peter speaks of all the saints as coming to Jesus, coming to him as unto a living stone, and being built upon him, and no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, and if any man say that coming anywhere but to Christ can bring salvation, he hath denied the faith and utterly departed from it. The coming mentioned in the text is a word which is sometimes explained in Scripture by hearing, at other times by trusting or believing, and quite as frequently by looking. “To whom coming.” Coming to Christ does not mean coming with any natural motion of the body, for he is in heaven, and we cannot climb up to the place where he is; but it is a mental coming, a spiritual coming; it is, in one word, a trusting in and upon him. He who believes Jesus Christ to be God, and to be the appointed atonement for sin, and relies upon him as such, has come to him, and it is this coming which saves the soul. Whoever the wide

world over has relied upon Jesus Christ, and is still relying upon him for the pardon of his iniquities, and for his complete salvation, is saved.

Notice one thing more in these three words, that the participle is in the present. “To whom coming,” not “To whom having come,” though I trust many of us have come, but the way of salvation is not to come to Christ and then forget it, but to continue coming, to be always coming. It is the very spirit of the believer to be always relying upon Christ, as much after a life of holiness as when he first commenced that life; as much when he has been blessed with much spiritual nearness of access to God, and a holy, heavenly frame of mind; as much then, I say, as when, a poor trembling penitent, he said, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” To Christ we are to be, always coming; upon him always relying, to his precious blood always looking.

So I shall take the text, then, this evening thus: — These three words describe our first salvation, describe the life of the Christian, and then describe his departure, for what even is that but to be still coming to Christ, to be in his embrace for ever? First, then, these three words describe, and very accurately too: —

I. THE FIRST SALVATION OF THE BELIEVER.

It is coming to Christ. I shall not try to speak the experience of many present; I know if it were necessary you could rise and give your “Yea, yes” to it. In describing the work of grace at the first, I may say that it was indeed a very simple thing for us to come to Christ, but simple as it was, some of us were very long in finding it out. The simplest thing in all the world is just to look to Jesus and live, to drink of the life-giving stream, and find our thirst for ever assuaged. But though it is so plain that he who runs may read, and a man needs scarce any wit to comprehend the gospel, yet we went hither and thither, and searched for years before we discovered the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Most of us were like Penelope, who spun by day, and then unwound her work at night. It was even so we did. We thought we were getting up a little. We had some evidence. We said, “Yes, we are in a better state; are shall yet be saved.” But ere long the night of sorrow came in. We had a sight of our own sinfulness, and what we had spun, I say, by day, we unwound again quite as quickly by night. Well, there are some of you much in the same way now. You are like a foolish builder who should build a wall, and then should begin to knock down all the stones at once. You build, and then

pull down. Or, like the gardener who, having put into the ground his seeds and planted his flowers, is not satisfied with them, and thinks he will have something else, and so tries again. Ah! the methods and the shifts we will be at to try and save ourselves, while, after all, Christ has done it all. We will do anything rather than be saved by Christ's charity. We do not like to bow our necks to take the mercy of God, as poor undeserving sinners. Some will attend their church or their chapel with wonderful regularity, and think that that will ease their conscience, and when they get no ease of conscience from that, then they will! try sacraments, and when no salvation comes from them, then there will be good works, Popish ceremonies, and I know not what besides. All sorts of doings, good, bad, and indifferent, men will take to, if they may but have a finger in their own salvation, while all the while the blessed Savior stands by, ready to save them altogether if they will but be quiet and take the salvation he has wrought. All attempts to save ourselves by our own works are but a base bargaining with God for eternal life, but he will never give eternal life at a price, nor sell it, for all that man could bring, though in each hand he should hold a star; he will give it freely to those who want it. He will dispense it without money and without price to all who come and ask for it, and, hungering and thirsting, are ready to receive it as his free gift, but: —

***“Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorred,
And the fool with it, who insults his Lord,”***

by bringing in anything that he can do as a Around of dependence, and putting that in the place of the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I said, dear friends, that it was very simple, and indeed it is so, a very simple thing to trust Jesus and be saved, but it cost some of us many a day to find it out. Shall I just mention some of the ways in which persons are, long before they find it out. Some ask, “What is the best way to act faith? What is the best way to get this precious believing that I hear so much spoken of?” Now the question reminds me of a madman who, standing at a table which is well spread, says to a person standing there, “Tell me what is the best way to eat. What is the philosophy of eating?” “Why,” the man replies, “I cannot be long about that; I need not write a long treatise on it: the best way I know of is to eat.” And when people say, “What is the best way to get faith?” I say, “Believe.” “But what is the best way to believe?” Why, believe. I can tell you nothing else. Some may say to you, “Pray for

faith." Well, but how can you pray without faith? Or if they tell you to read, or do, or feel, in order to get faith, that is a roundabout way. I find not such exhortations as these put down as the gospel, but our Master, when he went to heaven, bade us go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and what was that gospel to me? His own words are, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and we cannot say anything clearer than that. "Believe" — that is, trust — "and be baptized," and these two things are put before you as Christ's ordained way of salvation. Now you want to philosophise, do you? Well, but why should a hungry man philosophise about the bread that is before him? Eat, sir, and philosophise afterwards. Believe in Jesus Christ, and when you get the joy and peace which faith in him will be sure to bring, then philosophize as you will.

But some are asking the question, "How shall I make myself fit to be saved?" That is similar to, a man who, being very black and filthy, coming home from a coal mine or from a forge, says, seeing the bath before him: "How shall I make myself fit to be"? You tell him at once that there cannot be any fitness for washing, except filthiness, which is the reverse of a fitness. So there can be no fitness for believing in Christ, except sinfulness, which is, indeed, the reverse of fitness. If you are hungry, you are fit to eat; if you are thirsty, you are fit to drink; if you are naked, you are fitted to receive the garments which charity is giving to those who need them; if you are a sinner, you are fitted for Christ, and Christ for you; if you are guilty, you are fitted to be pardoned; if you are lost, you are fitted to be saved. This, is all the fitness Christ requireth, and cast every other thought of fitness far hence; yea, cast it to the winds. If thou be needy, Christ is ready to enrich thee. If thou wilt come and confess thine offenses before God, the gracious Savior is willing to pardon thee just as thou art. There is no other fitness wanted.

But then, if you have answered that, some will begin to say, "Yes, but the way of salvation is coming to Christ and I am afraid I do not come in the right way." Dear, dear, how unwise we are in the matter of salvation! We are much more foolish than little children are in common, everyday life. A mother says to her little child, "Come here, my dear, and I will give you this apple." Now I will tell you what the first thought of the child is about; it is about the apple; and the second thought of the child is about its mother; and the very last thought he has is about the way of coming. His mother told him to come, and he does not say, "Well, but I do not know

whether I shall come right." He totters along as best he can, and that does not seem to occupy his thoughts at all. But when you say to a sinner, "Come to Christ, and you shall have eternal life," he thinks about nothing but his coming. He will not think about eternal life, nor yet about Jesus Christ, to whom he is bidden to come, but only about coming, when he need not think of that at all, but just do it — do what Jesus bids him — simply trust him." "What kind of coming is that," says John Bunyan, "which saves a soul?" and he answers, "Any coming in all the world if it does but come to Jesus." Some come running; at the very first sermon they hear they believe in him. Some come slowly; they are many years before they can trust him. Some come creeping; scarcely able to come, they have to be helped by others, but as long as they do but come, he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You may have came in the most awkward way in all the world, as that man did who was let down by ropes through the ceiling into the place where Jesus was, but Christ rejects no coming sinner, and you need not be looking to your coming, but looking to Christ. Look to him as God — he can save you; as the bleeding, dying Son of Man — he is willing to save you, and flat before his cross, with all your guilt upon you, cast yourself, and believe that he will save you. Trust him to do it, and he must save you, for that is his own word, and from it he cannot depart. Oh! cease, then, that care about the calling, and look to the Savior.

We have met with others who have said, "I Well, I understand that, that if I trust in Christ, I shall be saved, but — but — but — I do not understand that passage in the Revelation: I cannot make out that great difficulty in Ezekiel; I am a great deal troubled about predestination and free will, and I cannot believe that I shall be saved until I comprehend all this." Now, my dear friend, you are altogether on the wrong tack. When I was going from Cook's Haven to Heligoland to the North of Germany, I noticed when we were out at sea, far away from the sight of land, innumerable swarms of butterflies. I wondered whatever they could do there, and when I was at Heligoland I noticed that almost every wave that came up washed ashore large quantities of poor dead, drowned butterflies. Now do you know those butterflies were just like you? You want to go out on to the great sea of predestination, free will, and I do not know what. Now there is nothing for you there, and you have no more business there than the butterfly has out at sea. It will drown you. How much better for you just to come and fly to this Rose of Sharon — that is the thing for you. This Lily of the

Valley — come and light here. There is something here for you, but out in that dread-sounding deep, without a bottom or a shore, you will be lost, seeking after the knowledge of difficulties, which God has hidden from man, and trying to pry into the thick darkness where God conceals truth which it were better not to reveal. Come you to Jesus. If you must have the knots untied, try to untie them after you get saved, but now your first business is with Jesus; your first business is coming unto him; for if you do not, your ruin is certain, and your destruction will be irretrievable. But I must not enlarge. Coming to Christ is very simple, yet how long it takes men to find it out!

Again, we, bear our witness to-night, that nothing but coming to Christ ever did give us any peace. In my own case I was distracted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted for some years, and I never could believe my sin forgiven or have any peace by day or night until I simply trusted Jesus, and from that time my peace has been like a river. I have rejoiced in the certainty of pardon, and sung with triumph in the Lord my God, and many of you are constantly doing the same, but until you looked to Christ, you had not any peace. You searched, and searched, and searched, but your search was fruitless until you looked into the five wounds of the expiring Savior, and there you found life from the dead.

And once more, when we did come to Christ, we came very tremblingly, but he did not cast us out. We thought he never died for us, that he could not wash our sins away. We conceived that we were not of his elect; we dreamed that our prayers could only echo upon a brazen sky, and never bring us an answer. But still we came to Christ, because we dared not stop away. We were like a timid dove that is hunted by a hawk, and is afraid. We feared we should be destroyed, but he did not say to us, “You came to me tremblingly, and I will reject you.” Nay, but into the bosom of his love he received us, and blotted out our sins. When we came to Jesus, we did not come bringing anything, but we came to him for everything. We came strictly empty-handed, and we got all we wanted in Christ. There is a piece of iron, and if it were to say, “Where am I to get the power from to cling to the loadstone?” the loadstone would say, “Let me get near you, and I will supply you with that.” So we sometimes think, “How can I believe? How can I hope? How can I follow Christ?” Ay, but let Christ get near us, and he finds us with all that. We do not come to Christ to bring our repentance, but to get repentance. We do not come to him with a broken heart, but for

a broken heart. We do not so much even come to him with faith, as come to him for faith.

*“True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy.”*

This is the first way of salvation — simply trusting and looking up to Christ for everything. But, then, we did trust. There is a difference between knowing about trust and trusting. By God’s Holy Spirit, we were not left merely to talk about faith, nor to think about it, but we did believe. If the Government were to announce that there would be ten thousand acres of land in New Zealand given to a settler, I can imagine two men believing it. One believes it and forgets it; the other believes it and takes his passage to go out and get the land. Now the first kind of faith saves nobody; but the second faith, the practical faith, is that which, for the sake of seeking Christ, gives up the sins of this life, the pleasures of it — I mean the wicked pleasures of it — gives up all confidence in everything else, and casts itself into the arms of the Savior. There is the sea of divine love; he shall be saved who plunges boldly into it, and casts himself upon its waves, hoping to be upborne. Oh! my hearer, hast thou done this? If so, thou art certainly a saved one. If thou hast not, oh! may grace enable thee to do it ere yet that setting sun has hidden himself beneath the horizon. Hast thou known this before, that a simple trust in Christ will save thee? This is the one message of this inspired Volume. This is the gospel according to Paul, the one gospel which we preach continually. Try it, and if it save thee not, we will be bondsmen for God for thee. But it must save thee, for God is true, and cannot fail, and he has declared, “He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.”

Thus I have tried to explain as clearly as I can that coming to Jesus is the first business of salvation. Now, secondly, and with brevity. This is: —

II. A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The Christian is always coming to Christ. He does not look upon faith as a matter of twenty years ago, and done with, but he comes today and he will come to-morrow. He will come to Jesus Christ afresh to-night before he goes to bed. We come to Jesus daily, for Christ is like the well outside the

cottager's house. The man lets down the bucket and gets the cooling draught, but he goes again to-morrow, and he will have to go again at night if he is to leave a fresh supply. He must constantly go to the same place. Fishes do not live in the water they were in yesterday; they must be in it to-day. Men do not breathe the air which they breathed a week ago; they must have fresh air into the lungs moment by moment. Nobody thinks that he can be fed upon the fact that he did have a good meal six weeks ago; he has to eat continually. So "the just shall live by faith." We come to Jesus just as we came at first, and we say to him: —

*"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die."*

This is the daily and hourly life of the Christian.

But while we thus come daily, we come more boldly than we used to do. At first we came like cringing slaves; now we came as emancipated men. At first we came as strangers. Now we come as brethren. We still come to the cross, but it is not so much to find pardon for past sins, for these are forgiven, as to find fresh comfort from looking up to him who wrought out perfect righteousness for us.

We come, also, to Jesus Christ, more closely than we used to do. I hope, brethren and sisters, you can say that you are not at such a distance from Christ now as you once were. We ought to be always getting nearer to him. The old preachers used to illustrate nearness to Christ by the planets. They said there were Jupiter and Saturn far away, with very little light and very little heat from the sun, and then they have their satellites, their rings, their moons, and their belts to make for that. Just so they said, with some Christians. They get worldly comforts — their moons, and their belts — but they have not got much of their Master; they have got enough to save them, but oh! such little light. But, said they, when you get to Mercury, there is a planet without moons. Why, the sun is its moon, and, therefore, what does it want with moons when it has the full blaze of the sun's light and heat continually pouring upon it? And what a nimble planet it is; how it spins along in its orbit, because it is near the sun! Oh! to be like that — not to be far away from Jesus Christ, even with all the comforts of this life, but

to be near him, filled with life and sacred activity through the abundance of fellowship and communion with him. It is still coming, but it is coming after a nearer sort.

And I may say, too, that it is coming of a dearer sort, for there is more love in our coming now than there used to be. We did come at first, not so much loving Christ, as venturing to trust him, thinking him, perhaps, to be a hard Master; but now we know him to be the best of friends, the dearest of husbands. We come to his bosom, and we lean our heads upon it. We come in our private devotion; we tell him all our troubles; we unburden our hearts, and get his love shed abroad in our hearts in return, and we go away with a joy that makes our heart to leap within us and to bound like a young roe over the mountain-tops. Oh! happy is that man who gets right into the wounds of Jesus, and, with Thomas, cries, "My Lord and my God!" This is no, fanaticism, but a thing of sober, sound experience with some of us. We can rejoice in him, having no confidence in the flesh. It is still coming but it is coming after a dearer fashion.

Yet, mark you, it is coming still to the same person, coming still as poor humble ones to Christ. I have often told you, my dear brethren and sisters, that when you get a little above the ground, if it is only an inch, you get too high. When you begin to think that surely you are a saint, and that you have some good thing to trust to, that rotten stuff must all be pulled to pieces. Believe me, God will not let his people wear a rag of their own spinning; they must be clothed with Christ's righteousness from head to foot. The old heathen said he wrapped himself up in his integrity, but I should think he did not know what holes there were in it, or else he would have looked for something better. But we wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ, and there is not a cherub before the throne that wears a vestment so right royal as the poor sinner does when he wears the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Oh! child of God, always live upon your Lord. Hang upon him, as the pitcher hangs upon the nail. Lean on your Beloved; his arm will never weary of you. Stay yourselves upon him; wash in the precious fountain always; wear his righteousness continually; and be glad in the Lord, and your gladness need never fail while you simply and wholly lean upon him. And now, not to detain you longer, I come to the last point, upon which we will only say a word or two. The text is: —

III. A VERY CORRECT DESCRIPTION OF OUR DEPARTURE.

“To whom coming.” We shall soon, very soon, quit this mortal frame. I hope you have learned to think of that without any kind of shudder. Can you not sing: —

*“Ah! I shall soon be dying,
Time swiftly glides away;
But on my Lord relying
I hail the happy day.”*

What is there that we should wait here for? Those who have the most of this world’s cods have found it paltry stuff. It perishes in the using. There is a satiety about it; it cannot satisfy the great heart of an immortal man. It is well for us that there is to be an end of this life, and especially for us to whom that end is glowing with immortality. Well, the hour of death will be to us a coming to Christ, a coming to sit upon his throne. Did you ever think of that? “To him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne.” Lord, Lord, we would be well content to, sit at thy feet. ‘Twere all the heaven we would ask if we might but creep behind the door, or stand and be manual servants, or sit, like Mordecai, in the king’s court.’ No; but it must not be. We must sit on his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever. This is what death will bring you — a glorious participation in the royalties of your ascended Lord.

What is the next thing? “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” So that we, are to be going to Christ ere long to behold his glory, and what a sight that will be! Have you ever thought of that too? What must it be to behold his glory? Some of my brethren think that when they get to heaven they shall like to behold some of the works of God in nature and so on. I must confess myself more satisfied with the idea that I shall behold his glory, the glory of the Crucified, for it seems to me that no kind of heaven but that comes up to the description of the Apostle when he saith, “Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But to see the stars, has entered into the heart of man, and to behold the works of God in nature, has been conceived of; but the joys we speak of are so spiritual that the Apostle says, “He has revealed them unto us by his Spirit,” and this is what he has revealed, “That they may behold my glory.” St. Augustine used to say there were two sights he would like to have seen — Rome in her splendor, and Paul preaching — the last the better sight of the two. But there is a third sight for which one might give up all, give up

seeing Naples, or seeing anything, if we might but see the King his beauty. Why, even the distant glimpse which we catch of him through a glass or a telescope darkly ravishes the soul. Dr. Hawker was once waited upon by a friend, who asked him to go and see a naval review. He said, "No, thank you; I do not want to go." "You are a loyal man, doctor, and you would like to see the defences of your country." "Thank you, I do not wish to go." "But I have got a ticket for you, and you must go." "No," he said, "thank you," and after he had been pressed hard he said, "You have pressed me till I am ashamed, and now I must tell you — mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off, and I have not any taste now for all the pomps that this world could possibly show." And if such a distant sight of Jesus can do this, what must it be to behold his glory with what the old Scotch divines used to call "a face-to-face view"; when the veil is taken down, when the clouds are blown away, and you see him face to face? Oh! long-expected day begin, when we shall be to him coming to dwell with him.

Once more only. Recollect we shall come to Christ not only to behold his glory, but to share in it. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Whatever Christ shall be, his people shall be, in happiness, riches, and honor, and together they shall take their full share. The Church, his bride, shall sit on the same throne with him, and of all the splendours of that eternal triumph she will have her half, for Christ is no niggard to his imperial spouse, but she whom he chose before the world began, and bought with blood, and wrapped in his righteousness, and espoused to himself for ever, shall be a full partaker of all the gifts that he poses world without end. And this shall be, and this shall be, and this shall be for ever; for ever you shall be with Christ, for ever coming to him. When the miser's wealth has melted; when the honors of the conqueror have been blown away or consumed like chaff in the furnace; when sun and moon grow dim with age, and the hoary pillars of this earth begin to rock and reel with stern decay; when the angel shall have put one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and shall have sworn by him that liveth that time shall be no more; when the ocean shall be licked up with tongues of fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up — then, then shall you be for ever with the Lord, eternally resting, eternally feasting, eternally magnifying him; being filled with all his fullness to the utmost capacity of your enlarged being, world without end.

So God grant it to us, that we may come to Christ now, that we may continue to come to Christ, that we may come to Christ then, lest rejecting him to-night we should be rejecting him for ever; lest refusing to trust him, we should be driven from his presence to abide in misery for ever! May we come now, for Christ's sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

MATTHEW 8.

Verse 1. *When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.*

There was a charm about his preaching, not that he modified his doctrine, or that he cut down his precepts; he spoke very plainly, very searchingly, and yet the people came to hear him. There is a something in the conscience of man that makes him turn away from that which flatters him, and makes him hear almost against his liking that which searches him.

2. *And, behold,*

Never mind about the crowd; fix your eye on the one man; behold, etc. — here is a mark of attention.

2. *There came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

He could not live in the city, but he might be found on the mount, in the outskirts of the crowd, where he would hear that gracious voice; and he came and “worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,” in which I detect no unbelief, but rather a very strong faith. “If thou dost but will, I can be made clean.” And Jesus, seeing the man was willing to dispense with any outward form used one.

3. *And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,*

Not making himself unclean, as any other man would have done, but making him clean whom he touched.

3. *Saying, I will;*

A word of encouragement.

3. *Be thou clean.*

A word of power.

3. *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

Christ's grace, which usually wrought at once, in an instant, wrought for ever — the man was cleansed, never to be sick again; cured perfectly; the leprosy was cleansed.

4. *And Jesus said unto him, See thou tell no man;*

Do not spread the news, the crowd is inconvenient already. It was not only Christ's modestly, but Christ's wisdom to keep down the throng a little, for they were too many which gathered about him.

4. *But go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

While the ceremonial law stood, Christ was very careful to pay it honor. He came not to destroy, but he came to Build up and to fulfill. He would have this man go and get a certificate from the priest that he was cleansed. Perhaps if he did not go at once, when it was found out that Christ healed him, the certificate might have been denied, and the man might not have been able to mingle with the company, so he sent him away quickly, to go to the priest with his offering to get the assurance faint he was really cleansed. When Christ's work is certified by Christ's voice, then is it sure indeed.

5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum,*

Which I may call his headquarters, he seems to have taken up his abode here for a time, to have gone to and fro to Capernaum.

5. *There came unto him a centurion,*

An officer over a hundred men, of some importance in those days; a small band of the Roman army placed in Herod's territory, perhaps to keep watch.

5, 6. *Beseeking him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.*

Sir Risdon Bennett tells us that there is a species of palsy which is accompanied with great pain, and we know, even from the apocrypha,

there is a case there of a man grievously tormented with palsy — not exactly the same thing, perhaps, that we call palsy nowadays.

7. And Jesus said mite him, I will come and heal him.

He did not say, “I will come and see him”; that would have been kind — he did not say what you and I would say, “I will come and pray with him”; that is all we can do — but “I will come and heal him.” Here is the tenderness of man and the power of God.

8, 9. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority,

Here was a great point — a man commissioned, a man authorized, girt with authority; and he looked upon Christ as in the same condition, sent of God, under divine authority, girt about with a heavenly commission.

9. Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

He did not further explain. It is a pity sometimes when we explain things to God in prayer, as I am afraid we often do, God knows what we mean. And so here he did not explain his meaning; we can see it clearly enough. “Thou too, O Christ, art under the authority of God, and sent by him, and thou hast the powers of nature under thy control. Thou hast but to say the word, and they go; do this, and they do it.”

10. When Jesus heard it, he marveled,

He had marveled at men’s unbelief; now he marvels at their faith, so that the thing which touches the wonder of God is man’s unbelief and man’s faith.

10. And said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,

This man is not an Israelite; he is a Roman soldier; but I have never found so much faith in those to the manner born as I find in this stranger.

11. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west,

From differing lands and extreme distances.

11. *And shall sit down*

Or recline in ease and rest.

11-12. *With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.
But the children of the kingdom,*

Those born in Israel, who belong to the promised seed.

12-13. *Shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.*

It is greatly important not only that we believe, but that we believe as much as ever we can, that we believe all that Christ has spoken. Some people, when they are converted, believe that they may fall from grace, and they do; according to their faith, so is it unto them. If they could believe for eternal life and lay hold on everlasting life, they would find it so, for generally it is according to their faith that it is unto them.

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“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.” — Jonah 2:7.

WHEN man was first made, there was no fear of his forgetting God for it was his highest privilege and delight to have communion with his Maker. “The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day,” and Adam was privileged to hold fellowship with God, closer, perhaps, than even the angels had in heaven. But the spell of that sacred harmony was rudely broken by man’s disobedience and his dreadful fall. Ever since our first parent tasted of the forbidden fruit, which brought death into our world, and all its train of woes, his mortal race has been naturally prone to forget God. The evil propensities of flesh and blood have made it impossible to persuade man to remember his Creator. The complaint of God against the Jews is true as an indictment against the whole human family. “Hear, O heaven, and give ear. O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me; the ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” Man is foolish; he flies from the highest good. Man is wicked; he turns his back upon supreme holiness. Man is worldly: he forgets the kingdom of God and the world to come. Man is wilful; he follows his own vain imaginations, and, with head-strong rebellion, opposes himself to his God, that he may pursue his own wayward course, and gratify his wanton passions.

To convince a man of his error, to arrest him in his evil pursuits, to reclaim him to the paths of righteousness — this is seldom accomplished without dire trouble and deep affliction. Some men, it is true, are brought to God by gentle means; they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds; still, a much

larger class of persons remains, upon whom these silken cords would exert no influence. They must not be handled softly, but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts; there must be the crowbar, and even the battering ram, to give a furious cannonade. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for truth except by storm. Sword in hand, God's law must scale the ramparts. With thundering report, God's Word must dash down the walls of their confidence, and make breach after breach in the bastions of their pride, and even then they will fight it out, and never yield, until, driven to an awful extremity, they see that they must either yield at once, or else be lost for ever. It is with such persons that I now particularly want to deal. There are those who have forgotten God after having once known him, and they are not likely to be brought back without great trouble; and there are others who never did know God, and they never will enquire after him, unless they are driven to their wits' end by calamity, as when a great famine in the land where he dwelt compelled the prodigal for very lack of bread to seek his Father's house. So I have first to remonstrate: —

I. WITH THE BACKSLIDER.

Let me, however, before I go into the matter with you, describe a little more minutely the individuals I wish to address. There is no need to call out your names; it will suffice if we portray your character and describe your conduct. There are some of you who used to be members of Christian churches years ago, but you have gradually declined, and so reckless has your career at length become, that it is a wonder that you have not utterly perished in your sin. You seemed to run well on the outset, and for a time you held on in the way; but where are you now? Well, you happen at this present to be in God's house, and I do trust that God's own hour has come, when he will meet you and bring you back. What we have to say of Jonah, I do entreat you to apply to yourselves; if the cap seems to fit you, put it on and wear it, even though it should be a fool's cap: wear it till you are ashamed of yourselves, and are led to confess your folly before the God who is able to remove it, and to make you wise unto salvation.

Observe, dear friends, that though Jonah remembered the Lord, it was not till he got into the whale's belly, nor even then till his soul fainted within him. He did not remember the Lord all the time he was going down to Joppa to find a ship, nor yet when he got on board that ship. His Master had said to him, Jonah, go to Nineveh," but Jonah was a strong-willed,

head-strong fellow. Though a true servant of God, and a prophet, yet he fled from the presence of the Lord. To Nineveh, he resolved within himself, he would not go. He could foresee no honor to himself out of the journey, no increase of his own reputation, no deference that would come to him amongst those proud Assyrians, so, in direct defiance of the divine command, he set off to Joppa, to take a ship and to flee from God's presence. Into the ship he got, paid the fare, and went sallying down the sea to go to Tarshish; but all this while he never thought of God. Not unlikely in this assembly there may be a woman who used to be a member of a Christian church, but she married an ungodly man; after that there was no going to the house of God, much less anything like keeping up her church membership. The shop was kept open on Sunday, or there was a pleasure party to be entertained at home, or an excursion taken into the country. All this seemed very pleasant. The disquietude of conscience she might feel at first wore off as habit made it familiar, until, year after year, this woman, who once seemed to be a true servant of Christ, lives in carelessness and indifference, not to say profanity, with hardly any thoughts of God. Perhaps she has not quite given up prayer; she could not absolutely become an enemy of Christ, or entertain a dislike to his people. Still, God was forgotten. So long as the business prospered, the husband was in good health, and the world smiled, God was never thought of. Can I be mistaken in supposing that there is a man here who in his youth was a loud talker, a vehement professor of religion, and a companion of those that fear the Lord? But after a time there seemed to be a way of getting money rather faster than the ordinary methods of honest labor or simple merchandise; so he entered into, a speculation, which soon ate out the vitals of his piety. His new projects involved new companions; in their fellowship he stifled his old convictions, and, as he would not play the hypocrite, he ceased to make any profession at all. Perhaps months have passed since he has been in a place of worship; even now he would rather be unrecognised, for he has only come here because a friend from the country asked his company to me the place and to hear the preacher. Ah! my dear sir, it is strange indeed, if you be a child of God, that you could have walked so contrary to God as you have. Yet so did Jonah. Do I, then, hold up his case before your eyes to comfort you? Nay; but let me hope that you will apply the bitter rebuke to your own soul, and be led to do as Jonah did. All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the veriest heathen on board. He was just as bad as they were. Yet was there a spark of fire

among the embers, which God in due time fanned into a flame. Happy for you if this better part of his experience should tally with your own.

Such, too, was Jonah's blank forgetfulness, that he does not appear to have thought upon his God all the while the storm raged, the billows rolled, and the ship was tossed with tempest. The poor heathen sailors were all on their knees crying for mercy, but Jonah was asleep in the vessel, till the superstitious captain himself was amazed at his apathy: "What meanest thou, O sleeper; caress thou not that we all perish?" He went down and upbraided him, and asked him how it was that he could sleep while the passengers and crew were all crying. "Arise," said he, "and call upon thy God." He was stirred up to his danger and his duty, even by a heathen! Now maybe there are some here who have had a host of troubles. Is husband dead? Are you a lone woman with a family to provide for? Or are you a widower, looking on your children with pity, whom you once regarded with a homely pride? Possibly you may have another form of trial. Your business has gone to the bad; you expected to have realised large profits by it, but you encountered loss upon loss, till your little capital has been scattered. Still, all this while you have not thought about God. Mayhap that child after child has been taken from you, and yet you have not remembered God. Is it really so, that the Lord loves you, and, because he loves you, therefore chastens you? Mark my word, you will continue to suffer loss upon loss, till you have lost all you have and all you count dear, and you will be brought to death's door yourself, but he will save you at last. If you ever were his, he never will let you sink into hell; but, oh! it will be hard work for you to get to heaven. You will be saved, but it will be so as by fire. You will be saved as by the skin of your teeth — scarcely saved, and the way in which you are saved will be a most terrible one to you. Oh! friend, I wish you would turn while God is smiting you gently, for know of a certainty if rods will not do, he will come to scourges, and if the scourge will not do, he will take the knife, and if the knife will not do, he will take the sword, and you shall have to feel it, for, as sure as God is God, he will never lose his child, and he will cut that child, as it were, into pieces, but he will save his soul. He will undermine your constitution by disease, and make you toss upon the bed of anguish, but he will bring you back. Oh! that you had grace to come back by gentler means before these terrible actions are tried!

So, then, Jonah did not think of God all this time. Now at length the vessel begins to creak, and seems as if she must go to pieces. Then they cast lots,

and the lot fell upon Jonah. He is about to be thrown into the sea. At that moment a pair of huge jaws open wide, shut again, and swallow him up. "Where am I now?" says Jonah, as he is taken down deep by the motions of this monstrous fish, till the weeds come into the fish and wrap about his head, and his life is only preserved by a miracle. Then, oh! then Jonah thinks upon his God. "When my soul fainted within me." Now why did his soul faint within him? Was it not because he thought, "Now I am in a hopeless case; I shall never come out of this; it is a wonder I am not drowned; it is a marvel I was not snapped in pieces by those huge jaws; what a hopeless case I am in! I will but linger a little while, then perish I must in this horrible prison of a whale's belly." I dare say he thought that never was man in such a plight before; never a person that was alive inside a fish; and how comfortless he must have felt with nothing but the cold deep round him. Instead of garments, weeds were wrapped about his head. How his heart throbbed, and his head ached, with no cheer, no light, no friendly voice, no succor, no help; faraway from dry land, out on the boundless deep, without a comrade to sympathise with his strange plight.

Now when a child of God goes astray, it is not at all unusual for God to bring him into just such a state as that, a condition in which he cannot help himself; forlorn and friendless, with no one that can relieve or minister to him. This dreary thought will meanwhile ever haunt his mind, "I brought it all upon myself!" Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? Like a woman who has left her husband's house, deserted her home, and betrayed her kind and tender protector, what fruit can she expect to reap of her wickedness? When she is ready to starve, when the wind blows through her tattered raiment, when her face is swollen with weeping, and her soul is full of anguish, she has only herself to upbraid, as she cries, "I have brought this upon myself; would God I had never left my cheerful homestead, however humble the lodgings might have been; would God I had never deserted the husband who loved me, and spread his aegis over me, however roughly he sometimes spake! Oh! that I had been more scrupulously obedient, and less prone to discontent!" The afterthought of sin — I think they call it remorse. Thus it was that Jonah thought upon his God, when the shame of his transgressions overwhelmed him.

Oh! how merciful our God is to allow us to think about him, and turn to him when in so pitiable a plight! "Yes," said a tradesman once to a customer for whose favors he felt little cause to be grateful, "you come to me, I know why; you have been to every other shop in the town for the

article you require, and you could not obtain it; and now you come back to me whom you had no good cause ever to leave, I shall not serve you." This is not how the Lord speaks to us. He does not resent our ingratitude. "My child, my poor child," says he, "though you have gone and spent your substance; though you have been feeding swine: though you are all black, and foul and filthy, yet you are my dear child still, and my heart yearns towards you." Without a word of rebuke, or even a taunting look, so soon as ever a poor sinner comes back to the Father's house, the Father's arms are round about his neck, and the kiss of pardon is pressed on his cheek. "I remember thee well," says he; "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities." Now if there be a backslider here — and I know there are several — I can only hope that God will bring you into Jonah's peril. You shall have no pity from me if he does; I will rather be thankful to God that he has brought you there, because I shall know then that he has some designs of love towards you. But when you get into the regions of despair, do as Jonah did — think upon your God. What, do any of you objects? Do you imagine that to think about God would make you worse? Well, think that you were once his child, and think again that he has found you out, and knows where you are. Jonah felt that God knew where he was, because he had sent the fish. God knows your whereabouts, my good woman; he knows what quarters you are now in, my fellow-sinner. Remember, too, that you are yet alive! what a wonder it is that you are still permitted to hear the voice which says, "Return, return; oh! backslider, return." God is immutable; he cannot change; his covenant is steadfast; he will not alter it. If he has loved you once, he loves you now. If I bought you, I will have you. Come back to him, then; he is your husband still. Return! return! he is your Father still — return! return! But, oh! my hearer, perhaps you have no pretensions to be a child of his! Perhaps you may have played the hypocrite and made a profession in your own strength. You turned back from the company of those who fear the Lord, because you never were truly converted. If it be so, let the mercy, which God shows to sinners, embolden you to cry to him. And may he break you to pieces now with the hammer of his Word. So may he save you, and so shall his praise be exceedingly great in your salvation.

Though I have tried thus to reach the backslider, it is likely enough that I have missed my mark, honest as my intention has been. Oh! it seems so dreadful that any of you should perish in your sins, who know the way of Rape! Some of you were candled on the knees of piety. There are those

now in heaven who look down upon you, and could they weep, you might feel their tears dropping on your brow. You know very well that time was when the hope of a better world yielded you some kind of comfort and joy. You do not think, at any rate, that you were feigning piety then, but you did account yourself, a sinner. By the compassion of the Most High, by the love of God, I pray you stop! Do not drink the cup of devils after having drank the cup of the Lord, and give not that soul to damnation which once seemed to bid fair for salvation. Eternal life is too rich a prize to trifle with. May the Spirit of God do what I cannot. May he send home these things to the persons for whom they are intended.

And now we have, in the second place, to deal with the careless, the thoughtless, the profligate, with: —

II. THOSE WHO NEVER WERE AWAKENED — moral or immoral in the world's reckoning. Jonah did not remember God till his soul fainted within him; and the reckless sinner, as a rule, never does remember God till under the stress of law, or the distress of pain and penalty; his soul is ready to faint within him. Now I hope some of you will be brought to feel this faintness.

What kind of faintness do persons who are under the saved discipline of the Spirit of God generally feel?

There is faintness of horror at their present condition. I can imagine a person lying down on the edge of a cliff and falling asleep. On suddenly waking up, having moved during his sleep, he finds himself within an inch of the precipice, and looks down and sees, far beneath him, the jagged rocks and the boiling sea. How his nerves would quiver as he realized his position and his jeopardy! Many a sinner has thus opened his eyes to discern his terrible hazard. He has suddenly waked up to find that he is on the brink of eternal wrath, standing where an angry God is waving a dreadful sword, and certain to plunge it into his heart before long. Every unconverted person here is poising over the mouth of hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten; he is hanging over the jaws of perdition by one rope, and the strands of that rope are snapping every moment. If a man does but apprehend this and feels it, I do not wonder that he faints.

Faintness, moreover, arises from a dread of horrors yet to come. Who can conceive the heart-sinking of those poor passengers on board that vessel which so lately foundered in the open sea, at the prospect of being

swallowed up alive, and sinking they knew not whither! It would be no easy thing, one would think, to keep from fainting at a time when such a doom was imminent. So when God awakens the soul by the noise of the tempest, it looks out and sees the ocean of divine wrath about to engulf it. The cries of lost spirits appal it, and it says to itself, "I shall soon mingle with those shrieks; my voice will aid the wailings of their dolorous company ore long; I shall be driven from his presence with a fiery sword at my heels' before many hours are over." Then the soul faints with alarm at the thought of judgment to come.

Faint, too, is the soul of the sinner through a sense of weakness. "I cannot do anything to avert the catastrophe" seems to be the leading idea of a person when he has fainted. Over the awakened sinner there comes this sense of weakness. When a sinner does not know himself, he thinks that being saved is the easiest thing in the world. He supposes that to come to Christ to get peace is a matter that can be done just as readily as one snaps his fingers. But when God begins to deal with him, he says, "I would believe, but I cannot"; and he cries out, "Oh! God, I find that faith is as impossible to me as keeping thy law, except thou help me!" Once he thought he could reform himself, and become as holy as an angel; but now he can do nothing, and he, cries out for very faintness, "Oh! God, what a poor, helpless, shiftless creature I am!"

And then there will sometimes come over him faintness of such a kind as I must call horrible. Well do I remember when I was in that state! I thought I would give up prayer, because it seemed of no use to pray, and yet I could not help praying; I must pray, and yet I felt that I did not pray. I thought I would not go to hear the gospel any more; there was nothing in it for me, and yet there was a fascination about the preaching of the gospel that made me go and hear it. I heard that Christ was very gracious to sinners but I could not believe that he would be gracious to me. Little did it matter whether I heard a promise or a threatening. I liked the threatening best. Threatenings appeared to me to be just what I deserved, and they provoked some kind of emotion in my breast. But when I heard a promise I shuddered with a gloomy feeling that it was of no use to me; I felt condemned already. The pains of hell got hold upon me, so tortured was my soul with the forebodings of an endless doom. I heard, the other day, of a young minister becoming an infidel, and I prayed for him. What, think you, was the burden of my petition? I prayed that God would make him feel the weight of his hand; for I cannot imagine that a man who has once

felt the weight of God's hand can ever afterwards doubt his being, his sovereignty, or his power. Believe me, brethren, there is such an unutterable anguish, as a man could not long endure without becoming absolutely insane, which God makes some people feel in order to crush their love of sin, to purge them of their self-righteousness, and bring them to a sense of their dependence on himself. Some men can never be brought in any other way. I may be addressing the patients I am describing. I sincerely hope I am. You are feeling God's hand. The whole weight of it rests upon you, and under it you are crushed, as a moth is crushed beneath one's finger. Now I have a message from God for you. When Jonah; was in your case he remembered his God. Tell me, what sayest thou, poor heart — what sayest thou to remembering thy God?

The case I am going to describe is not exactly that of John Newton, but it is from his experience that I gather my picture. There is a young man with a very good father, a holy father. As the young man grows up he does not like his trade: he cannot bear it, no he says to his father, "While I succumb to your government I mean to have my own way; other people enjoy themselves, and so will I; and as I cannot do it under your roof. I will follow my fancy elsewhere." He goes to sea. When he is at sea he discovers that all is not quite to his taste; the work he has to do is very different from what he had been accustomed to; still, he doesn't flinch. At the first port he reaches he gives loose to his passions. "Ah!" says he, "this is a jolly life! This is far better than being at home with my father, and being kept tied to my mother's apron-strings all my days. I say a merry life is the thing to suit me, sir." He goes on board again, and wherever the vessel puts in, each port becomes an outlet for his vices. He is a rare boy to swear and drink, and when he comes back to England he has no words too bitter to utter against religion in general, and against his father's scruples of conscience in particular. It so happens that one day there comes on a dreadful storm. He has to take a long spell at the pumps, and when that is over he must begin to pump again, for the ship is ready to founder, and every man must keep hard at it hour after hour. There is a driving wind and a heavy tempest. At last they are told that nothing can save them; there are breakers ahead, and the vessel will be on shore! He lashes himself to the mast and floats about all night, and the next day, and the next, with faint hope of life. He has some twitches of conscience now; he cannot help thinking of his father and mother. However, he is not going to be broken down by a trifle. He has a hard heart, and he will not give way yet. He is

crashed on shore, and finds himself among a barbarous people. He is taken care of by the barbarians; they give him food; albeit his meal is scant, and he is presently set to work as a slave. His master proves harsh to him, and his master's wife especially cruel. He gets but little to eat, and he is often beaten. Still, he bears up, and hopes for better days. But, half-starved and hard worked, his bodily health and his mental energy are reduced to a low degree. No marvel that fever overtakes him. Who has he to nurse him? What friend to care for him? The people treat him as a dog, and take no notice of him. He can neither stir nor move. In vain he pines for a drop of water in the dead of the night; he feels that he must die of thirst. He lifts his voice, but there is nobody to hear him. To his piteous appeal there is no answer. Then it is he thinks, "Oh! God, if I might but get back to my father!" Then it is, when he is at the last extremity, that he thinks of home.

Now what did happen in the case of John Newton will happen, and has happened, in the case of many a sinner. He never would come back to God, but at last he felt that it was no use trying anywhere else. He was driven to utter desperation. In this dilemma his heart said, "Oh! that I might find the Lord." Hark, now: I will tell you a tale. A lot of sailors were going to sea. When about to start, the owner said, "There! I have bought a lifeboat; put it on board." They reply, "No, never! We don't believe in lifeboats; they are new-fangled things. We do not understand them, and we shall never use one." "Put it on board, and let it bide there," says the captain. "Well, captain," says the boatswain, "a tom fool of a boat — isn't it? I cannot think what the owner meant by putting such a thing as this on board." Old tars, as they walk along the deck say to themselves, "Ah! I never saw such a thing in all my life as that! Think of old Ben Bolt taking a lifeboat with him! Don't believe in such gimcracks!" Presently a stiff breeze springs up, it comes to a gale — a hurricane — a perfect tornado! Now let down the lifeboat, captain. "No, no, no; nonsense!" Let down the lifeboat! No; the other boats are got out, but they are stove in, one after another, and capsized. They bring out another; she cannot ride out the storm. There she goes, right up on the crest of the waves and she has gone over, bottom uppermost. It is all over with them! "What shall we do, captain?" "Try the lifeboat, boatswain." Just so; when every spar is gone, when every other boat is washed overboard, and when the ship is going down, they will take to the lifeboat. So be it. The Lord wash all your boats overboard. May it please God to wreck your vessel; may he shiver every timber, and make you take to the lifeboat. I fear me some of you will never take counsel till

you reach the crisis. May there come, then, such a storm that you will be driven to take to Christ. That done there is no storm you need ever fear. That done, let the loudest tempest roar, you are safe; you have Christ in the vessel with you. Two or three more words, and I have done. God has been pleased to give his dear Son, his only-begotten Son, to die a most dreadful death, not for righteous ones, but for sinners. Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are a sinner, you are the sort of person Christ came to save. If you are a lost one, you are the sort of man that Jesus Christ came to seek. Let your present sorrow comfort you, because it is an indication that you are the kind of person that Christ will bless. Let your despair deliver you from despair, for when you despair there is hope for you. When you can do nothing, God will do everything. When you are empty of your own conceits, there is room for Christ to enter your heart. When you are stripped, Christ's garments are provided for you. When you are hungry, the bread that cometh down from heaven is provided for you. When you are thirsty, the water of life is yours. Let this broken-heartedness, this terror, this alarm, this faintness, this weakness of yours, only lead you to say, "I am such as Christ invited to himself. I will go to him, and if I perish, I will perish only there"; and if you trust Jesus, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hand. May you trust him here and now. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOHN 14:1-20.

This is a chapter which I suppose most of us know by heart, full of comfort, a very river of delight.

Remember that our Lord spoke this to his own beloved ones — to the inner circle. It was not addressed to the general public. It is not a sermon to the world. It is a discourse to those who had lived with him, and were now sorrowing because he was about to leave them by a cruel death. Thus he begins: —

1. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

"You have believed in God, whom you have never seen. Believe in me when you cannot see me. Believe that I still am — that I still am working for your good. You have believed in God, though he has not manifested

himself to you in his person as I have done. Now when I am no longer seen of you, believe in me as you believe in the invisible God.” It is well for us to have the same faith in Christ that we have in the everlasting God. This is the cure for the heart trouble. You are sure to be troubled in heart unless you have much faith in God. “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”

2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Our Lord was going away, but he was going away with a purpose, and a grand purpose too — a purpose which had to do with the everlasting future of his beloved ones. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

And he will come again, beloved. That is our grandest hope. We are looking for his coming. It is very sweet to know that we shall be for ever with the Lord if we die before his coming; but still the hope of God's people is the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead — his taking to himself all his redeemed to be for ever with him.

4. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

We know where Christ has gone. Every step we can follow. The way we know. It always reconciles us to a friend's going away if we know where he has gone — know all about him. A mother tells me that she has missed her boy now for twelve months, and never heard from him. That is sorrow; but when we know that our son has gone to the other side of the world, and we know why he has gone, and where he has gone, and what is coming of it, we are greatly comforted. So Jesus says, “Whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.”

5. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

There is always somebody who has not learned the lesson. I am afraid that it is not one Thomas, but a great many Thomases that still have to say, “We know not.” Although Christ himself be the teacher, we are always poor learners.

6. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

There is nothing good except by Christ. They that hate Christ very soon hate God. They get rid of the Christ of the gospel, and they soon get rid of God out of creation too, and there is no coming to the Father in any way or fashion except by Christ. He has gone to the Father, but he is also the way to the Father.

7, 8. *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

There is a Philip as well as a Thomas. It does not seem that, even with Christ for a teacher, we should learn much without the Holy Ghost. The greatest blessing, after all, is not the bodily presence of the Savior, though we learn something from that, but it is tire indwelling and the teaching of the Holy Ghost which we most of all need.

9-11. *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

The eternal union between Christ and the Father should never be forgotten by us. He seems to sink himself, but the well-beloved Son will have it that his words are not his own, but come from the Father. I cannot help remarking how different this is from some who profess to be the ministers of Christ. They must be original; they must be great thinkers. Every man nowadays makes his own gospel, but the Savior was no original — the grandest of all intellects, and yet he says, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work’s sake.”

12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

While the Master was here in his humiliation he healed a few poor Jews, and raised here and there a dead one, but he purposely veiled the splendor of his godhead. But now that he has gone up on high, he does greater wonders by his servants than he himself personally did, for he said to a few poor fishermen, “Go and break up the Roman Empire,” and they did it. They preached the gospel, and the gods of the heathen that sat upon their thrones for ages were cast to the moles and the bats. And there are greater victories yet before the Church of God. You ought not to measure our passage by the past, but believe that “greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father.”

13. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

We do not believe enough in the power of prayer. I sometimes feel staggered when I meet with good people, undoubtedly good people, who still look upon it as a new thing that we should believe that God hears our prayers. But this is the fundamental of Christian experience. How can we live without the mercy-seat? And if that mercy-seat be nothing but a vain show, and prayer be only a pious but useless exercise, what is there in the Christian religion at all? We have heard some very wise people say that prayer is no doubt beneficial to those who offer it; but to suppose that it has any effect upon the mind of God is absurd. Do you not see, brethren, that they think us all idiots. They must do so, for do you suppose that any but an idiot would go on praying at all if he did not believe that it had some effect upon the mind of God, and that it did prevail with God? I would as soon stand and whistle out of my bedroom window for half an hour, as I would kneel down and pray for half an hour, if there were to be no result coming from it, and so would every sensible man. But we know of a surety that God heareth prayer. We cannot imagine our Lord deceiving us, and he must have done so if it is not so, for he says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

14. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

But there is a deal of praying that never reaches to the name of Christ. Even to pray for Christ’s sake does not reach to the point of praying in Christ’s name. If I go and transact business in the name of such a person, that is a different thing from merely asking to be allowed to do my own business for the sake of that person. But when you are authorized to use the name of Christ — as it were, to write his signature to your cheques —

oh! what power there is in prayer at that time! “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.” But you cannot ask everything in that name. You are obliged to draw back from some prayers, and say, “No; Christ would never authorize me to put his name to that.” You see there is a blessed cheek upon the universality of prayer — a most necessary and useful cheek — for we would not dare to ask some things in that wondrous name.

15-17. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even 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.*

He dwelt with the apostles, but was not in them until after Christ rose from the dead. But now you and I knew his indwelling. He has made our bodies to be the temples of the Holy Ghost.

18. *I will not leave you comfortless:*

Orphans.

18. *I will come to you.*

He does this by his Spirit, but still he means more than that. It is not a spiritual coming merely; it is a personal coming. “I will come to you.”

19, 20. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

Wondrous unity — Christ in the Father, we in him, and Christ in us. Who understands this? He only who is taught of the Holy Spirit.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE

NO. 3511

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 11TH, 1916.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?” — 1 Corinthians 9:7.

THIS question occurs in the course of an argument. The Apostle was proving that the minister who gives all his time to the preaching of the Word is entitled to a maintenance from those people amongst whom he labors. He gives divers illustrations, amongst them this — that the soldier who devotes himself to the service of his country is not expected to find his own equipment and his own rations, but he is provided for by his country. And so should it be, he teaches us, in the Church of God. The minister set apart to labor wholly in spiritual things should have temporal supplied found him. That isle topic, however, on which it would be superfluous for me to enlarge. Your convictions are so sound, and your practice so consistent, that you do not need to be exhorted, much less to be expostulated with on that matter.

But the same question may be asked when we have other morals to point. Is it ever expected that men who go on a warfare should pay their own charges? There is a warfare in which all of us are engaged. What is life but a great battle, lasting from our earliest days until we sheathe sword in death? This battle we hope to win, and yet if we succeed, it will be a distinct and definite response to the challenge before us, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?” We may be quite sure that if ever we attempt the warfare of life at our own expense we shall soon find ourselves failing, and it will end in a miserable defeat. Going at once to the subject, we have here: —

I. AN INSPIRING METAPHOR.

When life is represented as a warfare, some peaceful minds may feel a little alarmed at the pictures; yet there are other minds with enough of gallantry in their constitutions to feel their blood pulsing the stronger at the thought that life is to be one continued contest. I do but borrow a reflection from the secular press when I say that it were ill for us if the love of peace, fostered among us as a nation, should degenerate into a fear of danger, a reluctance to bear hardships, or an indifference to the accomplishment of exploits. Craven spirits we may expect always to find, who conjure up gloomy anticipations, and to forbade horrible disasters. The untrodden path and the unaccustomed climate are dreadful bugbears. But is this the instinct of an Englishman? How else should he contemplate difficulties but as problems to be solved? capital out of which fame or fortune is to be won? And as for the British soldier, is he to be looked upon as a hot-house plant, who shrinks from exposure? Far rather would I respect him as a representative individual, the type of his race, always ready for any emergency. In the days of the old Gallic wars, when we had to fight with Napoleon in Egypt, there were just as many knotty points and critical situations to be grappled with; and certainly at headquarters the War Department was not more efficiently managed than it is now. Yet British soldiers pressed forward then to the conflict nor did they pant for fortune, what they did seek was a career, with some opportunity of distinguishing themselves. Moreover, those who stayed at home scanned the despatches with eager interest, and full often lamented that they had not the chance given them of going forth to the fight. Well may the patriot ask, Has Anglo-Saxon courage all fled? if at every call to fresh deeds of heroism we listen to the crowing of those whose nature it is to look black, and utter dark portents. Our children's children may read how the haughty insolence of Theodore of Abyssinia was humbled, but I hope they will never hear the screeching of the ravens who warned us of the mountain fastnesses in which he was lodged. The Ashantee war is behind us now, and I suppose those who were once afraid of its perils are now amazed at its prowess. Yes, and that is how I would have Christians feel with regard to spiritual conflicts. Difficulties! well, they are things to be deciphered. Dangers! they are things to be met and encountered. Impossibilities! they are to be scouted as a nightmare, a delirious dream. The Christian wakes to find impossibility impossible. With a history behind him and a destiny before him, he can say, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Things that are impossible with man are possible with God. I like my text all the better, because it implies a hostile engagement, and speaks of warfare. For me the

battlefield has no charms. With host encountering host, and carnage left behind, I have no sympathy, but spiritually my soul seems enamored of the idea; I buckle on my armor at the very thought that life is to be a conflict and a strife, in which it behoves me to get the mastery.

Do I not address many young men just commencing life? If you have thought of life at all I hope you have thought that it is wise to begin the battle of life early. We have all so little time to live, and the first years of life are so evidently the best years we shall ever have, that it is a pity to waste them. Oh! how much more some of us might have done if we had begun betimes! Had the very flush of our boyhood been consecrated and the strength of our youth spent in our Master's service, what work we might have accomplished! Now, young men, as a comrade a little farther on the road than you, I take you to the brow of the hill for a moment, and point out to you the pathway we have to pursue, and as I point it out I tell you that you will have to fight along every inch of the road, if you are at the end to win the crown which I hope your ambition pants after. Are you ready for the conflict? Then let us talk awhile about it, for as we shall always have to be on the alert, it is well for us to study the map, and to acquaint ourselves with the tactics we must practice.

Be sure, then, my friend, that if you and I are ever to be conquerors at the last, we shall have to fight with that trinity of enemies — the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is the world. Do you resolve to do the right and to love the true, depend upon it you will get no assistance from this world. Of its maxims, nine out of ten are false, and the other one selfish; and even that which is selfish has a lie at the bottom of it. As for its customs — well, live where you may, the customs of the world are not such as a citizen of heaven can endorse. Go into what company you please, and you will find that there is much of the prevailing habit that is no friend to grace, and no friend to virtue. In the upper circles, with much presence, there is little reality; there is a lack of sound honesty. Amongst the lower classes, go where you will, if you firmly resolve to be a Christian, to follow closely the footsteps of your Lord, you will have to breast the current. The most of men are going, down the hill. You will be like the solitary traveler when you are threading your way upwards. Do you enlist for Christ to-night? Then know that you enlist against the whole world. You will henceforth be an alien to your mother's children, and a stranger to your own household, unless happily that household Should have been converted too. Young man, the young men in the shop will be against you. Alas, for the

wickedness of the young men of London! Young woman, you will find in the workroom, aye perhaps you will find even in your father's house, influences at work to impede, if not to thrust you back. Man of business, when you meet others on exchange, if perchance the conversation should turn upon religion, you will find it far from profitable, and far from genial. You will be like a speckled bird, and all the birds round about you will be against you. As a marked man, your motives will be mistrusted, your character impugned, your piety burlesqued. If you resolve to win the crown of immortality, you will only do it as by the skin of your teeth. It matters not where you are cast, this is sure to be your lot, unless, as here and there is the case, you may be a timid and shielded one, too weak for conflict and, therefore, God keeps you in retirement. And yet as for the world, I think we could easily overcome that were it not for a worse enemy.

Soldier of Christ, you have to struggle with yourself. My own experience is a daily struggle with myself. I wish I could find in me something friendly to grace, but hitherto I have searched my nature through, and have found everything in rebellion against God. At one time there comes the torpor of sloth, when one ought to be active every moment, having so much to do for God, and for the souls of men, and so little time to do it in. At another time there comes the quickness of passion. When we would be calm and cool, and play the Christian, bearing with patience, there come the unadvised word and the rash expression. Anon, we are troubled with conceit, the devilish whisper — I can call it no less — “How well thou hast done! How well hast thou played thy part!” This pride is the arch-enemy of our souls. Then will come distrust foul and faithless, suggesting that God does not regard the affairs of men, and will not interpose on our behalf. Fresh forms of evil are generated in our own breasts, and this chameleon heart of ours, which never seems of one color but for a single moment, which is this and that by turns, and nothing long, challenges us on all occasions, and against it we shall have perpetually to struggle. Unless we deny ourselves and lay violent hands upon the impulses of our nature, we shall never come to the place where the crowns are distributed to the conquerors.

And then another foe comes up, though not the closest, the strongest of the three — the devil! If you have ever stood foot to foot with him, as some of us have, you will remember well that blandly day, for even he who beats Apollyon concludes the battle wounded in his own hand and in his

own foot. Oh! that stern enemy! He knows how to attack us in our sore points. He discerns our weaknesses and he is at no loss for cunning devices. He understands how one moment to fawn upon us and flatter us, and how the next moment to cast his fiery darts, telling us that we are castaways, and shall never see the face of God with acceptance. He can quote Scripture for his purpose. He can hurl threatenings at the heads of the saints, which were only meant for sinners, and he can tear promises out of the saints' hands, and cast them in the mire, just when they are ready to feed upon them as fair fruits of Paradise. Believe me, it is no small thing to have had to fight with Apollyon, the Prince of Hell. Seest thou then, young soldier, what is before thee? There is a triple host of foes, and thou must overcome them all, or else there shall never be given to thee the white stone, and the crown of everlasting life.

Think not that this is an engagement to be quickly terminated. Unlike the laconic despatch of the ancient Roman, "*Veni, vidi, vici*," I came, saw, and conquered, this is a continuous fight. Wouldest thou fight thy way to heaven, not to-day, nor to-morrow; wilt thou win it with a deadly skirmish or a brilliant dash like a knight at a tournament, thou canst not come back a conqueror. In sober truth, every man and every woman who enlists for Christ will have to wrestle till their bones shall sleep in the tomb. There shall be no pause nor cessation for thee from this day until the laurel is upon thy brow. If thou art defeated one day, thou must overcome the next; if a conqueror to-day, thou must fight to-morrow. Like the old knights who, slept in their armor, you must be prepared for reprisals — always watchful, always expecting temptation, and ready to resist it; never saying, "It is enough," for he who saith, "It is finished," until he breathes his last has not yet truly begun. We must have our swords drawn, even to the very last. I have sometimes thought that could we enter heaven by one sharp, quick, terrible encounter, such as the martyrs faced at the stake we might endure it heroically; but day after day of protracted martyrdom, and year after year of the wear and tear of pilgrimage and soldier-life is the more bitter trial of patience. I do but tell you in order that you may be convinced that it is not in our power to fight this warfare at our own charge; that if we have to endure in our own strength and with our own resources, it is most certain that disaster will befall us, and defeat will humble us. To fight, and fight on, is our vocation. But if thus you fight, you may hope to conquer, for others have done so before you. On the summit of the palace see you not those robed in white, who walk in light, with faces bright, and

sparkling o'er with joy? Can you not hear their song? They have overcome, and they tell you: —

*“To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He with his Lord and Master
Shall reign eternally.”*

They have overcome; then why should not you, Jesus Christ, who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, has passed through the sternest part of the battle, and he has overcome — a type and representative of all those who are cross-bearers, and who shall overcome as he has done.

Do I see some young man, eager, earnest, all of a glow, ready for the crown? Let me remind thee that thou mayest be defeated. Though it is well for thee to begin life with a resolute determination to fight through the battle, still I would have thee remember that thou mayest be led captive by thy foe. There is a most instructive little book, issued by the Religious Tract Society, called *The Mirage of Life*, which I think all young men should read. It gives historical pictures of the different ways in which men have sought to be great, wherein the result of the greatness attained has proved to be in mirage, mocking the man, as the mirage in the desert mocks the traveler when it promises him water, and he finds none. That book contains the history of such men as Beckford, a man worth £200,000 a year, who spent the former part of his life in building Fonthill Abbey, with an enormous tower, enriching the place with all the treasures that he could rather from every country; making the grounds so splendid that crowned heads longed to look within, but, it is said, were refused; and at the end of his life you find him almost penniless — the house upon which he had spent all his time and money a dilapidated ruin, the tower fallen to the ground, and the name of Beckford forgotten. You have a sketch of William Pitt, the heaven-born minister. One of the greatest of statesmen, who could make war or peace at his will, and after years of the most brilliant success he dies with a broken heart through grief. The high ambition of men of art such as Haydon, is introduced to your notice. This great painter, after blazing with wondrous fame in his art, took away his life because he found himself a disappointed and forgotten man. As I read a series of such cases, each one seemed sadder than the other, and it was enough to make a man sit down and weep to think that our mortal race should be doomed to follow such phantoms, and to be mocked by such delusions. As I read them all I could not help feeling how necessary it was

to say to young men, especially just as they are beginning life, and to young women too — aye, and the lesson is profitable for all of us — Take care how ye run in the race, lest after running, till ye think ye have won the prize, ye find that in truth ye have lost it. We must take care how we live, for this is the only lifetime we shall have in which to settle the life that lasts for ever. Make bankruptcy in your secular business; why, you can start again; but once make bankruptcy in soul affairs, and there is no second life in which to start your career afresh. Are you a defeated soldier of life? Ah! then, you can never begin again, or turn the defeat into a victory. If you go down to your grave a captive of sin, the iron bands will be about you for ever. There is no retrieving your position. The priceless boon of freedom is beyond your reach. You may lament, you cannot attain it. See then, our life is a battle; we must constantly fight; haply we may win, or haply we may be defeated. I now proceed to mark a second point with: —

II. A KINDLY HINT.

Like a cool breath fanning our cheeks when too hot with ambition, this enquiry greets us, “Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?” So, then, charges there will be in this life-battle. It is not to be won without pain and cost. Let us just glance at some of these charges. You will soon see how they mount up. If any man shall get up to heaven what a demand for courage he will have to meet! How many enemies he must face! How much ridicule he must endure! How frequently must he be misrepresented and maligned! How often must he be discreet enough to be silent, and anon, bold enough to speak and avow his convictions and his purpose!

If a man shall get to heaven, what a charge of patience he will be at! How he must bear and forbear! How he must put up with one sharp difficulty and another, making light of fatigue and fasting, restless days and sleepless nights; in fiery temptation unflinching, amidst cold contempt unabashed.

If any man will get to heaven, what an amount of perseverance he will require to hold on and to hold out! What hours of prayer, what wrestling with God for a blessing, what striving with himself to overcome sinful propensities! What a charge of watchfulness he will be at! How he must guard the avenues of his being! How he must track his actions to the springs of motives, and keep his thoughts pure from guile! There can be little ease and not much slumber for a man who would get the eternal crown. What fresh supplies of zeal he will need; for we shall not drift into heaven without a conflict or a care. We must cut, and hack and hew with

intense energy, for the Savior says, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm." What strength he will require, for he has to deal with potent foes! And oh! what a charge of wisdom he will be put to the expense of, for he has to stand against the craftiness of evil creatures, and to overcome one who is wiser than the ancients, even Satan, the arch-tempter.

It is possible that the difficulties of an expedition may be intensely aggravated by a lack of knowledge as to the country to be invaded. Under such circumstances it is hard to anticipate the contingencies that may arise. In the battle of life this is the rub. Who knows what lies next before him? How can we forestal the surprises that may await us? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." If I were aware of the temptations that would befall me a year hence, I think I could guard myself against them, but I do not even know what pinch or peril may befall me before the hour has passed. You cannot tell the provocations that to-night may occur before you close your eyes in slumber. You may have a trial or a temptation such as never crossed your path before. Hence I beseech you to consider the greatness of the charge of this warfare. You have to pass through an experience which no man before you has proved. All the path of life is new to you, unmapped, untrodden, unanticipated. Yet all you lack of clear statistics is made up for in dire prognostics. No doubt the climate is baneful, and will subject you to fever or ague. Our British soldiers, rank and file, must press forward though they are landed on a blazing beach, across which they have, to march; nor will it ever do for them to be dismayed by steep mountains, dismal swamps, or savage tribes. Bent on victory, they brave the incidents of the campaign before they sight the adversaries they attack, while their heads and hearts ace full of honor, promotion, stars, stripes, and Victoria crosses. But in our eventful battle of life the checks and bars to progress, the dangers and temptations that we shall all have to meet with in our natural constitution and our secular calling, the unnavigable currents and the impassable barriers that thwart us before we grapple with the main enterprise to enter heaven, are more than I can describe in one sermon. No marvel to me that Mr. Pliable should say, as he turned back, "You may have the, brave country yourselves for me." The Slough of Despond, as a first part, put him into a dudgeon and he said, "I do not like it; I will have no more of it."

Apart from divine strength, Pliable was a wise man, wise in his generation, to shrink from the adventure, for it is a hard journey to the skies. They

spake the truth who said that there were giants, to fight with, dragons to be slain, mountains to be crossed, and black rivers to be forded. It is so, and I pray you count the cost. There is no “royal road” to heaven, except that the King’s highway leads there. There is no easy road skilfully levelled or scientifically macadamised. The labor is too exhaustive, the obstructions are too numerous, the difficulties are too serious, unless God himself come to our help. I wittingly put these dilemmas before you that I may constrain you to say, “Who can go this warfare at his own Charges?” And now, in the third place, let us look at our text as: —

III. A GRACIOUS REMINDER.

Does any man at any time go a warfare at his own charge? I trow not. Young man! I have told you of difficulties and of dangers. I trust your bold spirit taught by God, has thereby been fired to greater ardor. Now I have somewhat to say unto thee which has cheered me, and cheered thy sires before me, and made them strong, even in their weakness. It is this. You see you cannot go this warfare in your own strength. Is not that clear to you? Then, I pray you, do not try it. Do not for a moment contemplate it. If you do, you will rue it. Your fall will be your first warning; the second time it will warn you more bitterly; if you continue in your own strength, you will, perhaps, have a warning too late. But you may rely on God to help you. The text implies it. If, by faith, you yield yourself to Christ, whoever you may be, with a desire and intent to live henceforth as a follower of Jesus, God will help you, and that right early. Though a warfare is before you, you are not to go at your own charges. Shall I tell you how God will help you? Certainly you may reckon upon his watchful Providence. You little know how easy the Almighty can make a path which otherwise would have been difficult and dangerous. Follow God’s leading, and you shall never lack for his comfort. I have lived long enough to see many people carve for themselves very eagerly, and cut their fingers very severely. I have seen others who albeit they were great losers for a time by doing right, have had to bless God year after year for the abundant recompense they received afterwards. No man shall be a loser in the long run by loving and serving God. If thou be willing and obedient, trusting thyself with Christ, thou shalt find those awful wheels of Providence revolve for thy welfare. The beasts of the field shall be in league with thee, and the stones of the field shall be at peace with thee. All things shall work together for good to them that love God. Now I am not pretending that piety will procure wealth, or that if you espouse Christ’s cause you shall

grow rich. I should not wonder if you did. You are none the less likely to prosper in business for being a Christian. I am not going to, predict that you shall be without sickness, much less without temptation, for “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”, but sure I am of this, that if you put your trust in God and do right, no temporal circumstances shall ever happen to you which shall not be for your eternal good. This is forestalling much more than any transient benefit. In the short space you are to live here you may reckon upon the gigantic wheels of Providence as your helpers. The angels or God shall be swift to defend you. Your eyes shall not see them, but your heart shall wax confident. You shall perceive that by some means you have been rescued from a place of drought and led into a fruitful land.

More than this; as you go this warfare, looking to God to bear your charges, you shall have the Lord Jesus Christ to help you. Promise not yourself that you will be able to maintain henceforth a perfect life. Sin will harass you. Old corruptions, even when they are driven out from the throne (for sin shall not reign over you), will yet struggle at the foot thereof. But Jesus Christ will be your helper. He will be always present to revive you with his precious blood, to sprinkle your hearts from an evil conscience, to wash your bodies with pure water. Have you never admired that picture of Christ, with the basin and the towel washing his disciples’ feet? This is what he will ever do for you at every eventide when you have defiled yourself through inadvertence or infirmity. Look into the face of the Crucified. Perhaps you have sometimes wished that he were now visible, and in body accessible to you. That sympathizing One who has suffered so much for you! You have said, “Oh! that I might go and tell him my griefs, and get his help!” He is alive. He is here. He is not far from any one that seeketh him. Whosoever trusteth shall surely find Christ to be his very present help in time of trouble. Believe this, and thou shalt prove it true.

And he that is a soldier of the cross shall have the divine power Of God the Blessed Spirit to help him. I have sometimes thought, when some strong passion has been raging within my soul — How can I ever overcome it? The will was good, but the flesh was weak. But as soon as the Spirit of God has moved on me the flesh has given way. The Holy Ghost can give the man that is prone to idleness such an intense apprehension of the value of time that he shall be more industrious than the naturally active man. I believe that if any of you who are subject to a bad temper will lay this besetting sin before God in prayer, and ask the Holy Spirit’s help, you shall

not only be able to curb it, but you will acquire a sweeter and gentler spirit than some of those whose temperament is naturally even, with no propensity to fitful change or sudden storm. Do not tell me that there is anything in human nature too obdurate for the Lord to overcome, for there is not. Whatever may be your temptation, you need not account it an effectual hindrance to your being a Christian. What though it be beyond your own power to grapple with it! When the Eternal arm comes to the rescue; when the right hand of Jehovah is made bare; when the Holy Spirit puts forth his irresistible power, he can smite through the loins of our kingly sins, and cut the Rahabs and dragons of our iniquities in pieces. Rest thou in the might of Jehovah, the God of Israel. He that brake Egypt in pieces with his plagues can vanquish our sins with his judgments or with his grace, and he can bring the new nature, like the children of Israel, up out of bondage into joyous liberty. Go thou to the blood, and thou shalt conquer sin. Go to the Eternal Spirit, and thy worst corruptions shall be overthrown. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?" As the soldier draws from his paymaster, so let every Christian draw from his God and Savior. Conduct your warfare trusting in the blessed God. My last words shall be to those who are beginning the great battle of life. Let me urge upon them these: —

IV. CAUTIONS AND COUNSELS.

Behold the wisdom of diffidence. I heard some time ago of a minister preaching on the dignity of self-reliance; and I thought to myself, Surely that is the dignity of a fool! The dignity of self-reliance! Taken in a certain sense, there is some kind of truth about it; or at least the folly of asking counsel of your neighbor in every strait is sufficiently obvious. But he that relies on his own wits will soon pander to expediency and grovel in the mire. His actions will admit of no better defense than excuses and apologies. Nay, sirs; "but let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." A better subject, and one that no preacher need be ashamed of if the Master should come ere the sermon be done, is the dignity of reliance upon God, and the wisdom of diffidence of oneself. Begin life, young man, by finding out that the capital you thought you had, is much less than it looked before you counted it. Begin life, young man, by understanding that all in your nature that glitters is not gold, and that your strength is perfect weakness. Begin by being emptied, and you will soon be filled. Blessed are the poor in spirit." Begin by being poor. If you begin with lowliness, you will not need to be humiliated.

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

He will win the battle who knows how to begin on the low ground and to fight uphill by divine strength. Learn the wisdom, not of self-reliance, but of self-diffidence, for he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

Be thoroughly alive to the importance of prayer. If all our charges in the life-war are to be paid us by the Paymaster, let us go to the treasury. Amongst the strangest of human sins is a distaste for prayer. I open my eyes with wonder at myself whenever I find my own self slow to pray! Why, if your children want anything of you, they are not slow to speak. They need not be exhorted to ask for this or that; they speak at once. And here is the soul-enriching exercise of prayer. Is it not strange that you and I should be slack in it? Did you ever stand in a market and see the people coming in from the country with their goods? How diligent they are in their business; how eager to take home as much money as they can! How their eyes glitter; how sharp they are! But here is heaven's market; God's wares are given away to them that will ask for them. Yet we seem indifferent, as though we did not care to be enriched; we even leave the mercy-seat of God unvisited! Oh! young people, do understand the value of prayer; and you aged people, do continue in prayer and supplication; for if we are to win this battle of our life, it can only be by taking in our charge-bill to the great Paymaster, and asking him to discharge the charges of this war.

Consider, too, the necessity of holiness. If, in my life's warfare, I am entirely dependent upon God, let me not grieve him. Let me seek so to walk with him that I may expect to have him with me. Oh! let our consecration be unreserved and complete.

And in all these we must prove the power of faith. If we have never begun to trust in Jesus, let us begin now. Oh! may the Eternal Spirit breathe faith into our souls. The beginning of true spiritual life is here — trusting what Christ has wrought for us, relying upon his sufferings on our behalf. The continuation of spiritual life is here — trusting still in what Christ has done and is doing. The consummation of spiritual life on earth is still the same — trusting still, trusting ever; always repairing to Christ for the supply of all our needs; going to him with our blots to have them removed, with our failings to have them forgiven, with our wants and requirements to have

them provided for, with our good works and our prayers to have them rendered acceptable, and with ourselves that we may still be preserved in him.

Sharpen your swords, soldiers of the cross, and be ready for the fray, but as ye march to the battle let it be with heads bowed down in adoration before him, who alone can cover your heads in the day of battle; and when you lift up those heads in the front of the foe, let this be your song, "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; the Lord has become my salvation!" And when the fight waxes hot, if your head grow weary, think of "him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," and still fight on until you win the day, and then as the fight draws to a close, and your sun is going down, and you can count your scars, and are ready to enter into your rest, be this your prayer "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." And be this your last word on earth, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of my salvation"; so shall this be your eternal song in heaven above, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

ARE YOU MOCKED?

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPT. 17TH, 1871.

*“Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.” —
Psalm 14:6.*

GOD'S Word divides the whole human race into two portions. There is the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman — the children of God, and the children of the devil — those who are by nature still what they always were, and those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There are many distinctions among men, but they are not much more than surface-deep. This one distinction, however, goes right through, and it is very deep. I may say that between the two classes, the saved and the unsaved, there is a great gulf fixed. There is as wide a difference between the righteous and the wicked as there is between the living and the dead. The Psalmist, David, in this particular Psalm calls one class of men fools, and another class the poor. You will observe that he begins by describing the fool, by which he does not mean one particular man. but the whole race as it is by nature — the whole of that portion of the human race that remains unregenerate. In our text he describes another class as the poor, in which he comprehends all the saved, all the godly, all the righteous, of whom our Redeemer hath said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Now from the very first, between the two seeds there has always been an enmity — an enmity which has never been mitigated, and never will. It displays itself in various ways, but it is always there. In some ages the enmity has burst forth into open persecution — Herod has sought the young child to

destroy it; Haman has sought to destroy the whole generation of Israel; stakes have been erected, and the faithful have been burnt; racks and inhuman engines of cruelty have been fashioned by the art of man, through the malice of his heart, to exterminate, if it were possible, the children of the living God. For there is war — perpetually war to the knife — war ever between the two generations. At this particular time the warfare is not less bitter; but the restraints of Providence do not allow it to display itself as it once did, and it now generally takes the form of cruel mockings so that our text is as applicable to the present race as it was in David's time, "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge." The fool hath made a mock of the righteous man, called the poor man; and this has been the subject of his mockery, that the godly man has been fool enough as he calls him, to put his trust in God, and to make this the main point and purpose of his life. There may be some here who have done this; all of us do it to some extent until we are new-born. We ridicule, if not with the tongue, yet in our heart, those who have made God their refuge, for when we begin to value the people of God, it is a sign of some degree of grace in us: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"; but until we come into that state of grace there is a hatred or contempt, more or less developed, against those who are resting in the living God.

Now I shall at this time first of all speak of those who are mocked; secondly, of the mockers; and thirdly, of how those who are mocked might to behave towards those who try to put them to shame. First, then, let us take the subject — the object — of the mockery of carnal minds.

I. WHO ARE MOCKED.

Here we have three points: "Ye have shamed the poor," that is, the persons; "the counsel of the poor," that is the reasons of their faith; then their faith itself, "because the Lord is his refuge."

To begin, it is very common for ungodly men to pour contempt upon God's people, the poor; and oftentimes they will do it by the use of these words. It so happens that many of God's people are poor in pocket, and how often do hear the observation, "Oh! these Methodists, these Presbyterians, these Baptists, they are a set of poor people, mechanics, and servant-girls and so on," and how often is that uttered with a sneer upon the lips! Well now, that is a fine thing to make fun of, isn't it, for, after all, what is there to be ashamed of in honest poverty? I will stand here and say

that if I could stand to-morrow morning in Cheapside, and pick out a dozen poor men, and then if I were to pick out a dozen middle-class men, and then if I were to pick out a dozen rich men, I believe, as to character, they would be very much of a muchness. You shall go, if you will, and pick out at random twelve good princes, and see if you could do it; but I will pick you out twelve working men that shall be honest, and upright, and chaste — which great men are not always. The poor are no worse than the rich, and have no more right to be despised. And if it were true that all who fear God were poor, it might, perhaps, be rather to their credit than to their dishonor, for, at any rate, nobody would be able to say that their Dockets were lined with the result of fraud. If they were poor, they would, at any rate, be free from many of the accusations that might be brought against rich men. I care no more for one class than another, especially when I preach the gospel — you are all alike to me, one as the other — but this I will say, that of all jests and all sneers that is one of the most ridiculous and mean against godly people, because they are poor.

But the sneer then takes another form. It is not that they are poor in pocket, so much as that they are very poor in education. “Ah!” say they, “these people — well, what do they know? They are not philosophical; they are not amongst those who cultivate the higher walks of literature; they are mostly plain, simple-minded people, and, therefore, they believe their Bibles.” Well, I don’t believe that. Amongst Christian people there are many men of as high an education as among any class. The mind of Newton found root in Scripture, and discovered depths which it could not fathom. But even if you say that, what of it? If these men have the wisdom which cometh from above, they have something that will last when the wisdom which is merely of this earth will have perished. Go, take the skull of the wise man in your hand, and look at it. Is it not as brown, is it not as ghastly a sight as the skull of the peasant? And what matters it to him, now that he lies among the clods of the valley, that once he spent his nights, with the lamp, poring into ancient tomes, or walked with his staff to heaven to measure the distance of the stars, or bored into the depths of the earth? It in all one to him, and if he is a lost soul, ah! who would not give the preference to the man that was learned in the kingdom of heaven beyond the man that was only learned in the things of earth? I see no great reason for jest on the subject therefore. And the sneer is, to say the least, ungenerous; for if the ungodly be so much the wiser, let them show their

wisdom by not sneering at those who do not happen to possess their gifts, but who possess what is much more precious.

And then it will take another shape — this shaming of the poor because of their poverty. Whey will say, “Ah! but they are poor in spirit; they have not good ideas of themselves. Hear them — they are always confessing sinfulness and weakness, and they appear to go through the world without self-reliance, relying upon some unseen power, and always distrusting themselves, and they do not seem to have the pluck that the ungodly have. Why, we, we who know not God can drink, and they will stop where we can go. And we can let out an oath, but they are afraid. And there is many a song that we can sing that these fastidious folks would not dare to hear, and there is many an amusement which we can enjoy which they, poor creatures, are obliged to deny themselves.” Ah! well, well, if they choose to be miserable, I do not know that you could do better than pity them. It would be a pity to be angry with them for not enjoying what you enjoy. Don’t, therefore, sneer. But, after all, sir, you know very well that there is more manliness in refusing to sin than there is in sinning; that there is more pluck in saying, “No, I cannot,” than there is in being led by the devil, first into one sin, and then into another. And these men of the world that have this high spirit, and are so bold and brave — what is it better than the high spirit of a lunatic, who dares to put his hand in the fire? I dare not do that which would dishonor God. I am thankful to be such a coward that I dare not venture it. But you shall not say that we are cowardly. Lived there ever a more earnest Christian than Havelock? Were there ever better soldiers than his Highlanders, who learned to bow the knee before Jehovah? But, O sirs, they could fight; they were men brave enough in the day of battle, though they could not be brave in the way in which the ungodly are. Talk to us Christians about want of courage! Do you ever wish to see the Ironsides again in England, with old Oliver Cromwell at their head? We hate war, but still we quote these instances to show that a man can bow before God like a sneaking Presbyterian, as you call him, and yet rise up and drive the Cavaliers, like chaff before the wind. It is not true that we are poor in spirit in the sense that is often attached to us. We have as much of courage of the right kind as the ungodly have. But, sir, we can afford to bear your jest. We are afraid to be damned; we are afraid to take a leap into the dark future, with wrath upon our heads; we do tremble before the living god, though we will tremble nowhere else. We count it no dim honor to fear him who is a consuming fire. But this is commonly the cry, “They’re

a poor set; they're a poor set of milksops." "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor."

But now the next point — a very common jest — is the reasons that Christian men give for being Christians. You notice the text says, "the counsel of the poor," for the Christian, when he becomes a believer in Christ, takes counsel about it. He does not believe his Bible because his grandmother did; he does not accept the Word of God because some priest has told him it is true; he takes counsel, and considers. This counsel, however, is generally sneered at, as though there were no reasonableness in it; therefore, let me just state it.

The Christian has taken counsel with his own weakness. He says, "I cannot trust myself; I am very apt to go wrong; therefore, will I put myself into the great Father's hands, and pray him to lead and guide me. I will not go to my business in the morning until I have asked for his protection, nor will I close the day without asking still that I may be under his care." His reason is because he feels himself to be a weak and fallible creature, and he wants protection. That looks to me to be very reasonable, but to some it seems to be the theme for laughter.

The Christian has next taken counsel with his observations. He has looked about in the world, and he could not see that ungodly men derive pleasure from their sins. He hears them shouting loudly enough sometimes, but he knows who hath woe, and who hath redness of the eyes — "they that tarry long at the wine," men of drink; "they that go to seek mixed wine." He has seen the ungodly in their quieter moments, and observed how unsatisfactory all their best things are, and, upon the whole, he considers that what the world offers to its devotees is not worth his seeking for. Moreover, the Christian man has sometimes seen the sinner die, and' having seen him die, he has discovered that there is nothing in the principles of ungodliness to give a man comfort in his dying hour. Some of us have heard language from ungodly men in their deaths that we would hardly like to repeat, the very memory of which makes our blood chill. I remember once being at the bedside of a man who alternately cursed and asked me to pray. I could not pray as I would desire. I did what I could, and thee he would tell me it was no good; his, sins would never be forgiven him; and then he would turn again to blasphemy. It was a dread sight. I never saw — and I have seen many ungodly people did never saw one die of whom I could say, "Let me die the death of this sinner, and let my last

end be like his"; nor do I think such sights are ever or anywhere to be seen. The Christian man, therefore, having taken counsel of that, looks for something better that may be his stay in the time of trouble, and be his comfort in the time of his departure out of this life. That looks to me to be good reasoning. I think it is, and yet there are some who sneer at it.

The Christian man has also taken counsel with the Bible. Believing it to be God's Word, he feels that one word of God is worth a ton weight of human reason. He would sooner have a drachm of revelation than have all the weight of authority that could be brought to bear upon his mind. And assuredly, if God be true, he is not incorrect in his judgment.

Moreover, the Christian man has taken counsel with his own conscience, and he finds that when he walks near to God, he is most happy. He discovers that, in keeping God's commandments, there is great reward, and though he does not expect to be saved by his works, yet he finds himself most sustained when he walks most carefully and jealously before the world, and when most near to his heavenly Father. Taking such counsel as this, and finding it so much to his own inward advantage, I cannot blame him that he still puts his trust where he does.

Moreover, the Christian man takes counsel with his own experience. There are some of us who are as sure that God hears our prayers as we are sure that twice two make four. It is to us not a conjecture, no, nor even a belief, but a matter of fact. We are habitually in the custom of going to God and asking for what we want, and receiving it at his hands; and it is no use anybody telling us that prayer is useless. We find it constantly useful. It is of no avail for people to say these are happy coincidences. They are very strange indeed — strange coincidences when they occur again and again, and again, and God continually hears our prayers. The witness that the Christian has to the truth of his religion does not lie in the books of the learned. He is thankful for them, but his chief witness lies here — in his own heart, in his own inward experience. Now we always say that you must speak as You find. The Christian has found God faithful to him, has found him support him in the time of trial, has found him answer his prayers in the hour of distress; and this is the counsel that he has taken for himself, and he, therefore, for these reasons relies upon God. Well, sneer as some may, I think we will do with our trust in God, my brethren, as the natives of a certain American State are said to have done when they, instead of making a law-book, agreed that the State should be governed by

the laws of God, until they had time to make better — we will continue to put our trust in God until somebody shall show us something better; we will still pray, and get answered; we will still bear our troubles before God, and get rid of them; we will still rely upon Christ and find comfort until somebody shall bring us something better, and it won't be just yet; and, until then, sneers and laughter shall not much affect us.

And now, once more, the great point at which the ungodly mostly aim their scoffs is the actual faith of the believer. He has made God to be his refuge. And what, what do they say, Why, "It's all canting talk." I do not particularly know what that means, but if ever Christian men are accused of being cants, they can make the retort by saying that the canting is quite as much on one side as the other, for of all cants the cant against cant is the worst cant that ever was canted. But surely if a man shall speak the truth in other things, and you know he does, it is not fair to say he does not speak the truth when he says he puts his trust in God. The man is not insincere.

"Oh!" but they will say, "it is ridiculous — a man trusting in God." Yes, but you do not think it ridiculous to trust in yourselves. Many of you don't think it ridiculous to trust in some public man. Half of the world is trusting in its riches, and is there anything ridiculous in leaning upon that arm that bears the earth's huge pillars up? If so, ridicule on. To trust weakness seems to you to be sense. I say to trust omnipotence is infinitely superior wisdom, and we will continue to trust in God, for to us it seems to be no absurdity.

"But," they will say, "what does your God do for you? Some of you Christian people are very poor; some of you very sick — very much in trouble." Mark you, our God never said we should not be, but, on the contrary, told us it should be so. What he does for us is this — in six troubles he is with us, and in the seventh he does not forsake us. He never made us a promise that we should be rich; he never made us a promise of constant help; on the contrary, it is written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But our God does this for us, that we look upon those troubles as being so much fire that shall purge our silver: so much of the winnowing fan that shall drive away the chaff and leave the corn clean. We glory in tribulation and rejoice in the afflictions which God has laid upon us. Still, that will always be a point of jest. But there is one remark I will make before I leave this. I should like any man who doubts the reality of faith in God to do go down to Bristol, and go to Kingsdown and see the

orphan-houses there, which Mr. George Muller has built. Now there they stand — substantial brick and mortar, and inside there are 2,500 boys and girls. They eat a good deal, want a good deal of clothing, and so on. And how comes the money? All the world knows, and no man can gainsay it, that it comes in answer to prayer, and as the result of Mr. Muller's faith — that, that faith has often been tried, but has never failed. What God has done for Mr. Muller, he has done for scores of us after our own way, and in our own walk, and we glorify his name. Though that stands as a palpable witness, we are not less able to say than Mr. Muller, there is a God that heareth prayer, and whoever may jest at faith, we continue in it still, and glory in it, and rejoice. Now this is what is the matter of jest for the mockers. But my time flies, so I must now speak a few words only upon:

II. WHO ARE THE MOCKERS?

Our text says they are fools. Well, that is my opinion; but it does not signify what my opinion may be. The point that does signify, however, is that it is God's opinion of every man who is not a believer or trusting in his God. In plain English, every such man is a fool. That is God's opinion of him — God that cannot err — who is never too severe, but who speaks the literal truth — that he is a fool. Let me add, it will be that man's opinion of himself one day. If he shall ever be converted — oh! that he may! — he will think himself a fool to have been so long an unbeliever; and if not, when the truth of Scripture shall be proved, and he shall be cast into hell, then will he see his folly, and own himself to be what God said before he was, namely, a fool. O sir, do not run the risk. There was an observation made by a countryman that is well worth quoting, when he said to the unbeliever. "I have two strings to my bow; you have not. Now," said he, "suppose there is no God, I am as well off as you are; but suppose there is, where are you?" So can we say, "Suppose, after all, our religion should be a delusion. It has made us very happy up till now; but as for you — suppose it should be true? Ah! where are you then, who have despised it and have turned away from God?" May each man who does not believe in his God know how foolish he is. Now as I gave you the reasons for the poor man's faith, let me give you the reasons why the unbeliever usually is an unbeliever. It is principally because he knows not God; and none of us like to trust a person we don't know. He knows nothing of the Most High, has never communed with him, nor even seen him in his works; and, therefore, he cannot trust him. The unbeliever will also say that he cannot

trust God because he cannot see him, as if everything that is real must, therefore, be the object of sight as if there were not forces in nature about which no doubts can be entertained that are far beyond the ken of sight. They will also say that they cannot trust God because they cannot understand him. If we could understand God, he would not be God, for it is a part of the nature of God that he should be infinitely greater than any created mind. I have heard of a man who went into a smith's smithy one day, and he began complaining of the wet weather. "Why," said he, "smith, you talk about Providence! There is too much wet by half. If there were any Providence, it would manage things a great deal better. There is the wheat nearly all spoilt, and the barley is going. I tell you," says he, "there is no Providence; things don't go right." The smith took no notice of his observations, but after a while walked across the smithy, and took down an odd-looking tool which he used in his craft, and said to him, "Do you know what that is used for?" "No," said he, "I don't." "Look at it; look at it, and find out." He did look, and then he said he did not know. The smith put up that tool, and took down another, an ugly-looking tool, and says he, "Do you know what I use that for?" "No," says the man, "I cannot conceive what you do with that." You can't! Look at it, and see; perhaps you will find out." He looked at the thing, and then he said, "No, I really do not know what is the use you put that to." The smith put it up, and then walked leisurely back and said, "You are a great dunce. You do not know the use of my tools, and I am only a smith; and you set up to judge of the use of God's tools, and say what is right and what is wrong. You don't even know about a smithy, and yet, you pretend to know about the whole world. It is a most unreasonable reason not to believe in God because I cannot understand him. The reason at the bottom is this — the ungodly man does not trust God, because he is God's enemy. He knows there is a quarrel between the two. He has broken the law, he has become an enemy to his Maker; and how shall a man trust his enemy? Besides, he knows that God won't do what he would like God to do. He would like God to give him good health to go on in sin; he would like him to make him happy in his lusts; he would like him to let him live a sinner and die a saint; he would like him to shape the world so that man might take his sinful pleasure and live as he liked, and yet, after all, receive the wages of a righteous life; and as God won't do that — won't bring himself down to the sinner's taste — therefore, the sinner says, "I cannot trust God," and then he turns round and laughs at the man who can, just to quiet his own conscience and keep the little sense there is within him from rebelling against him.

Now I spoke of the Christian's faith; just let me speak of the unbeliever's faith. It takes much more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer. I am sure the philosophies of the present age which are currently set forth would require a deal more credulity than I am the master of. I can believe Scripture readily, and without violence to my soul, but I could not accept the theory even of the development of our race, which is so much cried up nowadays, nor a great many other theories. They seem to me to require a far greater sweep of credulity than anything that is written in the Word of God. To the ungodly man this seems reasonable. "It is reasonable to trust a great man, and to hope that he will be the maker of you; it is reasonable to trust your own reason — to believe you can steer your own course; it is reasonable to be a self-made man, self-reliant; it is reasonable to look after the main chance; it is reasonable to get all the money you can; it is reasonable to put your confidence in it (of course, it has not any wings, and won't fly away); it is a reasonable and discreet thing to live in this world as if you were to live for ever in it, and never think of another world at all." To a great many it seems to be philosophy to get as far away from God as ever you possibly can, and then you will get to be a wise man that the creature is wisest when it forgets its creator. That is the world's creed, and I can only say that if they scoff at our creed, we can fairly enough scoff at theirs. Trust in yourselves! Why, you are fools to think of such a thing. Trust in your wealth! Have you not seen rich men disappear? How about a few years ago when — we must remember it well, and remember it sorrowfully — how a panic comes, and down go the towers of the great, and those who seemed to be rich burst like bubbles. And oh! the joys of earth! How soon are they scattered, how speedily do they disappear! What are they, after all, but a will o' the wisp? If it be a wise thing to live in this world, and never think of dying, God grant that I may be a fool. If it be a wise thing to think all about this poor body, and never about my immortal soul, may I never know such wisdom. If it be a wise thing to go into the future as a leap in the dark, believing nothing, and only by that means kept from fear, may I never know such philosophy. Truly it seems to me to be wisdom that I, a creature who certainly did not make myself, should think of my Creator; that I, a sinner, should accept that blessed way of salvation, which is laid before me in the Word of God; that I, weak and unable to steer my own course, should put my hand into the great Father's hand and say, "Lead me, guide me by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." This may be jested at and sneered at, but it can bear a sneer and will outlive the mocker. Now, lastly: —

III. HOW OUGHT THOSE WHO ARE MOCKED BEHAVE towards those that at mock at them? Well, the first thing is, never yield an inch. You young men in the great firms of London, you working men that work in the factories — you are sneered at. Let them sneer. If they can sneer you out of your religion, you have not got any worth having. Remember you can be laughed into hell, but you can never be laughed out of it. A man may by ridicule give up what religion he thought he had, but if he cast away his soul, his companions who caused his loss cannot help him in the day of his travail, and anguish, and bitterness, before the throne of the Most High. Why be ashamed? “They called me a saint.” I remember once a person calling me a saint in the street. All I thought was, “I wish he could prove it.” Once a man, passing me in the street, said, “There is John Bunyan.” I think I felt six inches taller at the least. I was delighted to be called by such a name as that. “Oh! but they will point at you.” Cannot you bear to be pointed at? “But they will chaff you.” Chaff — let them chaff you. Can that hurt a man that is a man? If you are a molluscos creature that has no backbone, you may be afraid of jokes, and jeers, and jests; but if God has made you upright, stand upright and be a man. Moreover, there is one thing you should always do when you are ashamed — pray. The next verse in the Psalm is, “Oh! that God would turn the captivity of Zion.” The best refuge for a believer in times of persecution is his secret resort to God. Let him to on his kneed and say, “My Lord, I have been counted worthy to be spoken ill of for thy name’s sake. Help me to bear it. Now is my time of trial. Strengthen me to bear this reproach. Grant that it may be no heavy burden to me, but may I rather rejoice in it for thy name’s sake.” God will help you, beloved.

Then next to that, pray always, most for those who treat you worst. Make them the constant subjects of your prayer.

And then I would say, in your actions prove the sincerity of your prayers by extra kindness towards those who are unkind to you. Heap coals of fire upon their head. That is an expression not always explained. When the crucible is to be brought to a great heat, and the metal to be thoroughly melted, it is not enough for the coals all around it to glow. The silversmith that is desiring to melt it thoroughly will heap them so that the metal shall be all surrounded by flames. Do so, I pray you, with any of your enemies; heap kindnesses upon them. A Christian woman had often prayed for a very ungodly and unkind husband, but her prayers were not heard. However she did this, she treated him more kindly than she had ever done

before. If there was any little thing that she could think of that would please his palate, if she had to deny herself, that would be on the table. She kept the house scrupulously comfortable, and did all she could. And one day someone said to her, "How is it that you, with such a husband can act so towards him?" "Well," she said, "I hope I shall win his soul yet, but if not" — and then the tears came in her eyes — "all the happiness he will have will be in this life, and so I will let him have all I can possibly give him, since he has no happiness in the life to come." Do that with the ungodly. Lay yourself out to oblige and serve them. Let it be known of you that the best way to get a good turn out of you is to do you a bad turn. "Oh!" says one, "it is too hard. Tread on a worm, and it will turn." And is a worm to be an example to a Christian? Christ Jesus, art thou not better for an exemplar than a poor worm that creeps into the earth? What did our Savior do but pray for his murderers? The blood they shed redeemed them that shed it. We have heard the old story of the sandal-wood tree that perfumes the axe that cuts it. Do you so, O Christian! Perfume with your love the axe that wounds you. Be like the anvil that never strikes the hammer again, but yet the anvil wears out many hammers by its indomitable patience. Be patient, be courteous, be kind — in a word, Christ-like; and how know you that these very persons who hate you most to-day will not love you well to-morrow, and come together with you to the communion table, and together rejoice in our blessed Savior?

Now if I have seemed to preach too harshly to-night, it is not so in my heart. Oh! how I wish you all, everyone without exception, knew what a blessed life the Christian life is! I would, not lie for God himself, but I speak the truth to you. I never knew what perfect peace was until I looked to Christ upon the cross, and rested my soul on him. I have had trials, and have suffered bitter pains, but I have always found consolation when I have turned my eyes to my bleeding Savior, and have given myself up again to the great Father's hands. He is a blessed Lord. I serve a good Master. Trust him, give your hearts up to him, and if you have spoken against his people, or rebelled against his love, he is willing to receive you. He has no hard word to say to returning ones. Come to him; come and welcome. Come just now, and the Lord receive you, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

LUKE 23:18-25; 32-34.

Our Lord's last days gave tragic proof of the hate and cruel mockery of his foes; yet how marvelously he endured!

18, 19. *And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)*

Do you not see how they refuted their own accusation? If Christ was really the leader of sedition, would they have asked that he should be put to death? Would they have preferred a murderer to him? There can be no danger of a man leading people astray when those very people were crying, "Let him be put to death." It must have been a transparent fraud. Pilate must have loathed them. Mean as he was, he must have been seen through their meanness.

20-22. *Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.*

He thinks a great deal of his own inconsistent conclusion, and so many men do. When they came to a conclusion, bad as it is, contradictory, they will stick to it. Adhesive to nothing but to wrong, like a pendulum swinging between right and wrong, was this Pilate. Yet he will keep on the swing. He is only steady in that, — "I will, therefore, chastise him and release him." Oh! dear friends, it would be better for you to come to

thorough decision one way or the other — Christ, or no Christ; true religion, or no religion; but to halt between the two is a lame business that will be ruinous to you.

23. *And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*

These men were bribed. The popular feeling was with our Lord to a very large extent, but, under the influence of threats and bribes, they found a mob to cry, "Crucify him." You know the old saying, *Vox populi vox Dei,*"

There is no truth in it. The voice of the people is not the voice of God, for they said, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

24. *And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.*

Again attempting to evade the responsibility by saying that they should be both accusers and judges.

25. *And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.*

Sad scene. May our hearts be broken, and made tender, and sanctified by meditation upon it.

Let us turn now to the later events.

32, 33. *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary,*

The margin reads, or the place of a skull, when they were come to the place which is called a skull.

33. *There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and he other on the left.*

Come hither, soul. Thou who readest this chapter, come to this place of a skull. It is the first resting-place of every weary soul. There is no rest for the sole of your foot till first you come to Calvary, and see your Savior die.

34. *Then said Jesus,*

As they crucify him.

34. *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

CHRIST'S MARVELOUS GIVING

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“Who gave himself for us.” — Titus 2:14.

WE have once more, you see, the old subject. We still have to tell the story of the love of God towards man in the person of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When you come to your table you find a variety there. Sometimes there is one dish upon it, and sometimes another; but you are never at all surprised to find the bread there every time, and, perhaps, we might add that there would be a deficiency if there were not salt there every time too. So there are certain truths which cannot be repeated too often, and especially is this true of this master-truth, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Why, this is the bread of life; “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is the salt upon the table, and must never be forgotten, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.”

Now we shall take the text, and use it thus: first of all we shall ask it some questions; then we shall surround it with a setting of facts; and when we have done that, we will endeavor to press out of it its very soul as we draw certain inferences from it. First then: —

I. WE WILL PUT THE TEXT INTO THE WITNESS-BOX, AND ASK IT A FEW QUESTIONS.

There are only five words in the text, and we will be content to let it go with four questions. “Who gave himself for us” The first question we ask the text is, Who is this that is spoken of? and the text gives the answer. It is “the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us.” We had offended God; the dignity of divine justice demanded that offenses against so good and just a law as that which God had promulgated should not be allowed to go unpunished. But the attribute of justice is not the only one in the heart of God. God is love, and is, therefore, full Of mercy. Yet, nevertheless, he never permits one quality of his Godhead to triumph over another. He could not be too merciful, and so become unjust; he would not permit mercy to put justice to an eclipse. The difficulty was solved thus: God himself stooped from his loftiness and veiled his glory in a garb of our inferior clay. The Word — that same Word without whom was not anything made that was made — became flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and his apostles, his friends, and his enemies, beheld him — the seed of the woman, but yet the Son of God, very God of very God, in all the majesty of deity, and yet man of the substance of his mother in all the weakness of our humanity, sin being the only thing which separated us from him, he being without sin, and we being full of it. It is, then, God, who “gave himself for us”; it is, then, man, who gave himself for us. It is Jesus Christ, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God; who made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is Christ Jesus, the man, the God, “who gave himself for us.” Now I hope we shall not make any mistakes here, for mistakes here will be fatal. We may be thought uncharitable for saying it, but we should be dishonest if we did not say it, that it is essential to be right here.

*“Ye cannot be right in the rest
Unless ye think rightly of him.”*

You dishonor Christ if you do not believe in his deity. He will have nothing to do with you unless you accept him as being God as well as man. You must receive him as being, without any diminution, completely and wholly divine, and you must accept him as being your brother, as being a man just as you are. This, this is the person, and, relying upon him, we shall find salvation; but, rejecting his deity, he will say to us, “You know me not, and I never knew you!”

The text has answered the question “Who?” and now, putting it in the witness-box again, we ask it another question — “What? What did he do?” The answer is, “He gave himself for us.” It was a gift. Christ’s offering of himself for us was voluntary; he did it of his own will. He did not die because we merited that, he should love us to the death; on the contrary, we merited that he should hate us; we deserved that he should cast us from his presence obnoxious things, for we were full of sin. We were the wicked keepers of the vineyard, who devoured for our own profit the fruit which belonged to the King’s Son, and he is that King’s Son, whom we slew, with wicked hands ousting him out of the vineyard. But he died for us who were his enemies. Remember the words of Scripture, “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure, for a good, a generous man, one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.” He gave himself. We cannot purchase the love of God. This highest expression of divine love, the gift of his own Son, was, in the nature of things, unpurchaseable. What could we have offered that God should come into this world, and be found in fashion as a man, and should die? Why, the works of all the angels in heaven put together could not have deserved one pang from Christ. If for ever the angels had continued their ceaseless songs, and if all men had remained faithful, and could have heaped up their pile of merit to add to that of the angels, and if all the creatures that ever were, or ever shall be, could each bring in their golden hemp of merit — yet could they ever deserve you cross? Could they deserve that the Son of God should hang bleeding and dying there? Impossible! It must be a gift, for it was utterly unpurchaseable; though all worlds were coined and minted, yet could they not have purchased a tear from the Redeemer; they were not worth it. It must be grace; it cannot be merit; he gave himself.

And the gift is so thoroughly a gift that no prep of any kind was brought to bear upon the Savior. There was no necessity that he should die, except the necessity of his loving us. Ah! friends, we might have been blotted out of existence, and I do not know that there would have been any lack in God’s universe if the whole race of man had disappeared. That universe is too wide and great to miss such chirping grasshoppers as we are. When one star is blotted out it may make a little difference to our midnight sky, but to an eye that sees immensity it can make no change. Know ye not that this little solar system, which we think so vast, and those distant fixed stars, and yon mighty masses of nebulae, if such they be, and yonder streaming

comet, with its stupendous walk of grandeur — all these are only like a little corner in the field of God's great works? He taketh them all up as nothing, and considereth them mighty as they be, and beyond all human conception great — to be but the small dust of the balance which does not turn the scale; and if they were all gone to-morrow there would be no more loss than as if a few grains of dust were thrown to the summer's wind. But God himself must stoop, rather than we should die. Oh! what magnificence of love! And the more so because there was no need for it. In the course of nature God would have been as holy and as heavenly without us as he is with us, and the pomp of yonder skies would have been as illustrious had we been dashed into the flames of hell as it will be now. God hath gained nought, except the manifestation of a love beyond an angel's dream; a grace, the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of which surpass all knowledge of all creatures. God only knows the love of God which is manifested in Jesus Christ. He gave himself. We will leave this point now, when it is fully understood that Christ's dying to save sinners, and giving himself for the ungodly, was a pure act of gratuitous mercy. There was nothing to compel God to give his Son, and nothing to lead the Son to die, except the simple might of his love to men. He would not see us die. He had a Father's love to us. He seemed to stand over our fallen race, as David stood over Absalom, and we were as bad as Absalom; and there he fled, and said, "My son, my son! Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" But he did more than this, for he did die for us. and all for love of us who were his enemies!

*"So strange, so boundless was the love,
Which pitied dying man;
The Father sent his equal Son
To give them life again."*

'Twas all of love and of grace!

The third question is, "What did he give?" "Who gave himself for us," and here lies the glory of the text, that he gave not merely the crowns and royalties of heaven, though it was much to leave these, to come and don the humble garb of a carpenter's son; not the songs of seraphs, not the shouts of cherubim: 'twas something to leave them to come and dwell amongst the groans and tears of this poor fallen world; not the grandeur of his Father's court, though it was much to leave that to come and live with wild beasts, and men more wild than they, to fast his forty days and then to die in ignomy and shame upon the tree. No; there is little said about all this.

He gave all this, it is true, but he gave himself. Mark, brethren, what a richness there is here! It is not that he gave his righteousness, though that has become our dress. It is not even that he gave his blood, though that is the fount in which we wash. It is that he gave himself — his Godhead and manhood both combined. All that that word “Christ” means he came to us and for us. He gave himself. Oh! that we could dive and plunge into — this unfathomed sea — himself! Omnipotence, Omniscience, Infinity — himself. He gave himself — purity, love, kindness, meekness, gentleness — that wonderful compound of all perfections, to make up one perfection-himself. You do not come to Christ’s house and say, “He gives me this house, his church, to dwell in.” You do not come to his table and merely say, “He gives me this table to feast at,” but you go farther, and you take him by faith into your arms, and you say, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Oh! that you could get hold of that sweet word — himself! It is the love of a husband to his wife, who not only gives her all that she can wish, daily food and raiment, and all the comforts that can nourish and cherish her, and make her life glad, but who gives himself to her. So does Jesus. The body and soul of Jesus, the deity of Jesus, and all that that means, he has been pleased to give to and for his people. “Who gave himself for us.”

There is another question which we shall ask the text, and that is, “For whom did Christ give himself?” Well, the text says, “For us.” There be those who say that Christ has thus given himself for every man now living, or that ever did or shall live. We are not able to subscribe to the statement, though there is a truth in it, that in a certain sense he is “the Savior of all men,” but then it is added, “Specially of them that believe.” At any rate, dear hearer, let me tell thee one thing that is certain. Whether atonement may be said to be particular or general, there are none who partake in its real efficacy but certain characters, and those characters are known by certain infallible signs. You must not say that he gave himself for you unless these signs are manifest in you, and the first sign is that of simple faith in the Lord Jesus. If thou believest in him, that shall be a proof to thee that he gave himself for thee. See, if he gave himself for all men alike, then he did equally for Judas and for Peter. Care you for such love as that? He died equally for those who were then in hell as for those who were then in heaven. Care you for such a doctrine as that? For my part, I desire to have a personal, peculiar, and special interest in the precious blood of Jesus; such an interest in it as shall lead me to his right hand, and enable me to

say, "He hath washed me from my sins, in his blood." Now I think we have no right to conclude that we shall have any benefit from the death of Christ unless we trust him, and if we do trust him, that trust will produce the following things: — "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity" — we shall hate sin; we shall fight against it; we shall be delivered from it — "and purify unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." I have no right, therefore, to conclude that I shall be a partaker of the precious blood of Jesus unless I become in my life "zealous of good works," My good works cannot save me, cannot even help to save me; but they are evidences of my being saved, and if I am not zealous for good works, I lack the evidence of salvation, and I have no right whatever to conclude that I shall receive one jot of benefit from Christ's sufferings upon the tree. Oh! my dear hearer, I would to God that thou couldest trust the Man, the God, who died on Calvary! I would that thou couldest trust him so that thou couldest say, "He will save me; he has saved me." The gratitude which you would feel towards him would inspire you with an invincible hatred against sin. You would begin to fight against every evil way; you would conform yourselves, by his grace, to his law and his Word, and you would become a new creature in him! May God grant that you may yet be able to say, "Who gave himself for me"! I have asked the text enough questions, and there I leave them. For a few minutes only I am now going to use the text another way, namely: —

II. PUT THE TEXT INTO A SETTING OF FACTS.

There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days; a time when there was no time, but when Eternity was all. Then God, in the eternal purpose, decreed to save his people. If we may speak so of things too mysterious for us to know them, and which we can only set forth after the manner of men, God had determined that his people should be saved, but he foresaw that they would sin. It was necessary, therefore, that the penalty due to their sins should be borne by someone. They could not be saved except a substitute were found who would bear the penalty of sin in their place and stead. Where was such a substitute to be found? No angel offered. There was no angel, for God dwelt alone, and even if there had then been angels, they could never have dared to offer to sustain the fearful weight of human guilt. But in that solemn council-chamber, when it was deliberated who should enter into bonds of suretyship to pay all the debts of the people of God, Christ came and gave himself a bondsman and a surety for all that was due — from them, or

would be due from them, to the judgment-seat of God. In that day, then, he “gave himself for us.”

But Time began, and this round world had made, in the mind of God, a few revolutions. Men said the world was getting old, but to God it was but an infant. But the fullness of time was come, and suddenly, amidst the darkness of the night, there was heard sweeter singing than ere had come from mortal lips, “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good will to men!” What lit up the sky with unwonted splendor and what had filled the air with chorales at the dead of night? See the Babe upon its mother’s breast, there in Bethlehem’s manger! “He gave himself for us.” That same one who had given himself a surety has come down to earth to be a man, and to give himself for us. See him! For thirty years he toils on, amidst the drudgery of the carpenters shop! What is he doing? The law needed to be fulfilled, and he “gave himself for us,” and fulfilled the law. But now the time comes when he is thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, and the law demands that the penalty shall be paid. Do you see him going to meet Judas in the garden, with confident, but solemn step? He “gave himself for us.” He could with a word have driven those soldiers into hell, but they bind him — he “gave himself for us.” They take him before Pilate, and Herod and Caiaphas, and they mock at him, and jeer him, and pluck his cheeks, and flagellate his shoulders! How is it that he will smart at this rate? How is it that he bears so passively all the insults and indignities which they heap upon him? He gave himself for us. Our sins demanded smart; he bared his back and took the smart; he gave himself for us. But do you see that dreadful procession going through the streets of Jerusalem, along the rough pavement of the Via Dolorosa? Do you see the weeping women as they mourn because of him? How is it that he is willing to be led a captive up to the hill of Calvary? Alas! they throw him on the ground! They drive accursed iron through his hands and feet. They hoist him into the air! They dash the cross into its appointed place, and there he hangs, a naked spectacle of scorn and shame, derided of men, and mourned by angels. How is it that the Lord of glory, who made all worlds, and hung out the stars like lamps, should now be bleeding and dying there? He gave himself for us. Can you see the streaming fountains of the four wounds in his hands and feet? Can you trace his agony as it carves lines upon his brow and all down his emaciated frame? No you cannot see the griefs of his soul. No spirit can behold them. They were too terrible for you to know them. It seemed as though all hell were emptied into the bosom of the Son of God,

and as though all the miseries of all the ages were made to meet upon him, till he bore: —

*“All that incarnate God, could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare.”*

Now why is all this but that he gave himself for us till his head hung down in death, and his arms, in chill, cold death, hung down by his side, and they buried the lifeless Victor in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea? He gave himself for us!

What more now remaineth? He lives again; on the third day he cometh from the tomb, and even then he still gave himself for us! Oh! yes, beloved, he has gone up on high but he still gives himself for us, for up there he is constantly engaged in pleading the sinner’s cause. Up yonder, amidst the glories of heaven, he has not forgotten us poor sinners who are here below, but he spreads his hands, and pleads before his Father’s throne and wins for us unnumbered blessings, for he gave himself for us.

And I have been thinking whether I might not use the text in another way. Christ’s servants wanted a subject upon which to preach, and so he “gave himself for us,” to be the constant topic of our ministry. Christ’s servants wanted a sweet companion to be with them in their troubles, and he gave himself for us. Christ’s people want comfort; they want spiritual food and drink, and so he gave himself for us — his flesh to be our meat, and his blood to be our spiritual drink. And we expect soon to go home to the land of the hereafter, to the realms of the blessed, and what is to be our heaven? Why, our heaven will be Christ himself, for he gave himself for Us. Oh! he is all that we want, all that we wish for! We cannot desire anything greater and better than to be with Christ, and to have Christ, to feed upon Christ, to lie in Christ’s bosom, to know the kisses of his mouth, to look at the gleamings of his loving eyes, to hear his loving words, to feel him press us to his heart, and tell us that he has loved us from before the foundation of the world, and given himself for us.

I think we have put the text now into a setting of certain facts; do not forget them, but let them be your joy! And now the last thing we have to do is to: —

III. TURN THE TEXT TO PRACTICAL ACCOUNT BY DRAWING FROM IT A FEW INFERENCES.

The first inference I draw is this — that he who gave himself for his people will not deny them anything. This is a sweet encouragement to you who practice the art of prayer. You know how Paul puts it, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?” Christ is all. If Christ gives himself to you, he will give you your bread and your water, and he will give you a house to dwell in. If he gives you himself, he will not let you starve on the road to heaven. Jesus Christ does not Give us himself and then deny us common things. Oh! child of God, go boldly to the throne of grace! Thou hast got the major; thou shalt certainly have the minor; thou hast the greater, thou canst not be denied the less.

Now I draw another inference, namely, that if Christ has already given himself in so painful a way as I have described, since there is no need that he should suffer any more, we must believe that he is willing to give himself now unto the hearts of poor sinners. Beloved, for Christ to come to Bethlehem is a greater stoop than for him to come into your heart. Had Christ to die upon Calvary? That is all done, and he need not die again. Do you think that he who is willing to die is unwilling to apply the results of his passion? If a man leaps into the water to bring out a drowning child, after he has brought the child alive on shore, if he happens to have a piece of bread in his pocket, and the child needs it, do you think that he who rescued the child’s life will deny that child so small a thing as a piece of bread? And come, dost thou think that Christ died on Calvary, and yet will not come into thy heart if thou seekest him? Dost thou believe that he who died for sinners will ever reject the prayer of a sinner? If thou believest that thou thinkest hardly of him, for his heart is very tender. He feels even a cry. You know how it is with your children; if they cry through pain, why, you would give anything for someone to come and heal them; and if you cry because your sin is painful, the great Physician will come and heal you. Ah! Jesus Christ is much more easily moved by our cries and tears than we are by the woes of our fellow-creatures. Come, poor sinner, come and put thy trust in my Master! Thou canst not think him hard-hearted. If he were, why did he die? Dost thou think him unkind? Then why did he bleed? Thou art inclined to think so hardly of him! Thou art making great cuts at his heart when thou thinkest him to be untender and ungenerous. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he would turn unto me and live.” This is the voice of the God whom you look upon as so sternly just! Did Jesus Christ, the tender one, speak in even

more plaintive tones, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? You working men, you laboring men, Christ bids you come to him “all ye that labor.” And you who are unhappy, you who know you have done wrong, and cannot sleep at nights because of it; you who are troubled about sin, and would fain go and hide your heads, and get: —

“Anywhere, anywhere out of the world,”

— your Father says to you one and all, “Run not from me, but come to me, my child!” Jesus, who died, says, “Flee not from me, but come to me, for I will accept you; I will receive you; I cast out none that come unto me. “Sinner, Jesus never did reject a coming soul yet, and he never will. Oh! try him! Try him! Now come, with thy sins about thee just as thou art, to the bleeding, dying Savior, and he will say to thee, “I have blotted out thy sins; go and sin no more; I have forgiven thee.” May God grant thee grace to put thy trust in him “who gave himself for us”!

There are many other inferences which I might draw if I had time, but if this last one we have drawn be so applied to your hearts as to be carried out, it will be enough. Now do not you go and try to do good worlds in order to merit heaven. Do not go and try to pray yourselves into heaven by the efficacy of praying. Remember, he “gave himself for us.” The old proverb is that “there is nothing freer than a gift,” and surely this gift of God, this eternal life, must be free, and we must have it freely, or not at all. I sometimes see put up at some of our doctors that they receive “gratis patients.” That is the sort of patients my Master receives. He receives none but those who come gratis. He never did receive anything yet, and he never will, except your love and your thanks after he has saved you. But you must come to him empty-handed; came just as you are, and he will receive you now, and you shall live to sing to the praise and the glory of his grace who has accepted you in the Beloved, and “who gave himself for us” God help you to do it. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 45:1-14.

It is a Psalm of instruction, and yet it is a song of love, for the science of love to Christ is the most excellent of all the sciences. To know Christ is to

love him, and we are best instructed who love him most, and the Psalm is most of all a Maschil, a Psalm of instruction, when we are taught to love. Hence the Psalm is a song of love.

1. *My heart is inditing a good matter:*

A good instrument — the heart refined and sanctified — a good subject, for, says he: —

1. *I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:*

Oh! it is a loyal subject concerning King Jesus. The original has it, “My heart boileth up with a good matter” — bubbleth up — as if each verse of this Psalm were, so to speak, the bubbling up of a boiling heart that is heated With the love of Christ; and all is concerning him — concerning him the king. “I speak of the things which I have made.” That is experience — things made my own; and there is no matter like that. Theoretical theology is of little value. We must have it in the heart, and have it in our own.

1. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

As though it were moved by another hand, as a pen might be. So the Psalmist feels as if his tongue were under divine influence, and he were about to utter things his own, yet not his own — things which he has made, yet which the Spirit indicts.

2. *Thou art fairer than the children of men:*

And then he sees him. He does see him by faith; and he speaks, not so much about him, as to him. “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” Oh! it is sweet meditating upon Christ, when Christ himself is present. It is blessed work to speak about Christ when you can speak to Christ at the same time. Thou art fairer than the children of men — the very fairest of them. Whatever beauty, excellence, and worth there may be about mankind, thou hast all, and mere than all that they possess.

2. *Grace is poured into thy lips:*

It comes, therefore, pouring from them. It comes welling up from thy mouth. Every word that thou speakest is full of grace and truth.

2. *Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

The Mediator, the God-man, Christ Jesus, is blessed of God. The blessing of the Most High rests upon him, because he is so infinitely lovely. His words are unspeakably gracious; and if God blesses him, shall not we bless him? If God himself praises him, shall not we praise him? Oh! let us not be silent, but where God leads the way, let us joyfully follow.

3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

He loves the fighting Christ — Christ with the sword on his thigh. Oh! but it is sweet to see the Prince of peace — to know that he comes to our heart bearing unspeakably precious blessings; but yet the terrible side of Christ is precious to his saints. They ask him to gird his sword upon his thigh. An armed Christ can only be armed for the defense of his people, and for the deliverance of them from captivity. Therefore, O thou loveliest of the lovely, be the mightiest of the mighty too.

4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

There are three things that are much put to it in this world, and have a hard time of it; truth, which is beset with error, like the hunted hind pursued by dogs. O God, defend thy truth! O Christ of God, lay upon thy sword to smite down error! The next thing is meekness. A gentle spirit has a hard time of it amongst the hard-hearted sons of men. They do not understand meekness. They call the meek man a milksop. They make mirth out of his gentleness.

O sword of the Lord, defend the meek ones of the earthy And there is a third thing that has a hard time of it, and that is righteousness amongst a godless generation, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter — darkness for light, and light for darkness. Righteousness has to run the gauntlet. But, O thou who art truth, and meekness, and righteousness embodied, come forth with thy sharp sword, and fight on the behalf of these things! We do not ask the Lord to come into the world for the sake of pomp, and pride, and power. We only want his battles to be battles of love. We only ask him to extend the kingdom of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.

5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies: whereby the people fall under thee.

Christ has far-reaching power. He can not only smite with the sword, but he has skill with the bow, and he can dart an arrow to those that are far off, that they may feel his power. Oh! that he would do so now, that those who are leagues away from him may, to their own surprise, find a shaft come right into their heart, that they may fall under the power of Christ, and cry out to him to come and heal the wound that his own arrow has made. He will do it, for it is written, “I wound, and I heal”; and wherever Christ wounds in mercy, he heals in mercy too.

6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.*

Notice that the more you look at Christ the more there is to see. Here *the* songster first said, “Thou art fairer than the children of men”; and now he cries, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” That man has not seen much of Christ. who has not perceived him to be God — God on the throne, God on an everlasting throne. Oh! if any of you have not yet believed in Christ as God, I pray you may do so; for you do not know the Christ of the Scriptures at all, however much you may value his moral character as supreme in wisdom, unless you can say, “My Lord and My God,” as Thomas did when he saw his wounds. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.” There is the joy of it! Christ has absolute sovereignty, but that absolute sovereignty never goes beyond the realm of right. “The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.”

7. *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Christ is no neutral. He loves righteousness, and hates wickedness. He is like fire in all that he does. There is about him a certain strength of heart, both to love and to hate; and it is for this reason that God loves him, for God hates lukewarmness. “So then, because thou art neither cold nor hot,” says he, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” But Christ is never neutral about those matters. He loves righteousness. He hates wickedness. “Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And if you want to have the oil of gladness, dear friends, you must not be neutral. You that live betwixt and between — that are neither very good nor very bad — that are not decided worldlings, nor yet decided Christians, you never have any joy at all. You see, you do not go enough into the world to get its joy, bad and base as it is; and you do

not go enough into Christ's kingdom to get its joy; so you get no comfort either way. Oh! to be cast into the kingdom altogether — thrown into it as a man into the deep sea, and swallowed up in it! In its lowest depths are the sweetest waters.

8. *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad*

The very clothes of Christ are precious to believers. “Unto you that believe he is preciousness.” But even his very garments are savored with it, whether he puts on his priestly robes, or his royal garniture, or his prophetic mantle. Each one of these has in it a sweet savor of all manner of choice perfumes, myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Bitter sweets all of them. Oh! in Christ there is a wonderful bitter sweetness — the pangs of death that breed our life: the pangs of sorrow that bring us joy: his downcasting for our uplifting.

9. *Kings' daughters were among thy honorable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

No one is so honored as the one who waits upon the Savior. They are honorable women that minister to him of their substance, that are often found in his temple, like Anna of old. These are kings' daughters, every one of them. And, as for his Church as a whole, she is a queen. She takes no low mean rank, and her apparel is like her dignity. She is clothed in the gold of Ophir — the, best of metals, and the best kind of that metal — the gold of Ophir; and “strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed by the great Sacred Three.” All *manner of* royal apparel is put upon the Church of God, and upon every member of it.

10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;*

We cannot know Christ thoroughly unless we leave off knowing the world. There must be a forgetting as well as a remembering. We are to forget our father's house come right out from it. If Christ is to love his Church, it must be a nonconforming church in the deepest sense of that word. I mean not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of its mind. Not only are we not to love the world, but we are not to think of it. “Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.”

11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty:*

We were thinking of his beauty. But see: when once we see the beauty of Christ, Christ puts a beauty upon us; and when we learn the beauties of Christ, we soon see beauties in his Church. I find that those who at the Church of God have not any very high esteem of the Church's Head; but when he is beloved, his people are beloved for his sake. Why, there is an old proverb that says, "Love me, love my dog." Much more may we say, "Love Christ, love his Church."

11. *For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*

This is the great business of the Church — to carry on the worship of her Lord; and I believe that, met together as we are to-night, we are met for the noblest purpose under heaven. When the people of God come together for worship, they are doing that which angels do before the throne — an occupation from which they never cease day or night!

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift;*

Well, but she is a heathen; she is a trafficker. What does she know about the king of Israel? Ah! but when Israel owns her king — when the Church of Christ delights in Christ, and dotes upon him, she shall have converts in plenty, from the least likely places.

12. *Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favor.*

They are generally taken up with other things, but then they shall know, when once the Church is right with her King.

13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.*

Who has wrought it but her King, whose own wight hand has hammered out the precious fabric, and then has taken every golden thread, and, with his own bleeding hand, has wrought it into a sacred vesture that shall outlast the stars. "Her clothing is of wrought gold."

14. *She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*

Happy are those pure virgin spirits that hardly dare think themselves fit to be called a part of the bride, but yet follow her and keep close to her. They are really a part of her, and they "shall be brought unto thee."

A PROSPECT OF REVIVAL

NO. 3514

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” — Isaiah 51:3.

THE pedigree of God’s chosen nation Israel may be traced back to one man and one woman — to Abraham and Sarah. Both of them were well stricken in years when the Lord called them, yet, in the fulfillment of his promise, he built up of their seed a great nation, which, for number, was comparable to the stars of heaven. Take heart, brethren; these things are written for our example and for our encouragement. His Church can never sink to so low an ebb that he cannot soon build her up again, nor in our own hearts can the work of grace ever decline’ so grievously that the same mighty power which once quickened cannot revive and restore us. Think of Abraham and Sarah, childless till they were old, then rejoicing in one son, who became their heir. Hence sprang the great multitude that peopled Palestine. With such a panorama unfolding before you, there is no excuse for despair; but you may find ten thousand reasons for confidence in God.

With such preface the Lord proceeds to unfold to his people a series of delightful promises. As we have no time to spare, and no words to waste, we will plunge at once into the heart of the text, and observe, first, that you have before you: —

I. HEAVENLY COMFORT PROMISED.

This is a promise to God’s Church. There are some who would have us always restrain Isaiah’s prophecies to the Jews, as though this was their

exclusive application. I have no objection to your so understanding them in their original and literal sense, nor have I any objection to our friends laboring for the Jews especially, as a class; far rather would I commend them. Only, I would have them recollect that no Scripture is of private interpretation that, in God's sight, neither Jews nor Gentiles are recognised under this dispensation of the gospel, for he has made both one in Christ Jesus. I, therefore, as a Christian minister, when I preach the gospel, know neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free, but I simply know men as men, and go out into the world to "preach the gospel to every creature." It seems to me that this is the order in which God would have his Church carry out every evangelical enterprise, forgetting and ignoring all fleshly distinctions, understanding that now men are either sinners or saints. As to circumcision or uncircumcision, vast as its importance in the kingdom of Israel, it is of no account in the kingdom of God. The text, we believe, whatever may be its relation to the Jews as a people, belongs to the Church of God and the disciples of Christ; for "all things are yours." Zion was the stronghold of Jerusalem. Originally a fortress of the Jebusites, it was taken by a feat of arms by David and his valiant men. It became afterwards the residence of David, and there, too, was the residence of the Great King; for in it was built the temple which became the glory of all lands. Hence the Church of God — which has been captured by Christ from the world, which is the palace where he dwells, which is the temple where he is worshipped — is frequently called "Zion," and the Zion of this passage, I believe, we are warranted in interpreting as the Church of the living God.

We are told here, then, that the Lord will comfort his Church. Let the object of this comfort, therefore, engage your attention. "The Lord will comfort Zion." Well he may, for she is his chosen. "The Lord hath chosen Zion." He would have those upon whom his choice is fixed be glad and happy. The elect of a great king have cause for thankfulness, but the chosen of the lying of stings should rejoice continually in the God that chose them. He would have his Church rejoice because he has not only chosen her, but he has cleansed her. Jesus has put away the sin of his people by his blood, and by his Spirit he is daily renewing the nature of his children. Sin is the cause of sorrow, and when sin is put away sorrow shall be put away too. The sanctified should be happy. The Lord will, therefore, comfort them; because he cleansed them. The Church of God is placed where God dwells: —

*“Where God doth dwell sure heaven is there;
And singing there should be.”*

What can ye conceive of weeping and lamenting in the house where Jehovah dwelleth? It was a rule with one of the old monarchs that no one should come into his presence sad. In all our afflictions we may draw near to the Lord, but his presence should dispel our sorrow and sighing; for the children of &ion should be joyful in their King. If the Lord dwelleth in the midst of his people, there ought to be shootings of joy. The presence of the King of Heaven is the heaven of their delight. Moreover, Zion enjoys her Monarchs love, and therefore, he would have her comforted. We know not how dear to the heart of Christ his Church is, but we do know this: that for his Church he left his Father's house and came down to earth, and was poor, that she, through his poverty, might be made rich. A man leaveth father and mother, and cleaveth to his wife, and they become one flesh; but what shall I say of the great mystery of this glorious Lover, who left his Father's house, and did cleave unto his Church, and became one flesh with her that he might lift her up and set her upon his own throne, that she might reign with him as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife? Well may, therefore, the Lord desire his Church to be happy. Eternal love has fixed itself upon her. Eternal purposes cluster around her. Eternal power is sworn to protect her. Eternal faithfulness has guaranteed eternal life to all her citizens. Why should she not be comforted? I do not wonder that the text says the Lord will comfort the people whom he has thus favored.

And the Lord himself is the Comforter. “The Lord will comfort Zion.” Beloved, we make but sorry comforters for God's people unless Jehovah puts his own hand to the work. I have sometime tried to cheer up my brethren when they have been desponding, and I hope not without success; yet I have always felt that to relieve and refresh a desponding saint, I must fetch the remedies from my Master's pharmacy. So, doubtless, those of you who have ever sought to obey the command, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” must have found that it was not your word that could comfort Zion, nor your sympathy, but God's truth applied by God' Spirit, for this alone can comfort Zion. Oh! blessed promise! “The Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort her waste places.” He that made the heavens will become the Comforter of his people. The Holy Ghost, who brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion; the mighty Spirit who came down at Pentecost in tongues of fire, with a sound like a mighty rushing wind — that same blessed Spirit will come to the hearts of the members of

his Church and comfort them. There are sorrows for which there is no solace within the reach of the creature; there is a ruin which it would baffle any mortal to retrieve. Happy for us that the Omnipotent comes to our aid. It is “he who telleth the number of the stars; calleth than all by their names”; who also “healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds!” Where he is, rolling the stars along, filling heaven with wonder as he creates majestic orbs, and keeps them in their pathways, making the comet fling its gorgeous light across space and startle nations, holding the burning furnace of the sun in the hollow of his hand; yet he stoops down to minister to a desponding spirit, and to pour the oil and wine of heavenly comfort into a poor distracted heart! Yes, it is Zion that is to be comforted, but it is Jehovah himself who has promised to be her Comforter!

And how does the Lord propose to comfort Zion? If you read the verse through, you will find it is by making her fertile. He will turn her barren deserts into fruitful gardens, and her unproductive wilderness into a blooming Eden. The true way to comfort the Church is to build her synagogues, restore the desolation of former times, to sow her fields, plant her vineyards, make her soil fruitful, call out the industry of her sons and daughters, and fill them with lively, ardent zeal. There is an everlasting consolation for the Church in those grand doctrines of grace revealed to us in covenant, such as election, particular redemption, effectual calling, final perseverance, and the faithfulness of God. Resting in his love, God forbid that we should ever keep back these grand truths; they are the wells of salvation from which we rejoice to draw the water of life. But there are other truths besides these and we could not make full proof of our ministry if we overlooked the rain, even the former and the latter rain, which God gives in due season, or withholds in his chastening anger. I have often remarked that those persons who are always crying after the comfort that is to be derived from the stability of God’s purpose are strangely lacking in that present joy and jubilant song which revels in the goodness of the Lord, who clothes the pastures with flocks, and covers the valleys over with corn. I have also remarked that the best way to make a Christian man happy is to make him useful, ploughing the fields which God has watered, and gathering the fruits which he has ripened. A Christian Church never enjoys so much concord, love, and happiness as when every member is kept hard at work for God, every soul upon the stretch of anxiety to do good and communicate, every disciple a good soldier of the Cross, fighting

the common enemy. Thus the Lord will comfort Zion, and he comforts her by turning her desert into a garden, and her wilderness into Eden.

And oh! my brethren, how happy is the Church when all the members are active, all the trees bearing fruit; when sinners are converted, and daily added to the fellowship of the saved; when, instead of the thorn, there comes up the myrtle, and instead of the briar, there comes up the fir-tree; when God is turning hard hearts, that were, like rocks, into good soil, where the corn of the Kingdom may grow. There is no joy like it! If you can be happy in seeking your own good, without caring for the welfare of others, I pity you. If a minister can be content to go on preaching without converts or baptisms, the Lord have mercy upon his miserable soul! Can he be a minister of Christ who does not win souls? A man might as well be a huntsman and never take any prey; a fisherman, and always come home with empty nets; a husbandman, and never reap a harvest! I wonder at some people's complacency. When God never blesses them, they never fail to bless themselves. "Divine sovereignty withholds the increase," they say. But it really is their idleness that tends to poverty. The promise of God is to the diligent, not the indolent. Let Paul plant, and let Apollos water, God will give the increase. It may not come to-day, nor to-morrow, nor the next day, but come it must. The Word cannot return unto God void. It must prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. Had God sent us on a listless, bootless errand, we might well complain, but he doth not so. Only let us preach Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and we shall, doubtless, come again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us. Although when we went forth, we wept because of our inability and our want of confidence, yet this is the way in which God comforts us.

The promise, you will observe, is given in words that contain an absolute pledge. He shall and he will are terms that admit of no equivocation. What an emphasis that man of God, the late Joseph Irons, used to lay on the words when he got hold of a "shall" and a "will" from, the mouth of the Lord! Though some people say we must not make too much of little words, I will venture to make as much as ever I can of these two potent monosyllables. "The Lord shall comfort Zion; the Lord will comfort all her waste places." How much better and brighter this reads than an "if," or a "but," or a "perhaps," or a "peradventure"! He shall comfort Zion. Oh! how those dear saints, the Covenanters, when they were hunted about, and fled into dens and caves, said, "Ah! but King Jesus will have his own; he shall comfort Zion!" And our Puritan forefathers, when priests threatened

to harry them out of the land, could see with prophetic eye the time when the harlot church would yet be driven out, and the true, legitimate children of God would take her place; they could say, "The Lord shall comfort Zion," and they looked forward to happier halcyon days. No less did those glorious Albigenses and Waldenses, when they stained the snows of the Alps with their blood, feel confident that the Church of Rome would not gain the day, that God would yet return and avenge the blood of his martyred saints, and give the victory to his true people. And surely you and I may take comfort too. "The Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort her waste places." Brethren, there are brighter days to come. The day breaketh, and the shadows flee away! Our hope is in God. Never doubt the true progress of the Church. Believe that, notwithstanding every discouragement that checks our progress, the cause of God goes on; it must go on, and it shall go on, till King Jesus is universally acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have not to serve a master who cannot take care of his own. To your tents, ye Philistines, when the God of Israel comes to the battle! Where will ye be? Your ranks are broken; ye flee like thin clouds before a Biscay gale! When God comes forth he has but by his Spirit to blow upon his enemies, and they fly before him, like the chaff before the wind. The Lord shall and the Lord will; who, then, shall disannul it? Though foes may hoot and fiends may howl, he will keep his word; it shall come to pass, and he will get to himself renown in fulfilling his own good pleasure. Having thus enlarged upon the heavenly comfort promised, we proceed to notice the: —

I. MOURNFUL CASES FAVORED.

"He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. "Now are there not to be found in the visible Church persons whose character is here vividly depicted? I think there are three sorts of people in such a case, to all of whom I trust the blessing will come. There are those who once were fruitful, but are now comparable to wastes. If God should visit his Church, he will be pleased to comfort the waste places. Do I not address some who must needs recognize their own portrait? You used to be church members, and then you did seem to run well; what did hinder you? You were, apparently, brave soldiers once, but you deserted and went over to the enemy. Still, if you are the Lord's people, one of the signs of God's grace to his Church will be the recovery of backsliders. I remember one Monday afternoon, when we had been waiting upon the Lord in prayer ever since seven o'clock in the morning, that there came a

most remarkable wave of prayer over the assembly. And then two backsliders got up and prayed, one after the other. According to their own account, they had been very bad fellows indeed, and had sorely transgressed against God; but there they were, broken-hearted and fairly broken down. It was a sight to make angels rejoice as their tears flowed. Certainly their sobs and cries touched the hearts of all of us who were assembled. I thought to myself, "Then God is blessing us, for when backsliders come back it is a proof that God has visited his people." You recollect when it was that Naomi returned to Israel with Ruth, her daughter-in-law. They never came back during the time of famine; they stopped in Moab then, but they came back when they heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Even then Naomi said, "Call me not Naomi." She seemed to come back from her exile groaning and full of bitterness, and yet she came back because God was with his people. Backsliders, come back, come now, for God is with his Church, and he has promised to comfort her waste places. Oh! you who have forgotten your Lord, remember your first Husband! It was better with you then than now. Though you have gone astray, yet the Lord smith, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord." You may break the marriage bond with God, but he will not break it with you. He claims that he is married to you, and he bids you return to him. I hope that some backslider will be encouraged by this promise to return, with full purpose of heart, to the God of his salvation.

Then a second department of the promise is, "He will make her wilderness like Eden." I take the wilderness here to be a place of scanty vegetation. The Oriental wildernesses are not altogether barren sand, but there is a feeble herbage which struggles for existence. We are told, you recollect, that "Moses kept his father's sheep in the wilderness." Oh! how many there are in the Church of God who are just like that! They are Christians, but sorry Christians they are. They do love the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is with a moonlight love, cold, very cold, and chill. They have light, but it is dim and hazy. If they do anything for Christ, their service is scanty; their contribution mean; their charity grudging. They bring him no sweet cane with money. They do not fill him with the fat of their sacrifices, but they make him to serve with their sins, and they weary him with their iniquities. Ah! dear friend, if thou art indeed a child of God, then there is this comfort for thee. We will make her wilderness like Eden. Even you who have borne

so little for God shall yet be visited, and made fruitful when the Lord comforts his people.

A third character is implied in the desert — the deserted places where no man dwells, where the traveler does not care to linger: How many professors of religion, how many who attend our chapels, answer to this description of the soil! They are like deserts. You not only never did bring forth fruit, but you never concerned yourself to do so. No man seems to care for you, and you appear to yourselves as though you were like the sand, which it would be a hopeless task to plough, for the gleaner would never fill his hand from the produce, much less the reaper his bosom with the sheaves. Ah! well, but God has a word for these desert souls. He will make her desert like the garden of the Lord. I pray — nay, I know — that during the gracious season which God has given us we shall see many a desert heart made to blossom like the rose. These be they whom the Lord will specially transform — backsliders, scanty Christians, and those who have often heard, but never yet proved the power of the gospel at all.

Ask ye now, what does the Lord say he will do for them? He says (hear it and marvel!) that he will make the wilderness like Eden. You know what Eden was. It was the garden of the earth in the days of primeval purity. Fruit and flower, lofty tree, and lively vegetation abounded there in profuse luxuriance. I know not how its groves and shrubberies were tenanted by graceful creatures and lovely birds, but I can well imagine that every sense of man was regaled by its unfailing charms. No thorns or thistles cursed the soil, no sweating brow with arduous toll forced the crops from barren sods. The land laughed with plenty. The river, branching into many heads, watered the garden. God himself was pleased to water it with the mists, and to make the fruits grow, to swell in rich abundance, and early come to mature perfection. So the Lord says that when he visits his Church he will make these poor backsliders, these immature Christians, these nominal professors, like Eden. Oh! that the Lord would do it! Oh! that he would make them healthy, fruitful, prolific in fruitfulness, and spontaneously fruit-bearing, so that we should almost have need to say, “Hold, Lord!” just as Moses and Aaron did when the people brought in the offerings for the Tabernacle, until there were more than enough. Oh! that the Church of Christ may be enriched with all spiritual gifts, with all heavenly graces, with all that can minister to the welfare of the saints, to the advantage of the world, and to the glory of him who created and redeemed us! God grant it may be so!

Moreover, as if to strengthen the volume of his grace and our hope, he says that he will make her desert like the garden of the Lord. He shall come to you and delight your heart and soul with his converse. If ever you should be an Eden, you shall be like to Paradise for a yet higher reason, because your fellowship shall be with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. There shall be upon you the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed. The Lord shall water his Church, shall water it every moment. He shall make fat our bones, and cause us to be as a watered garden, as a well of water whose waters fail not. Oh! some of you may well envy those happy days you once enjoyed! Would you like them back again? Then plead with God the promise of the text. You were once blessed with nearness to, and communion with, Christ. You once prayed with fervor, and your souls prospered. Go to God with this promise and say, "Lord, I am a desert; I am a wilderness; I am a waste place; but comfort thy Church, and let me partake of the consolation by making me fruitful in every good word, and work to thy glory!" The Lord will do it, for the promises of God shall certainly be fulfilled.

Who but Jehovah himself can do this? I have already noted this. "He will make her wilderness like Eden." It is he only that can perform it. The minister cannot. The Church cannot, with all her efforts. Talk of getting up a revival! It were insufferable arrogance to make the attempt. It belongeth not to us to do this. Unto the Lord our God alone doth this belong. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." If he will but visit his Church, then we shall see the wilderness rejoice, but if not, we may plough, as is our duty, and we may work upon it, as is our calling, but there shall be no joy and no rejoicing. We conclude with the view of: —

III. CERTAIN DESIRABLE RESULTS WHICH ARE PREDICTED.

"Joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody." You notice the doubles. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry, perhaps, necessitated them. Still, I am prone to remember how John Bunyan says that "all the flowers in God's garden bloom double." We are told of "manifold mercies," that is, mercies which are folded up one in another, so that you may unwrap them and find a fresh mercy enclosed in every fold. Here we have "joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Just so; the Psalmist tells us of our soul being satisfied with "marrow and fatness" — two things. Elsewhere he speaks of "loving-kindness and tender mercy" — two things again. The Lord multiplies his

grace. He is always slow to anger, but he is always lavish of his grace. See here, then, God will give his people an overflowing joy, an inexpressible joy, a sort of double joy, as though he would give them more joy than they could hold — joy and then gladness — thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Oh! what a delightful thing must a visitation from God be to his Church! Without God, all she can do is to groan. Nay, she will not always do that. She sometimes indulges a foolish conceit, and says, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” After that will soon be heard the hooting of dragons and the cry of owls. Let God visit his Church, and there is sure to be thanksgiving and the voice of melody. It has been remarked that all revivals of true religion in ancient as well as modern times have been attended by revival of psalmody and song. The joy that makes the heart grateful, enlivens the spirits, and diffuses happiness, will seek and must find some tuneful strains. Not to speak of the Hebrew Psalter or of the Greek Hymnals, in Luther’s day his translation of the Psalms and his chorales did more, perhaps, to make the Reformation popular than even his preaching, for the ploughman at his field-labor, and the housewife at the cradle, would sing one of Luther’s Psalms; so, too, in our own country, in Wycliffe’s day, fresh psalms and hymns were scattered all over the land. And you know how, in the last century, Wesley and Whitefield gave a new impetus to congregational singing. The hymns were printed on little fly-sheets after each sermon, and at length these units swelled into a volume. Collections and selections of hymns were published. So fond, indeed, were the Methodists of singing, that it became a taunt and a by-word to speak of them as canting Psalm-singers. But this is the mark of a revived church everywhere. New impetus is given to the service of song. When the Bridegroom is gone we may well mourn and fast, and hang our harps on the willows; it is when the Bridegroom cometh that joy and feasting seek the aid of vocal music, and the people of God break forth into thanksgiving with the voice of melody. I do fervently hope, beloved, that we shall have this thanksgiving, and this voice of melody in our midst for many a day to come! Would God that all the churches enjoyed it! Need I say that from all parts of the country there are, tokens of it now? We do not desire at any time a monopoly of blessing. May every Christian denomination and every Christian community be favored with the dew of heaven, and have their roots watered by that river which is full of water. Oh! that all the Churches of Christ were fruitful! Instead of wishing any of them to be

weak, I would say, with Moses, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them! Oh! that Jesus might be extolled from the uttermost parts of the earth to the highest heavens! Brethren, let us ask God to fulfill this promise to the Church at large. Let us say to him, "Lord, comfort thy Zion! She has many waste places — comfort her! Thou knowest she has many barren spots — turn them into gardens of the Lord! Oh! let the heavenly rain descend, and the divine dew come from thee, that the wilderness and the solitary place may yet be glad!"

But what shall I say to those of you who are not saved? If you want to become as these gardens of the Lord, it is only the grace of God which bringeth salvation that can work in you this mighty change. Look to the Lord. He it is who must do it. He hears prayer. A negro was once sent by his master on an errand that did not suit him; he did not want to go. So when he came to a river he turned back, and said, "Master, I came to a river; and I could not swim across it." "Well, but was there not a ferryboat?" "Yes, there was a ferry-boat, but the man was on the other side." "Well," said the master, "did you call to the ferry-man to come and take you across?" No; he did not think of doing that, for, as he did not wish to go over, he was glad to find an excuse. Now it is true, sinner, that you cannot save yourself, but there is One who can. There is a ferry-boat and there is a Ferry-man. Cry to him! Cry to him, "Master, across this river be pleased to take me; I cannot swim it, but thou canst bear me over it. Oh! do for me what I cannot do for myself. Make me to be accepted in the Beloved!" If you seek the Lord, he will be found of you. He never did set a soul a-seeking but what he meant to bless it. But if you will not seek, what should be said of you but that on your head should lie your own blood? I know many of you to be greatly impressed this week. I hope the impression will not be blown away, like smoke out of a chimney. May God make a deep work in your souls! Oh! some of you were easily impressed, but you quite as easily forgot the impression. You are like Ephraim's cake that was baked on one side; you do not get thoroughly cooked. You do not feel the power of the gospel permeating your whole nature in every part. You are like a cake not turned, and God accepts you not because of this. Oh! that there might be a thorough work of the Spirit in your souls, a work of grace that should bring you to Jesus to be rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

EZEKIEL 34:11-27.

Verse 11. *For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.*

Here is a divine One come to seek and to save. The shepherds had neglected and scattered the flock. Now God takes it out of their hands, and he says, "I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out."

12. *As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.*

He has a chosen people redeemed unto himself by blood, and though they have wandered in the cloudy and dark day of their depravity and ruin, yet will he seek for them with ceaseless care, and bring them back with mighty power, until he has put them into his fold again.

13. *And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.*

This shall yet be done to Israel after the flesh; it is being done to Israel after the spirit, to whom these promises in their fullness belong. By the mountains of his immutable promise, by the rivers of his Spirit's influences, shall his people be fed.

14. *I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.*

When God works, he does nothing by halves, nothing scantily. There shall be a pasture, and it shall be fat; his people shall feed; they shall feed until they lie down in the pasture through very satiety; through the plenitude of his feeding they shall rest.

15. *I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.*

Happy sheep that have such a guardian! Happy believer if you are realising today the full meaning of this, “I will feed my flock.” Only God can do it, but he can do it very effectually until the heart is satisfied with favor, and full of the blessing of the Lord.

16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which teas sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.*

Men that are proud and lifted up shall meet with no blessing, but such as feel their poverty, their weakness, their nothingness, shall be the favored ones of God. Cannot some of you poor lost ones, driven-away ones, broken ones, and sick ones, lay hold upon this promise? You may see daylight through it, however dark your condition may be. God saith, “I will,” and you may depend upon it he will make it good. There is never an “I will” of Jehovah that shall fall to the ground.

17, 18. *And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feel the residue of your pastures! and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?*

Sometimes when God’s people get very strong in themselves, they grow proud, and they find great fault; precious truth is not good enough for them unless it is very daintily spoken; they have eaten, and now they tread down the pasture and spoil it for others. This may seem a very small offense, but the great Shepherd does not think so; he looks with indignation upon these fat and strong, who foul the waters with their feet.

19-21. *And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them: Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side cad with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad.*

There is a way of doing that. Some are so big, so harsh, so wrapt up in themselves, that if they meet with a fellow-Christian in trouble, who has less confidence than themselves, who seems to be less useful than themselves, they are all for pushing, and poking, and driving, and doing I

do not know what. Mind what you are at, when you meddle with the poor people of God. There are some doctrinal views, some pretensions to perfection, which just amount to this.

22, 23. *Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them.*

You know his name. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto my sheep eternal life.” You know that voice; it makes you glad to think he is so near you. “I will set up one shepherd.” That is glorious. He is of God’s setting up; who can put him down again?

23. *And he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.*

The house of David shall still shepherd the people of God in the person of great David’s greater Son, whom we adore.

24, 25. *And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace.*

With you that were lost, that were driven away, that were sick, that were broken.

25. *And will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land.*

So he will. There were once more wolves than sheep; now there are more sheep than wolves; and the day shall come when the saints shall possess the land. “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Meanwhile, in the ways of God, “no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon.” “And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness,” where they seemed to be quite defenseless; there they shall be safe, and they shall “sleep in the woods,” in the very lairs of the wild beasts. There shall they be so safe that they shall feel safe, and shall even go to sleep. *So* “he giveth his beloved sleep.” “And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing,” for God does not bless men that they may keep the blessing to themselves. If he blesses them he makes them a blessing, and their surroundings become a blessing.

25-27. *And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a*

blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be sale in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

Oh! what a blessed day when all our yokes are broken by God's own hand. We have worn them long enough — the sinful yoke, the legal yoke, the yoke of fear of man, a yoke heavy to bear — when they are all gone, and we can sing, "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

THE FRUITS OF GRACE

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, JAN. 21ST, 1872.

“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it all be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the, work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” —
Isaiah 19:18-25.

THIS is a very remarkable prophecy. Attempts have been made to explain it, as if it were already fulfilled. I believe all such attempts to be utter

failures. This promise stands on record to be, fulfilled at some future day In those bright days for which some of us are looking, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, so the waters cover the sea, then shall this word to Egypt be verified; yea, and God shall be glorified both by Egypt and Assyria, as well as in the land of Israel. This ought to be an encouragement to carry on missionary operations with great vigor. Here is a distinct promise for Assyria and for Egypt. Let not the missionary be afraid, even if for thousands of years to come there should be little apparent success to the preaching of the gospel. If the Lord should tarry another six thousand years, ay, sixty thousand years — and he may — we are still to go on working, and still to go on laboring, looking for his coming, and expecting it, but not relaxing our efforts because he pleases to delay it, for the Lord has sworn that all flesh shall know his glory, and you may depend upon it, there is no spot of earth that shall be left to be Satan's dominion. It shall be conquered for Christ, and in truth he shall "see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied." It is most encouraging to find Egypt mentioned. You find it in one of the Psalms, "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and they shall come out of Ethiopia." Now this I believe to be the literal meaning of the passage. You must understand that the prophecy was given to the people of Israel, and it was given to them, as it were, to children that were using types and figures. It speaks in their language. Hence it speaks of altars, and pillars, and oblations, all of which are to be understood now in the spiritual sense. The Church of God has come to her manhood, in which she has done with material altars and material oblations, seeing that she has Christ to be her only altar, her only priest, and prayer and praise to be the spiritual oblation which she shall bring. I understand the prophecy to be, in brief, just this. In the latter day, Egypt will be converted, and Assyria too, and wonders of grace will be performed in that land, and the people of the land shall with delight worship the Most High.

Having said this, I am now going to use the text for another purpose. Here is a wonderful display of the grace of God in this promise to Egypt. I see the very heart of God revealed. I see a display of what God will do, not to Egypt only, but to others also, and though we have much to say, we will try to open up, in as few particulars as we can make them, the display of grace which God gives among the sons of men. We begin thus: —

I. THE GRACE OF GOD OFTEN COMES TO THE VERY WORST OF MEN.

It is promised to Egypt. Now Egypt was the nation which was the type of God's enemies. It was over Egypt that he triumphed at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord?" and we regard Egypt as always being typical of the enemies of God — the peculiar and chief enemies. Yet the grace of God is to come to Egypt. And so will it come often to the worst enemies that God has. Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth with rage against the Christ of God, was met and conquered by eternal love, and his heart was renewed, and he was made an apostle. And oftentimes since then, electing love has chosen those that were most furious against Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon them, and turned the lions into lambs, and made them lie down at the feet of the Savior. Let us have hope for the worst of men, and let the worst of men have hope for themselves under the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Egyptians were a peculiarly debased people as to their idolatry. If you go into the British Museum you will still see the cats, the crocodiles, the scarlet ibis, which they were accustomed to worship. Besides that, it was one of the sarcasms of the Roman poets that the Egyptians worshipped gods which they grew in their own gardens. They had the sacred beetle, the sacred mouse, and I know not what. And yet, degraded as they were by idolatry, the grace of God was to come to them. And men may have gone far into superstition; they may have debased even their own intellect by what they have tried to believe, and forced themselves down into the very deeps of superstition, and yet, for all that, the grace of God can come to them and lift them up. And the Egyptian were degraded politically too, for we read in one passage of the prophets that Egypt shall be the basest of all nations; and yet, though the basest of nations in that respect, the grace of God shall come to them. Oh! how wondrous is the sovereignty of God! The devil cannot dye a soul so scarlet in sin but what the blood of Christ can make it white as snow. Satan cannot drive a chosen sheep of Christ so far on the mountains of vanity, or into the deserts of sin, but what the great Shepherd of the sheep can find that sheep, and bring it back again. There is hope for the mart sunken. There is hope for those that grovel, and that sink in the mire. The infinite compassion of God can reach them, and the eternal power of God can lift them up.

But there is one singular note in the text, that one of the cities in that land of Egypt (if I read the text aright) that was to be saved was called the City of Destruction. It had come to be named by that name, and yet, think of that, God looked upon it with mercy. Now there are in villages, and there

are in towns, and certainly there are in London, men that have become so notorious for every sort of vice and sin that they are only known as the devil's own servants; and if anybody in the place were to speak of them, it would be with no question about the horrible condition of their minds and the state of their character. And yet in how many cases has the Lord been pleased to make such beings, new men in Christ Jesus! I have some in my mind's eye now, who have been to me a source of unutterable joy, whose characters were known, and certainly not admired. They were the dread of all with whom they dwelt. I remember one whose fist had many a time laid low his adversary, and whose oaths, and cursings, and songs at midnight often made the village tremble when he was filled with drink. But what a humble child he became when at last the gospel brought him down! How changed and how quiet was his manner when Jesus Christ had renewed his soul — something like John Bunyan with his drink and his Sabbath breakings — but what a saint was he when bowed at his Savior's feet, he found his sins forgiven! We must not say, "Our children are hopeful, and God will save them, but we cannot expect him to look upon the fallen and degraded." Ah! if, is Pharisaism that would make us speak so. The gospel has found some of its brightest jewels in the lowest haunts of vice. Bear it, bear it into the caves of darkness, where the blackness seems to be palpable, and to hang like the glooms of death — bear ye aloft the everlasting torch, which the divine Lord himself has kindled, and you shall discover by its light some precious blood — redeemed ones, who shall be to the praise of the glory of his grace. "One shall be called the City of Destruction, but thus saith the Lord, I have delivered it, I will save it, for my name's sake."

Now this ought to be very encouraging to every hearer present, for where there is mercy proclaimed to the chief of sinners, there is encouragement to every form of sinner to come humbly to the heavenly Father, and plead the precious blood of Jesus, and obtain life and peace. God grant we may be led there for his name's sake! But now the second observation is that grace is displayed in our text from the fact that: —

II. GOD'S GRACE SENDS A SAVIOR.

Note, too, that he adds this word, "A GREAT ONE, and he shall deliver them." Beloved friends, you know, all of you, what I have to say, but yet, though you know it, I know no story ever make score glad your spirit than the old, old story of the Savior. He that has same to save us is Jesus, the

Son of God; to save us from every stain of sin; to save us from our propensity to sin, from the power of our habits, and from the snares of Satan. He has come to save us from the death eternal, to save us from the wrath to come. God has sent us a Savior. We could not have saved ourselves, but one has come who can. The text says that Savior is a great one. Oh! I wanted a great Savior. A little Savior would not have answered my turn, for great sin wanted a great atonement, and my hard heart wanted great grace to soften it down. Now he that came to save us was God himself — Jesus — nothing less than God — counting it not robbery to be equal with God. He is great in his nature, for as God he is infinite — omnipotent. He is great also in what he has done. Look to him on the cross; it is the Son of God pouring out his life for sinners that they may live through his death. There must be great merit in such a sacrifice. I never dare believe in any limited merit in Christ. He who gave himself there upon the cross, being very God of very God, though certainly man — there can be no limit set to the value of the atonement which he made. Oh! beloved, it is a great Savior that God gives. And now that he has risen from the dead, he stands before God to plead for us, and it is no little plea — no plea which might be put back or put off. With authority he pleads before his Father's throne, points to his own wounds, and the Father's heart always yields to the Son's intercession. You have a great Savior, for he is a great pleader. And, besides that, all power is in his hands; the keys of death and hell are at his girdle, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God. Oh! what a Savior we have! Dare we doubt him? When we cast ourselves upon him, is there not an end to all our fears, for Jesus is mighty to save, and what a word that is in the text — “a Savior and a great one, and he shall deliver them”! God did not send Christ at a haphazard. Jesus did not come here to save those who might perchance be saved — to make men salvable, but he will save all he came to save. Those on whom he fixed his eye of everlasting love, for whom the precious drops were shed — these he will, by the power of his arm, pluck from the jaws of the lion, because, with the blood of his heart he had redeemed them. “He shall deliver them.” Oh! you that trust in Jesus, lay this word home. May the Spirit of God lay it home to you. He shall deliver them from all temptation, from all trial, from all affliction, from death itself. “He shall deliver them.”

Now put the two points together. We have mentioned that the grace of God comes to the greatest of sinners, and it brings to them a Savior, and a

great one, and I have laid open to you something of the heart of God in the greatness of his compassion. But we must pass on. Where the grace of God comes, it seems from the text that: —

III. IT CHANGES MEN'S LANGUAGE.

Turn to the 18th verse. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan" — the spiritual meaning of which is that the grace of God shall make men speak that holy and pure language which is the mark of a child of God. O dear hearer, if the grace of God ever meets with you, your friends will know it — every one — by your conversation. That man could not speak without an oath; there will be no oath now. When he did speak, it was in a proud, boastful, hectoring way about himself. Ah! you will hardly know him to be the same man; for he will speak so humbly and so gently, and when he comes to speak about himself he will have the tears in his eyes to think of what he used to be, and what the grace of God has done for him now. Then his language would be lascivious and unclean at times, but now he desires not even to hear of such things, much less to mention them; for it is a shame for a Christian to speak of the things which are done by many in secret. The grace of God soon rinses out a man's mouth. His wife knows it; his children know it; his workfolk know it; and though some of them will think him a fool to speak after the way in which he now does though he does not imitate the language of Christians, and is not a cant, yet there is something about his very brogue and talk that might make men say, "Thou also west with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee." Oh! would not it be a mercy if God would change the speech of some in London! Even our boys in the streets sometimes talk in a way that is enough to make your blood chill. Foul words are very common in our streets and elsewhere. O sovereign grace, come and visit these, and they shall speak no longer the language of Babylon and the language of Belial, but they shall speak the language of Canaan, for God shall give them a pure language. When you hear men that once could curse begin to pray, when those who were given to blasphemies begin to pray, and when, instead of hearing the noise of strife in the working-man's house, you hear the song of praise, then is fulfilled the saying that is written, "In that day shall five cities speak the language of Canaan. and swear to the Lord of Hosts." But I must pass on. Where the grace of God comes: —

IV. IT SETS MEN ON HOLY SERVICE.

“There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. “When a man is in sin he worships himself, or he serves his pleasure and Satan; but when the grace of God comes, the man begins at once to serve God, and becomes God’s servant. I am sure I know houses now that have an altar to God in them — the family altar — where you would not have thought such a thing could ever have been. I know some, too, that will this very day give of their substance to God, who two or three years ago would have scorned the act. They would have said it was a waste of money altogether to give anything to the cause of the Most High. There are some teaching at the Sabbath school, and spending the day of rest in, perhaps, the hardest toil of the week, and doing it very cheerfully too, who once would have laughed to scorn any proposal that they should have done any such thing. But the Lord, when he gets men’s hearts, and washes away their sins, takes them into his service, and makes those who were most ready to serve Satan become most willing to serve him. Is not this true — I appeal to many here present — is it not your delight now to do all you can for the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps, however, while you say “Yes,” you also add, “But I do not do half as much as I should, nor as I ought. “You feel precisely as I also felt — and I must make the same confession as yourself. But, brothers and sisters, do not let it end in confession. Let us wake up and do more; for the love that saved us, the love that bought us at such a price, ought not to be recompensed so poorly as it has been. And let us pray for the grace of God, that we may ever have an altar in our own hearts, and be ourselves the sacrifice — that our whole life may be a life of consecration to the living God. Oh! that our common dress might be as priestly vestment, and our ordinary meals as sacraments, and ourselves as priests unto the living God; our whole life a psalm, and our whole being a hallelujah to the Most High! Where the grace of God comes with power, it makes the worst of men become the best, and the lowest of the low become true servants of the living God. “Can it be?” says one; “can I ever be a servant of God?” Ah! yes: hark to the song of heaven! “We have washed our robes” — then they needed washing — “and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Glory be to him who hath made us kings and priests unto our God.”

The next display of divine grace in the text is to be seen in this, that where the grace of God comes: —

V. IT TEACHES MEN TO PRAY.

We read in the 20th verse, "They shall cry unto the Lord because of oppressors." This is a kind of prayer that only God can teach us. You can easily learn to say a form of prayer, or to read one from a book, but a prayer that can fairly be called a cry is the fruit of grace. The cry is the natural expression of distress. There is no hypocrisy in a cry. When one is sore sick and ready to die, and cries out in anguish, it is the genuine expression of an oppressed spirit. And God always teaches his children to pray such prayers as those. And oh! how sweetly will saved souls pray next to the songs of angels, I think the prayers of new converts are among the sweetest things that ever reach our ears. When we have been a long time professors, we are very apt to get into a sort of stilted mode of talking to God in prayer, and men that have more gifts than graces will spend the time in words, words, words. But oh! how has my heart leaped when I have heard a cry, such as "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" when some soul, ready to burst with fear of the wrath to come, has cried out, "Jesus, Lord, have mercy upon me!" or when some heart that has just found Jesus has praised and magnified the exceeding mercy that has put away its sin. Christ can teach the blasphemer to pray; he can take the profane into his school, and teach them all to cry, and what all the clergy and ministry in the land could not do, namely, teach a man to pray one sincere prayer, God the Holy Ghost can do to the very offscouring and the scum of the universe, when once he comes to deal with them in the way of grace. Wonders of grace to God belong. He that teaches us to pray will teach us to praise him in heaven. The soul that lisps out its desires sincerely to God shall one day sing with cherubim and seraphim before the eternal throne. But I must hasten on. Where grace comes: —

VI. IT INSTRUCTS MEN.

We learn this from the next verse, "And the Lord shall be known in Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day." It is a very serious evil with many hearers that they are altogether ignorant of the things of God; but it is delightful to observe how sweetly the Holy Spirit can teach. I have spoken lately with some whom God has called by his grace during the past few weeks, and I have been surprised that, although they had never been Bible readers, nor received any religious instruction in their youth, when the grace of God showed them their sin, he did it thoroughly, and when he showed them the Savior, he did it in a wondrous way, so that when they came to read the Bible it was not difficult to them to understand it, nor to lay hold upon it with delight, and some have become well instructed in the

things of the kingdom in a very short time indeed. There is no teacher like the Holy Spirit! “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord,” and when he teaches they are taught indeed. What boots it to a man to know all earthly knowledge if he knows not his God? But where grace comes, the man is no longer a stranger to the Lord; he knows the Father, the Son, the Spirit. He must know the Father, for he has become a child. He must know the Son, for he is his only confidence. He must know the Spirit, for it is the Spirit that dwelleth in him, and hath renewed him. Oh! that God would be pleaded to-night to take some fresh scholars into his school! Don’t say, “I am poor and illiterate.” What matters that? With the Lord to teach you, you will make an apt scholar. We can only teach your ears; he can teach your hearts. We can only write the copy in a book, but he can write it on the fleshy tablets of your souls. Never despair of being instructed in the things of heaven. The Lord can graciously instruct you, and if he leads you to-night to receive the Savior — the great one — he will begin the divine teaching which will end in your being complete in Christ, and your entering into his glory. I want you to notice a little more. Where the grace of God comes into a man’s heart: —

VII. IT MAKES EVEN TROUBLE A BLESSING TO HIM

Read the 22nd verse. “The Lord shall smite Egypt” — there is the trouble — “he shall smite” — there is the trouble again — “and heal it” — there is the mercy — “and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.” An ungodly man when he is in trouble, has nothing whatever to sustain him, and no good comes out of the trouble. But get the heart renewed, and let the man receive the Savior, and perhaps the greatest mercies he has are those which are blessings in disguise. I read a story the other day — an incident which happened to a City Missionary. He was preaching one night out in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and there was a man — an extremely aged man, who had lost his wife, and lived in a garret alone. He had scarcely a rag upon him and was nearly starved, and he was going out to commit suicide, but, moved by curiosity, he listened to the preaching of the gospel, and it saved his soul. It turned out that he had once been worth £100,000, and had been a distinguished merchant, but had lost his all in a foolish speculation, and had come down from the heights of riches to the lowest poverty, and at an extreme age he found Christ. The missionary found him friends who kept him with about enough to keep body and soul together — a humble crust in a very lowly, solitary room — but he used to say that now he had found the Lord; but he

might never have found him if he had not lost all his wealth, and he looked upon it as the greatest blessing that had ever occurred to him, that he was brought to such beggary, that he was able and willing to stand in the street to listen to a sermon; for he said that in his riches he had despised the gospel, and had been altogether an atheist and an unbeliever but now, when brought to the lowest, Christ had found him, and he had more happiness with his cross than he had with his wealth. Oh! get the grace of God in your heart, and then broken limbs will be a bleeding. That long depression of trade that brought you oft low will appear a very different thing now. Your lot is very lowly now perhaps, and your toils severe, but God's grace will gild all these dark things in such a way that you shall even learn to glory in tribulation also, and bless the Lord that he did not leave you to be a stranger to him, but made you his child and, therefore, made you feel his rod for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? Beloved, what a blessing it is to have the grace of God, seeing it turns adverse circumstances into true prosperity and makes our losses to be our lasting gains! One other reflection, and that is this concerning the grace of God:

VIII. IT CHANGES THE RELATIONS OF MEN ONE TO ANOTHER.

Read the 23rd verse. "In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians." Now the Egyptians and the Assyrians were enemies to one another; they were always fighting. There was a bloody feud and war between them century after century; but when the grace of God shall visit them both, there shall be no more fighting; the Egyptian shall go and visit the Assyrian, and the Assyrian shall visit the Egyptian. Have you never met with a case? Two brothers were at enmity, and would not speak to each other. One of them was saved by grace, and he thought, "Oh! if my brother John might be converted!" He wanted to fall into his brother's arms and make it all up, and be friends again. Meanwhile, brother John had heard the gospel somewhere else, and his soul had been saved, and he goes to find out the other brother, and all are reconciled, and the families that had been at a distance are knit together in love. Oh! the gospel soon breaks down barriers. I won't give a penny for your religion if you are at enmity with anybody — if you can say of anyone of your kith and kin, "I will never speak to them again." Mind, in that day when you appear before God, how can you expect mercy? Well, now, genuine grace makes us forgive as we

have been forgiven, and it establishes intercommunications between those who had long been enemies to one another. Should there happen to be in this place at this time any that have long been at variance, I believe that there is no way of establishing a lasting love between you like your both loving Jesus Christ. If you cannot meet anywhere else, you are sure to meet if you come to the cross. A common Savior will bind you together. Bought with the same blood, and filled with the same divine life, you will become members of the same mystical body; you cannot help loving each other. Oh! that God would put an end in the world to all wars between nations, as well as all strifes between individuals. It won't come about by trade, nor yet be politics, nor by anything of man's devising; but if the gospel spreads, if God converts Egypt and converts Assyria, then Egypt will not desire war with Asia, nor Assyria with Egypt, but they shall be one in Christ Jesus the Lord. Wonders of grace! wonders of grace, that those that hated should love, and enemies should become friends. We will close with these last words. Where the grace of God comes: —

IX. IT MAKES MEN TO BE BLESSED, AND TO BE A BLESSING.

You will find that affirmed in the last two verses. "They shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, and it shall be said, Blessed be Egypt, my people." The man that was accursed before, and was a curse, becomes blessed, and is a blessing. I will not enlarge upon it, but I will say this to you, the members of the church. It has delighted me to find the many earnest hearts there are here that are trying, to do good, some in one way, and some in another. I would in every case, if my encouragement were worth your having, give it you very heartily. But, beloved, if I do not know of it, and if no one knows of it but yourself and God, go on, go on. It is God's work to save souls, and you are workers together with him. Oh! this city wants you — wants ten thousand earnest spirits. The lodging-houses want you; the alleys and the courts want you; the poor want you; the rich want you. If you have anything to say of the remedy which wisdom has prepared for the remedy of sins disease, the millions want it. They won't come to hear the gospel presaged, take it to their houses, carry it to their doors. If they reject a Savior, let it not be for want of your hunting after them. Push it in their way. Sow beside all waters. In season and out of season teach ye the Word. Ye know not where God may bless you. But never be discouraged because of the badness of the neighborhood, or the lowness of the character of the people. If Egypt shall be saved, have faith for this Egypt. If Assyria shall be saved, have confidence in God for those who are often

worse than heathens, and you shall have your reward in that day when he of the pierced hand shall distribute crowns to those who faithfully serve him. Rewards, not of debt, but of grace, shall be given to the most obscure and unknown of you, who for his sake have sought to teach little children or to reclaim the adult who had fallen into sin. Take courage — your work of faith and labor of love are not in vain in the Lord, and will do wonders yet to the praise of his grace. And as to you that are not saved. I have been saying great things of encouragement to you. I don't know who may take hold of them, but if there were one here who should reckon himself to be quite out of hope, it is to that man I spoke; and if there is a man here who says, "You don't mean me; you don't know my character," I will suppose it to be the worst character that was ever heard of — I meant you. He is "able to save unto the uttermost than that come unto God by him." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Seek ye the Lord! Confess your sins to him. Weep out your confession with your head on your Father's bosom and say, "Forgive me, forgive me for thy Son's sake," and it shall be done unto you. God grant it may be done, even now: for his name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ACTS 9:1-22.

Verses 1, 2. *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings, and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he fouled any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

His very breath was threatening. Slaughter seemed to be a necessity of his existence, He was breathing out threatenings and slaughter — could not breathe without them — could not speak without them. So full was he of fury against the people of God, that Jerusalem was not enough for him; he wanted wider hunting grounds; he must go to Damascus.

3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus.'*

There was his prey before him, and the wolf was ready to leap upon it. 3-5. *And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why*

persecutest thou me? And he said, Who are thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

So it is when God means to save a man. He will make every kick that he gives against the gospel to be like that of an ox that kicks against the goad and wounds itself.

6. *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* What a sudden change! Before, he knew what he was going to do. He was going to do his own will and wreak his own vengeance, but now it is, “Lord. what wilt thou have me to do? My will is in a moment subdued. What is it thou dolt ask of me?”

6-9. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth: and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the head, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*

And what a battle went on in his soul then, perhaps even he could scarcely describe afterwards. Brethren, some of you can surely guess, for you, perhaps, have felt the same. Some souls are born to God with terrible pangs; and this man was one. And oh! what strong believers those often are who have great difficulty in coming at peace. “And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”

10. *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias;*

One of those to whom Paul had intended to pay his cruel respects.

10. *And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold I am here, Lord.*

A grand way to be able to answer the Lord at all times. May we never be, dear friends, where we shall be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.” Some Christians go into very strange company, and they would not like their Master to know. They would be ashamed to say, “Behold, I am here, Lord.”

11. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one culled Sanl of Tarsus:*

The Lord knows the whereabouts of his people. He knows your whereabouts to-night, young man. I only trust that though you are an opponent of the gospel, he has brought you here on purpose that you may become one of his best advocates, through his renewing grace.

11. *For, behold, he prayeth.*

There was the secret sign and mark of a changed character, "Behold, he prayeth." What a wonder! He prayeth — he that breathed out slaughter. He prayeth — he that came to destroy. "Behold, he prayeth."

12-16. *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias caroling in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy sailors at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

And it seemed a gracious retribution of him, did it not? I say not a penal infliction. I know not how to put it better than "a gracious retribution" — that he who made saints to suffer should now have the high privilege to take the front rank in suffering himself. Often, I doubt not, when he was bearing and enduring with such matchless fortitude, he thought of those saints whom he had harried and worried in the days of his carnal estate; and how he must have prized them, and with what wonder must he have said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

17. *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul,*

Oh! what new words, "brother Saul"! A few days before no man durst have used such Language of familiarity to this mighty disciple of Gamaliel, armed with authority from the chief priests. Now how sweetly it must have

sounded on his ear, “brother Saul”! Oh! there is nothing that makes us such brothers as the gospel.

“This is the dear uniting bond
That will not let us part.”

17, 18. *The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

What else should a believer be but be baptized? It is the very next step which he should take after he has found the Savior.

19. *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.*

It seemed unimportant to put that in here, did it not? Yet it is not so. While grace heals the infirmities of the mind, bodily food is still wanted for the body; and sometimes it is well with your young convert, when he has been a long time in distress of mind, that you refresh him in body, as well as cheer him in heart.

19, 20. *Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*

And had they ever heard such a preacher before? How they gnashed their teeth on him — the unbelievers; and how the timid saints crept in and heard this man advocate — this man who had had a wonderful twist in his mind from which he never recovered — who had seen something — as yet he himself could hardly tell all that he had seen. Oh! it must have been fine hearing to listen to his preaching that Christ is the Son of God.

21, 22. *But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

And this is the great thing to prove to the Jew. Oh! when shall it come to pass that poor forsaken Israel shall know that this is the very Christ? God grant her restoration right speedily!

LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

NO. 3516

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DELIVERED BY C.H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.” —
Song of Solomon 8:6.*

TAKEN in its most natural sense, this is certainly true of creature love. It is a mighty, all-constraining, irresistible passion. Even the love of friendship has proved itself occasionally to be “strong as death.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” There have been those who were willing to sacrifice their lives for their friends. Filial affection has sometimes proved to be more than a match for the terrors of the grave. Some pleasing instances are on record worthy to be written among the golden deeds of manhood, in which brothers and sisters have seemed to contend with each other which should die first, if perchance a brother’s precious life might by such a sacrifice be preserved. What a mighty instinct of love glows in the mother’s heart! You recollect that famous story of the mother whose child was taken from her by a Jesuit missionary to be trained separate and apart from its parents; how she swam through rivers, and passed through what seemed to be impenetrable forests, guided only by the midnight star, till she arrived at the place where her offspring was — braving death in a thousand shapes, from wild beasts and venomous serpents, from floods and jungles, from fierce men and relentless persecutors, might she but reach her child. Have there not been instances where, in the stormy blasts of winter, a mother has wrapped her garments about her infant, and, exposing herself to the fury of the elements, has sacrificed her own life that the little one might live? Love has indeed often proved itself to be strong as death. When merely the common passion, which burns in the breast of ordinary men and women towards each other, it has asserted its strength in a fond devotion which recked no

consequences, spared itself no pain, and fixed no limit to endurance, not counting life itself too dear to be parted with on so high a service. Nor do we lack painful proofs of the converse proposition as it is stated in the second clause of our text. Jealousy has often proved itself “cruel as the grave.” You have only to recall the most appalling murders that have been committed within your memory, or, if you please, those you have read of in the history of nations, and you will find that jealousy has instigated those that were most vindictive and relentless. When jealousy begins to turn its sharp tooth upon a man’s heart, his reason fails him. Madness takes possession of his faculties. A determined purpose, which he would not have dared to contemplate under the influence of a well-balanced judgment, prompts, plans, and performs, almost without premeditation, an atrocious crime, when jealousy rules the cruel hour. We believe it, and we deplore it; no revenge has ever been found too bitter, too malicious, too lawless for jealousy to inflict. Relentless as the grave, it spare not youth nor beauty, respects not fame nor fortune, but accounts all comers for its prey. Not that these things, an phenomena of nature, much concern the Christian minister. He has to handle these themes because they concern you as men. It is to men he speaks. He has to tell them of the salvation of Jesus Christ. It is rather the business of the mental philosopher than the faithful evangelist to take up these phenomena of the human mind. Our business is to understand these things spiritually. This Song of Songs is spiritual, or else it has no claim on our attention; its very inspiration were incredible. We cannot imagine the Holy Spirit giving us this song merely for the purpose of entertaining us with the figures and metaphors of eastern allegory. There must be a deep and hidden meaning in it.

Now we believe it will be fair to say that there are two high spiritual forms of love and jealousy, and that our text is lucid in its description of both — first; the love and jealousy of the saints with regard to Christ; and secondly, the love and jealousy of Christ with regard to his saints. We will begin with: —

I. THE LOVE AND JEALOUSY OF THE SAINTS WITH REGARD TO CHRIST.

The saints love their Lord and Master, or else they could not be saints. Love is the fountain of their saintship. They are sanctified by love. It is the love of Jesus Christ which constrains them to hate sin, and which leads them forward in the path of holiness. The Holy Ghost uses the same passion of love to work in us the purging of ourselves from every

unhallowed thing, and to inflame our desire after everything that is agreeable to the mind of Christ. The saints have received, by the Holy Spirit, a love to Christ which is “strong as death.” And how strong is death? Think for a moment how strong death is! He is so strong that the armies which lay encamped upon the field just now, and could tread an empire beneath their feet, yield to his imperial sway, and are themselves trodden beneath the feet of death. Xerxes, as he sat on his golden throne, wept at the thought that death should so soon moor down the myriads of his Persian hosts. Over all the multitudes which have been born into the world, with but two exceptions, death has swayed his scepter. So strong is he, that he has hitherto reigned as an Universal Monarch. Nor will he ever resign his scepter until he shall come whose kingdom shall have no end — lie? who is “death of death, and hell’s destruction.” The monarchy of death is not only universal, but its behests are imperious, and instantaneously obeyed. When, at God’s command, death seizes the body, it has no power to resist. The vital energy at once ceases; the tongue of music is dumb, and the hand of skill is motionless for ever. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God, who gave it. In vain the physician’s skill; it cannot avert the stroke of death. No long siege is necessary; it requires not years, nor months, nor weeks to scale the ramparts of man’s citadel of bodily strength. As death knocks at the door it flies open. The arrest must be made. Willing or unwilling? the prisoner must go with the officer. The demand is peremptory, and the obedience passive. Seems it not as if nature had no parallel for this strong irresistible force of death?

Behold the love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Mark you, it is as strong as death! It can, and it does, overcome all adversaries; yea, even death itself! My brethren and sisters, it may, perhaps, strengthen your courage if I remind you that some of your comrades have tried their love in competition with death. They have “resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” They have met with death in the most cruel forms. They were stoned; they were sawn in sunder? they were burned at the stake; they were dragged at the heels of wild horses. Think of Marcus of Arethusa, stung to death by wasps, or of holy Mr. Samuel, starved to death in his dungeon. with but a mouthful of bread and a drop of water given him each day, only just enough to continue his lingering existence! And yet these persons who thus met death, with no downy pillow to lean the head upon? and with no voice of friendship to comfort them, never wavered in their attachment to

their Master. They suffered persecution, and nakedness, and peril, and the sword, but nothing could separate them from the love of God, which was in Christ Jesus the Lord. Some of them met with death in the most gloomy forms, as well as in the most cruel shapes. They were cast into lonely dungeons, where it was almost literally true that “the moss grew upon their eyelids.” Think of our brethren in Holland, persecuted alike by Protestants and Romanists! They have been despised of all men, and have suffered death in deep desertion. They have been thrown into dungeons, and left there till the slimy snails crawled over them, till the toads gathered about them, till their emaciated frames absolutely rotted and decayed in the nauseous places of their confinement! Not that they desired to escape, or sought liberty at the expense of conscience; rather did they account it a joy that they had fallen into divers trials for the sake of Christ. With none to cheer them, with no brother’s voice to help them to raise a tune, with no hymn to chant them on their way to public martyrdom, without an eye to look upon them, except the eye of the Master, their love verily proved itself to have been “strong as death.”

Still worse, methinks, to bear; some of them met death in the most lingering manner. Many a man could stand upon the burning faggot, endure with heroism his hour of torture, and then ascend in the chariot of Elias up to heaven; but to be roasted before a slow fire, to be starved by a low regimen, to be enervated by a vicious atmosphere, for the martyrdom to extend over a week, a month, or a year — how shall this be endured? The supernatural grace of God has made a bed of spikes to be a bed of roses to some of the martyrs. Amidst the flames they have even leaped and sung for very joy. That was a grand saying of one of the martyr of Mary’s age, who, when he was told by Bonner that his life would be spared if he would recant, said, “Look you here, Bishop; if I had as many lives as I have hairs on my body, I would burn as many times as that before I would bend myself down before the superstitions of Rome.” Another of the martyrs, when his finger was put into the flame of a candle that he might feel what kind of peril he was about to encounter, told his persecutors if he had as much agony in all his body as he then had in his finger, he would not give up the faith which he had received from God, to adopt any of the traditions of men. Death has thus come piecemeal to a man; he has had to “die daily,” in deaths oft like the Apostle Paul, continually having to face the grim fiend. The love which Jesus Christ has kindled in the souls of his people has been undiminished in quantity and undimmed in brightness. In fact, I think

that the love which Christians have for Christ seems to flame the more vehemently the more troubles that they have to endure. Have you never seen a chemist, when illustrating a lecture, take a small piece of solid matter, put it on some water, and the moment it touches the water it has begun to burn? In ordinary cases, contact with water extinguishes fire; but this substance touches the water and burns there, as it burns nowhere else. So seems it to be with the Christian. The best and most brilliant part of the Christian's love comes out under some overwhelming trouble. He triumphed when the opportunity arose that put him to the test. "Love is strong as death."

Although you and I are not born in an age in which we are likely to attain to the distinguished honor of wearing the ruby crown of martyrdom, their example may excite our emulation. Hast thou, dear young friend, been subjected to, a little jeering and sneering in the workshop, or to a little harsh treatment at home? Maybe thou beginnest to falter and flag. Bethink thyself then. What part hast thou in that love which is strong as death if it cannot bear this? If any of you have been sorely tempted to do an unholy thing to get you out of your pecuniary embarrassments, ask yourselves, where is the love which is strong in death, and will you dare to stoop? If you do not maintain your integrity, you have not a drop of martyr's blood in you, and if you have not the spirit of Christ, you are none of his. When I see professors turn pale at a laugh of the thoughtless, or look terrified when some article in a newspaper or a magazine thrusts hard at their principles, I wonder how they would have behaved themselves in the grand old times of Luther; or had they belonged to the school of which Calvin was the great exponent, or might it have been their hap to encounter the struggles, political and social, with which such bold reformers as Wickliffe and Hugh Latimer were mixed up. Let not worthy sons of valiant sires pander to craven fears. Rather let that love which is as strong as death brace your nerves and replenish you with a divine inspiration. Doubtless, brethren, we shall have an opportunity of testing this love, though not at the ignominious stake perhaps, nor yet in the desolate prison. The average trials and troubles of life; the peculiar contingencies of each individual's career; the special besetments and temptations that pertain to a child of God — all these make it momentous to live; to live as becometh godliness. And what think you? Can it be child's play to die? To finish one's course; to know that alterations and emendations cannot be made. Our flesh creeps

at the prospect of the grave; but our soul trembles at the outlook and the judgment.

Our faith must be firm and our fellowship unwavering; then our love will be tenacious; yea, as strong as death. You should not lose your confidence when you lose your health. The animal spirits may sink, but you are not dependent upon aught so contingent as they are on the atmosphere. The spirit that sustains you is divine. With decay comes depression; they are both the fruit of disease or of infirmity. Faith can survive — love can triumph over both.

*“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on his breast you lean your head
And breathe your life out softly there.”*

This is what Christ can do. Do you ask what he will do? If you live to his praise, and rest in his love, you shall find that that love is strong as death. Instead of its growing cooler and weaker when the outward man decays, that love of yours shall get to the land of Beulah, and you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan, expecting the coming of the Master, and singing happy canticles and blessed love-songs, even in the prospect of your departure. Love is strong as death.

I wish every Christian would think it over in his own mind, whether his love to Christ is not very poor and flat, compared with what it should be? It seems to me that there is a notion abroad that a Christian man may be expected to betray weakness on other points. Is it not a fact that evangelical or orthodox books are far the most part written in a feeble style? How many devout ministers preach sound gospel like simple twaddle! If you want strong common-sense, you often get more of it in secular than in religious periodicals. The ready pen and the forcible tongue are frequently employed on the wrong side. I think the idea prevails among pious people that everything we do for Christ ought to be done in a quiet, gentle, soft, milk-sop fashion — that we must pray in a very smooth tone of voice, speak in a whisper, and sing so as not to shock anybody’s nerves! This seems to me to be totally inconsistent and utterly alien to the spirit of genuine Christianity. When you espouse godliness you need not renounce manliness. If anything be fitted to develop all the energies of a man’s nature, and call forth all the powers and faculties of his being, it should be his enlisting on the side of King Jesus. My Master calls you to serve him,

not with a timid, vacillating, fitful service, but he demands that you be bold and brave, valiant and venturesome, in his service. he provides you with strength, he may well require your diligence. 'Tis meet that ye serve him with all your powers of body, soul, and spirit. The love we bear to Christ should not be a mere complacency, bland and gentle, a matter for well-bred reticence, rather than for blind avowal. No; let it be a mighty, all-constraining potion, that gets hold of a man like a whirlwind, and carries him along. Ah! methinks this love of Jesus should be dearer to the heart than light to the eyes; it should throb with every pulse of life; it should warm one's blood as it circulates through the veins; it should inflame the heart with zeal and mould the constitution of one's soul. The gold, phlegmatic man, or the supine, lukewarm man, are alike unfit to engage in our Master's service. Should not the love of disciples to their Lord be stronger than the love of the husband to the wife, of the mother to her child, or of friend to friend; a love compared with which there is no love on earth to be found; a love that is strong as death? Connected with this love, and as a result of it, jealousy is brought under our notice.

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave." Whenever love absorbs the heart, jealousy will guard the object of affection. Only let a provocation occur, something of jealousy is sure to appear. Your love to Christ especially lacks the genuine stamp if it is never roused to jealousy by the malice of foes and the faithlessness of professed friends of our Lord. Many Christians nowadays have a kind of love which is too fond of ease, and too full of compromise to kindle any jealousy in their breasts. The saints of olden times, how sensitive they were; how quickly their hot indignation was kindled. When Baal, the abomination of Moab, was worshipped in Israel, Moses said to the judges, "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor." So, too, at the time that the golden calf was made in the wilderness, you will remember that Moses' anger waxed hot, and he stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me," and all the sons of Levi gathered them selves unto him. At his bidding, by the word of the Lord, they took every man his sword, and went in and out from gate to gate to slay every man, his brother, his companion, and his neighbor. There fell of the people that day about three thousand men. Their love to Jehovah gave them a jealousy which was cruel as the grave in avenging idolatry. You remember how it was accounted to Phineas, the son of Eleazar, for righteousness, that he rose against Zimri, a prince among the Simeonites, and thrust him through with a javelin when he was

caught in sin with a Midianitish woman. Such jealousy was cruel as the grave. Men like Elijah did not say, in gentle accents, "Comprehensive charity is better than covenant truth. Give us full liberty to worship Jehovah, and you shall have perfect liberty to worship Baal." No! He contested the question with the idolatrous priests. The verdict came by fire from heaven. The frightened multitude saw it, and cried out, "Jehovah, he is the God." Then said Elijah, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." This was the voice of a man who loved the Lord, who was jealous for his name, and these excited in him a holy anger and a righteous enmity against the worshippers of idols. Now, under the Christian dispensation, we can have no such anger against individuals. Our Lord has taught us, by his example, that they are rather to be pitied than hated by us. But, on the other hand, in zeal for the Lord of Hosts, and in hatred of every false way, a Christian, walking in the light of the gospel, should excel the most devout Jew under the old dispensation. Persecution is unprincipled. It violates the law of love, to which we owe a supreme allegiance. But true faith never can hold fellowship with infidelity. Vital godliness must be at hostility with all unrighteousness of men. Do we seem to speak bitterly? I suppose it never will be a very sweet thing to tell people of their faults. We should like to know whether Luther did not speak bitterly. What kind of honey did he use? Did Calvin declaim in soft and silvery tone? Did Hugh Latimer, when he encountered Popery, line his mouth with velvet, and deliver himself in delicate phrases?

What think ye, men and brethren? Did ever patriot stand upon maudlin civilities when he saw conspirators plotting against his country? Did any noble-minded philanthropist cringe with misgivings, or apologise for interfering with the miscreant libertines who defile the youth and beauty, or debauch the homes of the people? And can it be possible that any lover of God, and valiant defender of the faith ever did, or ever shall, buckle to those damnable heresies which are alike insulting to the Lord, who bought us, and destructive to the souls of men whose redemption is inestimably precious in his sight? Nay, but they only cared to clear themselves of the blood of souls against the last great day. What I long to see in every church is not a breach of charity between man and man, but the utter destruction of that pseudo charity which is now the curse of the Christian Church. If you have a partiality towards what Christ hates; pity for Agag, whom God abhors; a wish to tolerate that which exalts human pride, though it be utterly derogatory to your Master, truly then you are a traitor, however

unintentionally to your Master. You do not show any wise and discriminating love to him, for if your love were vehement, you would be jealous of his crown jewels, and you would not suffer any other to be recognized as the head of the Church but your Lord. If you love him, you will be jealous of his atonement, and you will not allow that anything else can cleanse from sin but that blood he shed for our remission. If you love him, you will become jealous of his spirit, and you will not be willing that the new birth which cometh of his operations should be set down to any mere ceremony. If you love Jesus Christ, you will be jealous of his Deity, and you will not be party to bits of bread and drops of wine being adored as the body and blood of Christ, when you know that he is in the body up above, dwelling before the eternal throne. You will feel that error, instead of being stared at as an object of scientific interest, is a thing to be shuddered at as a malignant disease, and to be guarded against as an epidemic. With Jezebel, you can have no peace while she loveth her vicious unions. You will contend against every faction which conspires to tarnish the Redeemer's glory, and cast him down from his excellence. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave." "Hard" is the word. "Jealousy is hard as the grave." Truly the grave is hard. It has not the slightest compunction. It holds fast the prey that is taken by its Master. As Christians we are, and we must be, lovers of mankind. Men we love; men we would at all times help and serve. No clime nor caste, no geographical line or national character, can define the boundary of our heart's yearning for the welfare of humanity, while we act on the commission to preach the gospel to every creature. But error we must scout, and cry out against it, and rest not day nor night till the arm of God has torn it up root and branch. This seems to me to be a natural consequence of loving Christ much. If you love Christ but little, you will hate error but little. If you do not love the truth at all, you will not hate error at all. You will say, "Oh! what matters it? It is a mere theologian's dispute; let it be left to the schools to wrangle over." Not so; when you once get to think, "Such and such a truth is precious to me as my life; it is identified with any being and my well-being." From that very moment you will be filled with a jealousy which is hard as the grave. Turning now from our love and jealousy for our Savior, let us speak a little of: —

II. THE SAVIOR'S LOVE AND JEALOUSY TOWARDS US.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, we know, has a love for us that passeth all understanding; and, however it may seem to grate upon the ear, it is equally true that he has a jealousy over his people, which watches them

with incessant care. I need not prove to you that the love of Jesus Christ for us is as strong as death; he verified that when he tasted death in all its bitterness — forsaken, not only by men, but, worst of all, forsaken of his God. “*Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani*,” was the concentration of all griefs. Such was his cry upon the accursed tree. Death never made him flinch. He faced and felt its agonies extremely, and loved us then as he loved us before, and as he loves us still with infinite tenacity. The fact that his love is strong as death admits of no question. But here is the point I am coming to; his jealousy is cruel, or hard as the grave. He is never cruel towards his people, but he is very hard on foe or rival that would come between his people and himself — ay, hard is the grave.

Consider this, my beloved friends. You and I once cherished a self-righteousness that stood in the way of our receiving Christ. We would not look to him, nor trust him, but we loved our own works. We thought ourselves at least as good as others, and we rested there. Now how relentless the Lord was in cutting down that self-righteousness of ours! He never gave it any quarter. How he denounced it, doomed it, and utterly destroyed it. We thought so much of it that we would have harboured it, but he would not tolerate a vestige of it. He turned our beauty into ashes, and our glory into confusion of face; for he loathed our self-righteousness more than we ever loathed our uncleanness and impiety. He accounted it fit neither for the land nor yet for the dunghill. How he dealt with us in severity then! What cuts and wounds we had! We were killed some of us, by his law. We cried out of the depths to him, but still he had no pity and no mercy apparently. We seemed to sink deeper and deeper into the mire, till, as we read the Book of Job, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, we felt that the expressions we found there had been written on purpose for us. We tried to pray, but our prayers came back from the brazen sky reverberating in our ears in notes of despair. We went to the house of God, but we found no comfort there. We turned to the Bible, but not a promise cheered us, for the Lord Jesus was jealous of our self-righteousness, and he would not give us a comfortable word, nor so much as one kind look till that self-righteousness was wholly gone. When that was turned out of us, oh! the love-passages, the blessed revelations of his divine grace that he then gave us! But he would not give us so much as a glance of kindness, or a sentence of cheer, until first he had got rid of the unholy thing that provoked his jealousy.

Since then we have had many visits from him, yet he has not, ceased to be jealous. I have held interviews today with a goodly number of those who have lately found Christ, and I observed among them many who were brought to seek his face by the death of a husband, or a child, land in some cases it was not only the loss of one child, but of another and another. I have frequently met with instances where a woman has been bereaved both of her child and of her husband before she yielded up her heart to Jesus. He has had to be “cruel as the grave” ere he got rid of the object of his jealousy. She was wrapped up in the affections of earth; she had given herself up wholly to earthly things, and so one gourd must wither, and then another, till there was nothing earthly left to shelter her, and then the poor weeping eye was turned to the Cross, and then consolation came. Christ’s jealousy is thus “cruel,” but oh! what a blessed cruelty it is! It is better to enter into life halt and maimed, and shaving only one hand, than having two eyes and all our friends and kinsfolk about us, to be cast into hell-fire. It is better that we should suffer from cruel Providences here than that we should be permitted to go wafting along streams of pleasure down to the gulf of everlasting ruin. Blessed cruelty! that makes us love the Savior by revealing the Savior’s inextinguishable love for us.

And since the day of our conversion how many times you and I have cherished tastes and habits which we preferred before Christ, and the walk of faith with him! It is so easy to let the creature come in, and usurp the place of the Beloved — thus to live half for God and half for our friends. But that will not do, for God will have us all love and serve him with all our heart, and soul, and our strength. Our dearest friends, the partners of our every joy and sorrow, every hope and fear of our mortal lives, if they take away our hearts from Christ, will either prove a bane to us, or else they will be taken away from us. I recollect the story of a Christian woman who had made a great idol of her child. He was her only son, and she lost him. Nothing then could console her, till at length one day she went into a Quakers’ meeting. She sat there a long time, and not a word was spoken. Presently one of the members rose up and simply said, “Verily I perceive thy children are idols.” Not another word was uttered during the whole of the meeting. That word, however, was sent by the providence of God, and fastened like a nail in a right place. It had done its work; the mother’s heart was comforted; she saw the reason of her loss, and submitted her soul to the discipline. Now it is not children only of which we make idols. There are twenty other things. Twenty, did I say? Why, the world swarms with

idols! Man is such an idolater that, if he cannot idolise anything else, he will idolize himself, and set himself up, and bow down and worship himself. But the Lord Jesus will never tolerate idolatry in any heart which belongs to him. If he did not love you, you might do as you liked; but if he loves you, and has chosen you, and your heart then goes after idols, he will chasten you, vindicating his affection, as well as his authority, by the rod. What would it matter to me what your children did, in comparison with the responsibility I feel for my own? Whatever mischief they might do in the street, I might not feel called upon to interfere. You and I alike feel that we are each accountable to punish our own children when they are refractory. And so is it with God. If you were not his children you might live as you list, and enjoy a measure of immunity for a while. But if you are his people, you are not your own masters, and you will have a cross, if not a curse, come into your house. The spell of the idol will spoil your blessing. "Jealousy is cruel as the grave."

Yet, let me say it again, this is blessed cruelty. We are very apt to think that a surgeon must have a hard heart and a cruel nature when we take a shallow view of the operations he performs, and the nerve with which he performs them. A better judgment might convince you that the surgeon's knife is dictated by necessity, wielded with skill, careful to spare pain, and designed to restore health. "Oh!" you say, "only amputation will save life; my child's leg must be taken off; it festers; it mortifies; I could not touch it; I could not do it; it cannot be done" and when you hear that the surgeon has cut through the flesh and the bone, you are apt to think, "What a cold heart he must have! Ah! but which is the more profitable, that love of yours that would let the child die rather than do violence to its feeling, or that which would cut off its leg, in spite of fall entreaties, to save its life? Oh! thank God for the surgeon; his deep incisions are tender mercies; his misgiving would be our undoing. And has not our God thus to deal with us when he takes those things from us which tend to fatal issues, and might otherwise prove our destruction? A fable has been sometimes told of a little plant which grew under a big tree, and was thereby shielded from the storm, and kept tranquil and happy. The little plant prayed that it might grow into a tree, and its prayer was heard. The woodman came along and cut down the tree. Then the poor plant was exposed to the shower, and the wind, and the snow, and the frost, and it said, "Alas! for me. I am left in a pitiful condition!" But the angel of the tree told it that was the only way by which it could ever grow into a tree. So, dear friends, when you lost your

property, when the bank broke, when you lost your friend, when your mother died, when you lost, perhaps, your reputation through a slander which was abroad, it was only the taking down of the tree that the plant might grow, which could not have grown else. The discipline of nature is harsh and cruel, you may think. Ah! well, the Lord lets you think as you like, and misjudge him if you please, for he knows that time will soon correct your judgment, and then you will think very differently as you see the end from the beginning. You will judge more wisely now when your faith is brought into active exercise. You yourself will then begin to abhor idolatry as Christ does, and you will marvel as much with thankfulness as thoughtfulness that it is taken away. I have been reminded by this of what Rutherford said to Lady Erskine when she had lost her husband. "Well, your ladyship," he said, "the Lord Jesus Christ sets great store by your love, for it is clear that he will have it all; he has taken away those who might have had a part of it, and he has said, 'I will have it all! I have bought it, and I will have it.'" Perhaps the Master has been doing the same, or will do the same, with some of us, so that he may get all our hearts to himself.

Now for our practical conclusion. Let our jealousy towards Christ now be cruel as the grave. Is there anything which keeps our heart from perfectly loving Christ? Let us have done with it at once. Have you got into any habit which keeps you from living near to Jesus? Is there any favourite sin which mars your communion with him? Have you any little practice which, in itself, may be excusable, but which, in its tendency, may be injurious? Give it all up. He who is poor for Christ's sake is richer than the richest of men, and he who gives up a pleasure for the sake of Christ has more enjoyment in so doing than he would ever have had in the pleasure itself. It may be that you have been for some time trifling with a conviction which you would have embraced as a truth, only it would have involved a sacrifice; therefore, you have halted and wittingly overlooked it. I know there are very many Christians just now who are in, a position which they cannot justify, but they say they cannot see their way out of it. They apologize for themselves with questionings like these, "How am I to get right? What shall I do?" Now, dear friends, ask yourselves, Does not the Lord Jesus Christ deserve to have from you simple, absolute, unhesitating obedience? "Yes," say you. Then yield it to him, and ask grace, that from this day forth you may look with holy jealousy upon the most pleasant things that in any form or disguise come between you and your Lord and

Master. Oh! what a happy life! what a blessed life you would lead! Yours will be a path of separation! You may have to journey over a rough road. Nevertheless, let your love be strong as death, and your jealousy cruel as the grave; and you will enjoy a communion with Christ dearer than life, and a Sabbath of peace that is like the days of heaven upon earth. Well, my dear hearers, there are some of you who have no part nor lot in the inheritance that we esteem beyond all other possessions. May God give you a share in it. Oh! if you have no love to Christ in this life, what can there be for you in the next but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation! But trust in Jesus, trust in Jesus, and you shall be saved. Being saved, you shall love him, and, loving him, you shall be jealous of everything that comes in the way to divide you from him. You shall be with him at last in the land where doubts and fears can never enter, and where jealousy can no longer intrude. Thus ye shall be for ever with the Lord. Amen.

SYMPATHY AND SONG.

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“Rejoice with them that do rejoice.” — Romans 12:15.

SYMPATHY is a duty of manhood. We are all brethren sprung from the same stock, and that which is a good to any man ought to be a joy to me. That any man should be sick or sorry should in a measure make me sad, but that any man should rejoice with a worthy joy — worthy of a creature made by God — should make other men thankful. But what is thus a natural duty is elevated into a yet higher duty, and a more sacred privilege amongst the regenerate amongst the family of God; for over and above the ties of manhood in the first Adam, there are the ties of our new manhood in the second Adam; and there are bonds which arise out of our being quickened by the same life. We have “one Lord, one faith. one baptism.” We are members of one body, having one only Head: and one life throbs through all the members of that body. Hence, for us to strive with one another in joy and in sorrow would be to act contrary to the sacred instincts which arise out of Christian unity. If, indeed, we are one with Christ, we are also one with each other, and we must participate in the common joys and common sorrows of all the elect family. This, again, gathers yet higher force when the joys in question shall be spiritual joys. I am bound as a Christian to be thankful when my brother prospers in business, but I may not be quite sure that that will be a real blessing to him; but if I know that his soul prospers, then I may safely rejoice to the very full, for that must be a blessing to him, and will bring honor to God. If I

hear that any community prospers, I am bound to be glad of it; yet I cannot be sure, if the prosperity deals with wealth, that it is, on the whole, the best thing in the world; but when I hear that a church is growing, that its zeal abounds, that the Spirit of God is at work in it, that God is glorified there, then I am bound to rejoice, for this is a joy which no man takes away — a joy about which there can be no question — a joy which brings glory to God, and, therefore, must bring happiness to all those who find happiness in God's glory.

Now I desire at this time to talk to you, beloved friends at home, about a joy which God has recently given to us. If all those shall be present to-night who are to receive the right hand of fellowship, Ploy will make up to, no less than 118 that God has added to our number. Some of them are friends who have joined us from other churches; some few are those who have long known the Savior; but the great majority are those who have lately been brought out of the world — lately been made to taste the new life. They have, we trust, washed their robes in the blood of Christ, and are come hither to say, "We belong to the people of God." Now if this was not a joy to us, it ought to be; and my object to-night is to make you merry — to make believers' hearts merry with it — merry after the good old gospel sort of which we read just now. "They began to be merry," because the lost ones were found, the wanderers were restored. May God grant that a feeling of holy joy may go through the midst of this room; and if there be any in sorrow who cannot rejoice in their own joy, yet at least may their hearts be large enough to joy in other people's joy; and if to-night they would be bowed down if they only looked within, may they rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, and be glad in the glory which is brought to God!

Keeping to this one point entirely, we shall begin by saying, "Rejoice with those who do rejoice" that is, rejoice with those who are the converts — who have themselves been brought to Jesus. If there are any persons in the world who must of necessity be happy, they are those who have newly found "peace through believing." They may forget some of that happiness by-and-bye. All that arises from novelty will certainly depart, but now the love of their espousals is upon them, their heart rejoices in a new-found Savior. All their spirits are alive towards him, their faith is in active exercise, and their love is plain; and, therefore, they are happy men. Find me those who have discovered Christ to-day, and I am certain I shall not find eyes full of tears, unless they be tears of joy. In looking back, I cannot remember any day in my whole life that was at all comparable to the day in

which I looked to him and was lightened. There have been joys since then; joys of all sorts have fallen to our lot in a measure; but ah! that one day still is the great bright star in the skies, the red-letter day off all, the spiritual birthday, the day in which the soul came out of bondage and entered into its liberty. All those to-day, then, who are new converts and have come to cast in their lot amongst us — rejoice, rejoice, my brethren and sisters with them. You can enter into their joy, for you have tasted the same. Let the old memories be awaked, and the old love, and the old ardor. As you see them, think of the time when Jesus called you, and when you answered to his voice, sweetly constrained by his divine Spirit. Let us now ponder together: — THE REASONS FOR OUR SYMPATHISING JOY.

In the case of some who will be added to us to-night, their joy is the greater, and ours with them, because their convictions of sin were painful. It was my lot in some cases to see them when the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them — when their sin haunted them day and night, and they found no rest; and I thank God I had the privilege in some, cases of speaking the word that God had ordained should turn their darkness into day; and I saw the change, the strange and marvellous change, which indicated itself upon their countenances when they said, “We understand it now. We trust the Savior, and our hearts are glad.” Oh! you that ever felt the gyves and fetters of sin and Satan, do you remember how you leaped when they fell to the ground? Oh! participate, then, in the joy of those who have gained deliverance from their cruel Sin, and from the bondage of their many fears.

In some cases too some, of those converted to God have, since their conversion, been partakers of very remarkable peace. I have in my memory now the stories of one or two off them of the exceeding joy they have felt. They have not lost it, I trust; but it was, indeed, a peace of God which passed tall understanding which filled their hearts and minds. Now you who have drunk of that sweet cup may sip this honey dropping from the comb. You cannot but rejoice when you think that they should be so full of joy. There were some aged ones, and they thanked God that in the sere and yellow leaf they found him — that though fifty and even sixty years had been spent in the service of sin and Satan, yet they were delivered from going down into the pit. Rejoice, with them. Some were young,, very, very young; and I may say of some children to whom I spoke, their conversion and their testimony was as clear — indeed, it was more clear than the testimony of many who were in middle life; and what a blessing when the

young heart is wedded to the Savior, when the dawn of the morning has the dew of grace upon it — when the, soul comes into the bosom of the Savior while yet it is a lamb! Oh! bless God for the young, and for the old, that they have come to Jesus, and are resting in him.

Think, dear friends, in the case of some whom God has converted here, and I may say in the case of some who will be added to us to-night, we joy when we remember what they were. I will not enlarge, but some here present could tell their own story of what grace has done. Sitting here to-night, but a few months ago the ale-bench would have suited them far better. Singing songs of Zion now, but unchaste music would have suited their lips far better once. But they are washed; but they are pardoned, sanctified, and changed, find as they rejoice in the change, they feel, we cannot but rejoice with them.

And then think of what they would have been still if grace had not interposed, ay, and of what every one of us would have been to-day, and will be, unless the grace of God shall keep its hold upon us, as, glory be to God, we believe it will; for every soul that is saved by grace, if it had not been for that salvation, would have been cast away for ever from the presence of God — another firebrand in the everlasting flame; another, another soul that should gnaw its fire-tormented tongue in vain, and ask a drop of water, to receive no answer of mercy. O sirs, if ye do not praise God for souls snatched from the jaws of hell, and by divine grace taught to walk is the way of heaven, what will ye praise him for? If heaven itself is glad, ye who hope to go to heaven, will ye not participate in the joy? Else, indeed, ye seem to be unfit for that hallowed place, and not to have the capacity which is needful to enter into the joy of your Lord. They are glad. I would like you to have heard some of them at the church meeting here — how they gladly told of what the Lord had done for them. If there were but one I would be glad. When God gives us scores we will be glad, and glad, and yet glad again. I went home very weary one day with seeing so many. The second day there were still more, and I was more weary still. I would like to die with such weariness, for it is such blessed work — this work of bringing in souls that are of the Lord's planting, and of the Lord's ripening, to the garner of his Church. Rejoice, then; rejoice again; rejoice with the converts.

I hear here and there a faint voice saying, "Ah! I wish I could! I am glad they are converted, but I wish I were." Oh! soul, I am glad to hear you say

that, for when a heart longs for Christ it will soon have him. If thou desirest him, he is free to thee. Oh! when thou sayest, "I would I were his; I would bow my neck to his gentle yoke; oh! that he would forgive me and have mercy on me" — come and welcome! come and welcome! Thou best but to trust, and the work is done; thou art saved. God grant that thou mayest do it to-night.

But now advancing a step to-night, dear friends, we ought to rejoice with the friends of the converts, for when souls are saved they do not have the joy all to themselves. There are others concerned in it. There are parents, and in some cases they have brought up their children with much anxiety and godly fear; and they have trembled lest the son and daughter of their love should depart with an evil heart of unbelief from the living God. And there are cases here in which parents have seen all their children coming forward and saying, "We are on the Lord's side." I do not think any joy — there may be a greater joy, but I do not think any is sweeter than the joy of parents who see their children walking in the truth. O you who have the same anxieties, enter into the joy of those whose anxieties are turned to confidence. In some cases it was not the parent alone, but other friends — brothers and sisters — in some cases a husband — in more cases still, a godly wife — in some a Christian nurse. Such have had anxieties and turned them into prayers, and the prayers grew into an agony of soul; and they have seen the persons that they prayed for saved. They have heard those who once denied the Savior confess him. They have seen the proud sinew broken, and the stout heart bowed down in repentance, and they are glad, very glad, to-night. Oh! let us sympathise with them then, and enter into their joy. I think I hear one say, "So I would, but ah! it seems to send a pang into my soul to think I have not been saved." Well, I will not forbid the pang; it is natural; it is gracious; but at the same time wilt thou not be glad that another has that which thou dost so covet? Be not envious. Thou mayest be, easily. It is natural thou shouldst, but prevent the envy by entering in holy sympathy into the joy. It may be that if you can rejoice with their parents and with all other friends, when you have so done, you will be driven with greater anxiety to the Savior, and, in answer to a more earnest prayer, the benediction will come to your household too. Oh! they are glad houses in London where husband and wife walk together in the faith. They are not always the rich; they are not always the healthy, but they are always the happy, who unite themselves in the bands of the

covenant of grace with each other to the Lord, and walk hand in hand so. We will rejoice to-night with those who do rejoice.

I can only stay a minute where there is plenty of room to enlarge, and notice, in the next place, that we ought to rejoice with those who were the means of bringing those who are added to us to a knowledge of the Savior. I would not arrogate any honor to myself whatever; still, I have a joy, a joy which no man taketh from me, that there have been many, many, many souls who have been brought to see the Savior, and put their trust in him, by a simple testimony of the Word. Sometimes I know, indeed, that I could reckon up more than ten thousand souls that profess to have found the Savior through the hearing of the Word. And the world may say what it will, men may condemn as they will; but while God will seal the Word, we will bate no jot nor tittle of it, but preach still as we have received commission from the Lord of Hosts. But I am very thankful to have to add that in the cares of all the conversions that are wrought here, there is a very large number that are brought to Christ not through the ministry from the platform, but through the ministry of many of my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, who are here working for the Master with heart and soul. How rich has God made us — ah! some of our dear brethren and sisters especially — in the leading young minds to the Savior. You will thank God for it who have brought hundreds to Christ. The Sabbath school has not been without a blessing; and in your tract distributing we have had cases of conversion, and from individuals obscure and unknown, occupying these pews to-night — from them there has been fruit. There are quiet, gracious women here who have brought in one or two to Jesus by their pious conversation. I am pleased when I hear such a story as this. “We never went to the house of God, sir, but such and such a member of your church became a servant-girl with us, and she was a quiet spirit and seemed so happy that we asked where she went, and we came too; and we have come to join the church of which she is a member, because of that.” That has happened again and again. Yet, alas! there are other members of the church whose conduct would not be the means of the conversion of anybody, but the very reverse. Yet thank I God for not a few whose lives and whose testimonies have, to my knowledge, brought many to the Savior. None know your names, beloved; none can sound the trumpet before you; but you have been faithful servants in a few things. You will in your turn be made rulers over many things, and you shall enter into the joy of your Lord. Oh! believe me, my heart is full when I think of sinners saved by

simply telling the story of the cross. This is a joy that the miser does not know of when he gloats over his treasure — a joy which the warrior knows not of, even when he rides in triumph through the streets — a joy which earth could not produce — from all her mines and all her fountains — the joy of bringing souls to Jesus Christ, their Savior. Rejoice, then, to-night with those that do rejoice.” Oh!” saith one, “I would, but I never was the means of the conversion of a soul.” Do you recollect our brother’s prayer last night, that every member of this church might during the year be the means of the salvation of one soul? As he said, it was not a very large prayer; and yet if it were answered, there would be 4,500 more souls called by your instrumentality in that way. I know I said “Amen” to it, and I do say “Amen” to it; and I do pray that there may not be one barren one among you, but that the Lord may grant grace to everyone to bring one at least to the Savior in twelve months. God grant it, for his name’s sake! Well, if that be so, then you will be among those who will rejoice, and now you may rejoice in the anticipation of it. I am sure if you have not been useful yourself, you cannot but be thankful to God that others have been, and you will rejoice with them that do rejoice.

Again, we must pass on, but this time our joy must take a higher range; our thought must take a higher sweep. We have spoken of those who are converted, and of their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and of those who were the instruments of their conversion; but there are others that are rejoicing besides those on earth. The angels rejoice. Did we not read just now, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”? Angels have more to do with us than we wot of. They are next akin to us, and they have a holy sympathy with us. They watch us when we go astray; and when they perceive us hearing the Word, I do not doubt they hover over us to observe as best as they can how far the Word operates upon the mind. We read in Scripture — and that is the reason why the woman’s head is covered, that she is to have a covering over her head because of the angels; but some read it because they observe the decorum and propriety of the assembly; and even if we do not, they do. Angels, then, we believe, are in the midst of the congregations of the faithful, and when they see a sinner hearing the Word, I doubt not they watch with such anxiety as may be possible to spirits that cannot be unhappy. And when they follow home the hearer, and they mark the expression, and they note the beginning of the prayer, I should not wonder but they whisper it as news in all the golden streets, “Behold, he prayeth.” And when they see the

tear of repentance, that first ensign of the grace of God, which, like the snowdrop that comes in spring to be the prophet of the cooling summer when they see this tear of penitence which foretells this change of heart, and is the token of its having come, then they speed their way and tell their fellows up yonder, and they strike their harps anew. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

“And shall not we take up the strain?”

They who are not of our race rejoice when any of our race are saved: and shall we be so flinty-hearted as not to be glad? No, ye spirits. though we see ye not, we hear, and what is done above is done here below. Your joy is participated in to-night.

But now we must go much farther. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice.” There is one (his name be ever blessed!) — the Eternal Father (who is so represented by his own dear Son) is rejoicing; and, therefore, though it be speaking after the manner of men, it is also speaking after the manner of the man Christ Jesus, and we cannot err. We find that the Father, when the prodigal returned, was the chief in all the joy. He called others to rejoice with him, but it was thus, “Rejoice with me, for this my son, which was dead, is alive again; he was lost, but he is found.” In all the festival of that glad day there was joy with the neighbors, and joy in the poor penitent son, but the greatest joy of all was in the glowing heart of the father, who had loved his son, when his son loved not him — had seen his son when his son was afar off, and had run to meet his son when he was returning. Have you ever thought, and will you think to-night, of the joy of God over recovered sinners? The joy of God! He is ever blessed. infinitely blessed, but still he condescends to allow us to describe him as being in this respect of like passions with ourselves — a Father rejoicing over a returning son. Beloved, enter into Jehovah’s joy. Is God joyous — joyous over sinners saved? Let the sacred flame come on your soul. Have sympathy with your Father. Play not the part, the unworthy part, a the elder bother. As ye yourselves were prodigals, and could not say, “These many years do I serve thee,” rejoice with your Father, who, in pressing others to his bosom, is only doing in their case what he has done to you.

*“With joy the Father doth approve
The fruit of his eternal love.”*

He always loved the soul that he doth save, loved it ere it was created, loved it in the purpose of predestination, loved it when it fell, loved it when he ordained it to eternal life and gave it to his Son, loved it when it hated him. Is it not written, “His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins”? And that great love makes him infinitely rejoice when he sees it recovered from its misery and danger, and brought into a state of reconciliation and love to himself. Share ye, then, the Father’s joy.

But now forget not the joy of another, never to be forgotten by us who are named by his name — the joy of the shepherd who has found his sheep, that great Shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life that he might save souls. Jesus is infinitely glad when a sinner repents. Measure, if you can, his joy. I have given you a task which ye can never fulfill. I will give you two plumb lines, but they, dike the deep you would measure, are themselves immeasurable. These two plumb lines are, first, the pangs he suffered for those souls and secondly, the love he bore and bears those souls. His joy in their salvation is proportionate, first, to the pangs he bore. So much the price, so much the value that he puts upon the purchase. By so much as the travail was bitter, by just so much the fruits of — that travail are sweet to him. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” — only satisfied because he had the travail to obtain it, and he has obtained it. Had not the grief been deep, been infinite, the joy had not been great enough to satisfy — to fill to the brim his soul with joy. I know Jesus was very sad when on earth, but yet I have sometimes thought that, of all the men that ever lived, Jesus was the happiest man, even in his sorrows, for it is not possible for a heart to be so full of love to others — to be so benevolent — and not to be happy. To love, makes even suffering in a certain sense sweets for the object of loves “The joy that was set before him” made our Savior “endure the cross,” but not with a common endurance. He so endured it that he “despised the shame”; and though it was shame, and it broke his health yet it was shame on which, in the majesty of his love, he trampled with a sacred joy. Now today: —

*“All his work and warfare done,
He into his heaven Is gone;
Now before his Father’s throne,
There is pleading for his own.”*

And as his own come to him one by one, and as they come sometimes in larger companies, the Savior doth rejoice. Measure, I say, his joy by his pangs.

Measure it by his love too, his great love, his boundless love, love which many waters could not quench, and which the flood could not drown. Now I say to every godly heart, Canst thou refuse to be glad when Jesus is glad? If he rejoices over souls saved, will you not rejoice with him? Is there not a sacred infection in that heavenly heart? Do you not catch light from those beaming eyes? If you see him glad, you forget your little sorrows. You think them great, yet you forget them. I pray God you may know the meaning of that verse here, “ Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. “ May you have his joy, beloved, in you, so that your joy may be full, and so that you may rejoice with Christ who does rejoice.

One other word — there is one other who rejoices too.

*“The Spirit takes delight to view
The holy soul he fires anew.”*

Do we ever honor the Holy Spirit as we should? I fear we greatly grieve him by our forgetfulness of him. Think you a moment, beloved. The incarnation of Christ among the sons of men was a very, very great marvel of condescension; but I do not know whether the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in men is not, if possible, even a greater mystery of condescending love. Christ took on him flesh, but it was pure. No sin lives in his body. But the Holy Spirit dwells in sinful men. These bodies are his temples, but they are impure, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is constantly made to see the depravity of our hearts. Now Jesus Christ walked among the sons of men and saw sin, it is true, and his holy soul was grieved, but in a certain sense he was separate from sinners. But here is the Holy Spirit infinitely pure, tender, jealous for holiness, and yet he comes to dwell in our spirits. In our spirits he dwells, and, perhaps, by the weak together we, do not even recognize his presence, and every day we rebel against his government. He seen us unholy, and he is grieved at it, for our sakes and for his holiness sake. He works graces in us, and then we permit Satan to come in and spoil those very graces. He instructs us, and then we forget it. He leads us, and then we start aside, and all the while the dear faithful, gentle, dove-like Spirit does not leave us; he abides with us and in us continually. He hides himself sometimes, and withdraws his condescension, but God does not utterly take his Spirit from us. Now in the case of every soul converted

there have been strivings of the Holy Spirit; there have, been resistances of the Holy Spirit; there have been grievings of the Holy Spirit; there have been sins against the Holy Spirit of man, sorts and in many forms; but at last he has brought to bear omnipotent persuasions upon the heart; at last he has put in his hand through the hole of the door, and the soul has opened to the touch; at last he sees Jesus installed in the heart — Jesus, whom the Holy Ghost delights to honor, for it is his work and office to reveal Christ to the soul; and surely there is as much of joy in the Holy Ghost himself as there is in the heart of Jesus, or in the heart of the Eternal Father, when at last a soul is saved. The triune God is glad; he rests in his love; he rejoices over the converts with singing. Come, brethren, let us rejoice too! Forget your own troubles a while now; forget, I pray, everything that might hamper and hinder, and let us come to the table with our brothers and sisters, many of them who come here for the first time to-night. Let us feel that the fatted calf is killed, and that the dancing and the music are with us, and let each be merry, rejoicing with the joy of our Lord, and with the joy which he has given to his saved ones. Oh! what joy it would be, if all this congregation were saved. May we meet in heaven, beloved, every one of us. Now suppose the preacher should receive a message to-night that every soul here would be saved except one, and suppose it were revealed to him who that one would be, and he was expected now to point out that one! Oh! dreadful message! With what trembling would you all sit, each one afraid lest it should be yourself to be left unsaved. I have no such message, thank God. And yet, yet if I could hope, that all here would be saved but one, I must confess my heart would be lighter than it is; for except some of you repent, forsake your sins, and fly to Christ, the lost will not be one, but many. Dear hearer, let it not be yourself. While mercy still with silken accents speaks and cries, “Return, return!” while love with bleeding hand beckons and cries with wounded side of Christ, “Oh! believe and come! Whosoever believeth on him shall be saved, for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.” May God help you to trust in Christ and live. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ROMANS 12:1-16.

Verse 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren,*

Paul is a calm reasoner. He is a bold starrer of truth, but here he comes to pleading with us. I think that I see him lift the pen from the paper and look round upon us, as, with the accent of entreaty, he says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, by God's great mercy to you, his many mercies, his continued mercies." What stronger plea could the Apostle have? "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God."

1. *By the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Though he beseeches you to do it, he claims a right, to it. It is but your reasonable service. Do we need to be entreated to be reasonable? I am afraid that we do sometimes. And what are we to do? To present our bodies to God, not our souls alone, to make real, practical work of it. Let this flesh and blood in which your body dwells be presented unto God, not to be killed and to be a dead sacrifice, but to live and still to be a sacrifice, a living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable to him. This is reasonable. God help us to carry it out.

2. *And be not conformed to this world:*

Do not live as men of the world do. Do not follow the customs, the fashions, the principles of the world. "Be not conformed to this world."

2. *But be ye transformed*

It is not enough to be nonconformists. Be transformed ones, altogether changed into another form.

2. *By the reviewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

It is by holy living, by consecrated bodies, that we are to prove the will of God. We cannot know it, we cannot practically work it out, except by a complete consecration unto God.

3. *For it say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as Clod hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

Humility is sober thinking. Pride is drunken thinking. He that thinks more of himself than he should is so far intoxicated with conceit; but he that judges aright and is, therefore, humble, thinks soberly. God give us to be very sober in our thoughts of ourselves.

4, 5. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Hence the diversity. If the hand were made exactly like the foot, it would not be a tenth part as useful; and if the eye only had the same faculty as the ear, it would not be able to see, and the whole body would be a loser thereby. Do we begin to compare eyes, and ears, and feet, and hands, and say, "This is the better faculty"? No. They are each one needful. So do not compare yourselves among yourselves, for if you are in the body of Christ, you are each one needful, and the peculiarity which you possess, and the peculiarity which your brother possesses, have their place in the body corporate, and must be precious before God.

6-8. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching; Or he that exhorted on exhortation:

Keep to your own work; stand in your own niche. If you are only an exhorter, do not pretend to teach. If your work is ministry, and you cannot prophesy, do not attempt to do it. Every man in his own order.

8, 9. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation.

Do not pretend to a love that you have not got. Do not lard your speech with "dear" this and "dear" that, when there is no love in your heart; and even if your heart be full of love, show it without spreading molasses over your talk, as some do. "Let love be without dissimulation."

9. Abhor that which is evil;

Be a good hater. Abhor that which is evil

9. Cleave to that which is good.

Stick to it. Hold it fast. Do not go an inch beyond it.

10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love:*

Hear this, ye members of the church. Endeavor to carry it out by a kindly courtesy and a real sympathy one with another.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.”

10. *In honor preferring one another:*

Putting another before yourself, aspiring after the second place, rather than the first.

11. *Not slothful in business;*

A lazy man is no beauty anywhere.

11. *Fervent in spirit;*

Burn. Let your very soul get hot.

11, 12. *Serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope;*

When you have not anything else to rejoice in, rejoice in hope.

12. *Patient in tribulation;*

The word “tribulation” signifies threshing as with a flail. Be patient when the flail falls heavily.

12, 13. *Continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints;*

When you have told your own necessity to God, then help the necessities of those who come to you.

13, 14. *Given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and*

A Christian man cursing is a very awkward spectacle. Even the Pope, when he takes to cursing, as at least the former one used to do very liberally, seems as if he could hardly be the vicar of God on earth.

Our work is to bless the sons of men. “Bless and curse not.”

15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice,*

Do not be a wet blanket on their joys. If they have good cause for rejoicing, join in it. Help them to sing their hymn of gratitude.

15. *And weep with them that weep.*

Sympathize with mourners. Take a share of their burden. I really believe that it is easier to weep with them that weep than it is to rejoice with them that do rejoice; for this old flesh of ours begins to envy those who rejoice, whereas it does not so much object to sympathize with those that sorrow. Carry out both commands. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice. Weep with them that weep.”

16. *Be of the same mind one toward another.*

Agree together, you Christian people. Do not be always arguing and discussing. Be of the same mind one towards another. In church life very much must depend upon our unity in mind as well as in heart. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” — these help to make a good foundation for Christian fellowship.

THE POWERFUL TRUTH OF GOD.

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“Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed.” — Acts 19:19, 20.

IT should be very encouraging to us to hear of the triumphs of the gospel in the olden times. It is not only a matter of interest as to history, but it is a matter of practical consolation for the present day, for the gospel is just the same to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago. If we preach the gospel at all, it is the very same gospel which Paul delivered. We may not have all Paul's gifts, or all Apollo's eloquence, but for all practical matters the, same preaching is with us that was with Paul; we may, therefore, expect to see the same results. It may be imagined, however, that perhaps the population may have changed in character, but, believe me, it is not so. The gospel of Jesus Christ was not intended for one century or two, but for all time. After all, men's hearts have not altered. The population of London is not at all unlike that of Ephesus. They may dress very differently, and their language is not the same, and their customs may outwardly differ, but as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. One man's heart is like another man's, and the sinners of eighteen hundred years ago are very like the sinners of to-day. If a man should come into London with the

same gospel with which Paul went into Ephesus, he has a gospel adapted to London as assuredly as the gospel was adapted to Ephesus. More than that, we have the same spirit resting upon the gospel now as then. The power which rendered the gospel saving in the olden times was not Paul's logic, or Apollo's eloquence; the saving power lay in the Holy Spirit accompanying the divine truth. Now the Spirit of God is not straitened; he is divine; his arm is not shortened that he cannot save. He is just as able to make the Word of God the power of God unto salvation to-day as he was then; ay, and, I bless his name, he is doing it. He has been doing it lately in Madagascar, as an instance in far-off lands, and we have seen him do it in our very midst. We have known and conversed with multitudes who have been turned from darkness to light, from the slavery of Satan into the liberty of Christ, by the power of the gospel which Paul preached, which we also, preach. When Paul and his two or three companions came into Ephesus, they were not one whit different from two or three Christians going into any city in the world with the view of evangelising it. Of course, they had the gift of miracles, but we have other appliances which they had not. We have books which we can scatter far and wide, and an amount of religious liberty in almost every place which they did not possess. I do not think they stood on any vantage ground beyond ourselves, or, if they did, we can reach that same vantage-ground too; and we may expect that the God of Paul will work in London and elsewhere as he worked at Ephesus, if we know how to be as obedient to his divine will, and as earnest in our service to him, as was that mighty apostle of the Gentiles.

Our text suggests to me to speak to you upon three matters. The first is: it is said the, Word of God grew; so we will begin by noticing that in Ephesus the Word of God was planted. It could not have grown if it had not been planted. Secondly the Word of God grew; we will watch it. There was the Word of God prevailing over sin, for it made men burn their foolish books of magic. To begin then: —

I. THE WORD OF GOD WAS PLANTED.

It is interesting to notice how it was planted in Ephesus. I read to you all about it, and you noticed that when Paul first came there, there were a few persons that received him gladly. I suppose the Apostle went down into the Jews' quarter, for in all these cities there was a Jews' quarter, and he began to enquire a little and look about him, and he soon found there were some John the Baptistites there — about twelve. So he began with them. They

were prepared ground, well ploughed, ready for the seed; so he instructed them a little further in the faith, and they believed in the Lord Jesus, and were baptized, and became the nucleus, the first twelve with which to form a Christian church. Go, servant of Christ, go where God sends thee. There are some prepared of God to receive thee. In the most barren country there are some pieces of soil that, like oases, are abundantly fertile. In any company of the most depraved of men there are some hearts made willing of God who will receive the gospel at once. We must never think, if God sends us upon what looks hard ground, that it is so hard as it looks. It is our unbelief that is hard. If we conquer that, shall be surprised to find that God has cleared the way for us, and perhaps where we looked to find no friend there shall be a chosen twelve who will be glad to receive us. I speak to you who go about serving Christ; I beseech you to be of good courage, for your Lord has prepared some, and made them ready for you. I feel to-night, when I preach the gospel, that there are some who will hear it and say, "Ah! that suits me; I am guilty; I want a Savior." They have heard the Baptist preach of repentance, but they do not know yet what simple faith in Jesus is, and I am hoping that, when to-night they hear that there is life in one look at the crucified Savior, and that whoever trusts in Jesus will be saved, they will accept the good news with great gladness, and will soon be numbered among the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. God grant it may be so.

But the Apostle found that there was a great deal of stony ground at Ephesus. The people did not all receive him, though twelve men did, and I suppose some women with them. Generally, I find more women receiving the gospel than men; so I suppose he gathered at least four and twenty who had known John the Baptist and his preachers. But the rest of the people were not after this fashion. Well, brethren, why should they be? Is the servant of Christ to expect to find all men willing to receive him? They rejected Christ; shall they revive us? If the work which our Master sent us upon were all easy, where were the honor of it? He gives easy work to those who are weak, but if he endows us with his own power, of course he will give us difficulties to overcome. We must not, therefore, flinch because we are rejected by many, but just buckle on our harness and ask fresh strength from God, and give ourselves to the work. Paul went down to the synagogue, and the Jews allowed him to speak too. After he had spoken, they began to dispute. He answered their questions; he persuaded them; and it appears that a great number of them, after hearing his answers

to their difficulties, and listening to his solemn persuasive appeals, were led to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and trust in him, and so were saved. Well, blessed be God, when we go to plant the gospel anywhere we may expect to find some whose difficulties will speedily yield to further light, who, though at present they are prejudiced, will give up their prejudices, when they understand more completely the gospel. They may be, probably there are, some here to-night who do not quite know what the gospel is, about which we say so much, and when they understand that it is just this, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man and suffered in the stead of all who trust him, in order that they might not suffer for their sins — when they understand that truth, it may be they will say, “Well, that is just what I want — someone to stand in my stead, someone to be a Savior to me; I believe in the Son of God,” the preacher shall be right happy if he meets with such. Even though he should have to meet many of their objections and answer them one by one, if at last they will be led to believe in Jesus by the power of his Spirit, happy shall the preacher be.

But it appears that there was a third class among those to whom Paul ministered, who, after all that he could say, were hardened. He gave them clear proof that Jesus was the Christ, and he urged them to repent of sin. He persuaded them to believe in Jesus, but they were hardened the more by it, and they proved their hardness by this, that they spake evil concerning this way. Mostly when men will not submit to Christ, they try to find some fault. Perhaps they will slander the preacher, or the people of God, or they will misrepresent the gospel, or they will catch up certain phrases and words, and twist them, misrepresent them. Common enough, we grieve to say, is this among graceless hearers. What they will not receive themselves they rail at. They are like the dog in the manger; they cannot eat the hay, but they lie there and bark. They won’t enter the kingdom of heaven, and those who would enter they hinder them if they possibly can. Even when they see the power of the gospel upon others, they will turn it to ridicule. They wonder at the change that is wrought, but they are filled with wrath against it, and will not submit to Christ. However, brethren, though there will always be such as these, we are not to be cast down about it, for if we are ever able to say, as Paul was, “I am pure from the blood of all men,” it will be no small thing to be able to say it, even if great numbers should reject the teaching which we present to them. I have often prayed that I might be able to say what George Fax, the first Quaker, said when he came to die. He said, “I am clear, I am clear, I am clear of the blood of all men.”

Oh! if we can only get to that, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall Christ be glorious in his Father's eyes, and Christ's servants shall be accepted in him too. We must always reckon that after the most diligent ministry some will believe the gospel, and some will not believe it at all. However, the Apostle Paul, though he was beset by those who despised him and lay in wait for his life, did not hesitate to preach the gospel to all men, for we are told that it was known to all in Asia, both Jews and Greeks. He went on scattering his seed, whether it fell on stony ground or among the thistles and thorns. That was no business of his. It was his to scatter the seed; it was God's business to make it fall in the right place. He that sows is responsible for the sowing, not for the reaping. If he does what his Master bids him, it is his Master's work to take care of the precious seed, and make it spring up, and not the servant's.

I would exhort all here who love the Lord Jesus Christ to try to do what the Apostle did, viz., try to break up fresh ground and get fresh hearers. The gospel succeeded all the better in Ephesus because it was a new thing there. I believe I should have a better hope of conversions to-night if I were speaking to people who had never heard the gospel before; but after long hearing the gospel men get accustomed to it; the most startling warnings do not alarm, and the most wooing invitations do not attract. I should not have such attention as you are kind enough to give me, but perhaps here and there, where attention was given, the barbed arrows of divine truth would stick fast in true hearts, whereas in some now present it is almost hopeless work to speak, for it is not to know the gospel that is wanted with them, it is to have a heart to yield to it, a soul to give it due attention and a reverent, believing reception. May God grant that you may yet be saved. But my hope lies in my brethren in Christ breaking up fresh ground. Open little rooms, dear friends, wherever you can, in every part of London. I have a great belief in cottage-meetings to get to the poor. We ought to have if we are a truly living Church, we shall have — little preaching room in every court and alley; and if men can't come here, or won't come here — and really I see not how they can, for I do not perceive that there is room for any more, we must go and take the gospel to them. And if I must tarry here with the thousands, go, my brethren, to the tens, and twelves, and twenties, and the people of London shall hear the gospel somehow, and we shall each be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men." We want more of the work of the Apostle in breaking

up fresh ground. God stir us up to it, and send us success in it. Thus I have spoken of the planting. Now to our second point: —

II. THE WORD OF GOD GREW.

A man drops an acorn into the ground, and goes his way and forgets it. When he comes back twenty years afterwards he finds a very respectable tree, and if he could live to come back in a century he might find a tree that seemed to cover acres with its outspread branches — all from a single acorn. We never know what will come of an attempt to do good. Paul steps into Ephesus with a friend or two, and finds twelve that come at his call; but ere he has left Ephesus, what a stir the man has made! There was never such a shake given to a city as Paul gave to it. By the grace of God, the gospel grew. Let us just notice how it grew.

First, there was a church formed in Ephesus, which appears to have been a strong church. You notice that the of the church came to Miletus to Paul. There were many elders, and I suppose the elders were in proportion to the people, so that there was a very large church gathered there. This is delightful fruit, to find men made believers — willing to be baptized on profession of their faith, and then formed into Christian churches. Paul had not labored in vain, for he had lit such a lamp in Ephesus as should not soon be put out. In addition, however, to the church, a great many people in Ephesus had been impressed — perhaps not savingly, but they had been impressed, for they became the friends of Paul. At your leisure, will you read the rest of the chapter? and you will find that a great mob gathered in the theater on one occasion, excited to great wrath against Paul; and Paul, like the little hero that he was, wanted to go right into the great amphitheatre to address them, but some of his friends said, “No, no; you mustn’t do that! They’ll tear you to pieces.” Our brave little man felt that he should like to go and preach to them. He wanted to get a chance if he could of speaking the Word of God. There they were, all on stone seats, tier on tier — a great mass — much, I suppose, like the Coliseum at Rome, and he thought he must go in and talk to them. But it is said that “certain of the chief of Asia which were his friends” prevented his going in. The disciples would not, perhaps, have had influence with him, but these were men of rank and ability, who said, “We are not Christians, but we respect you, and we don’t want to see you torn to pieces by that wild rabble. Don’t go in”; and Paul did not go in. Now where souls are saved, if the gospel be truly preached, it will always have a great many friends, and these will,

perhaps, serve a great turn at a pinch and in times of difficulty, and I am not sure but what these “chief of Asia” may, after all, some of them have become Christians, for if a man does not want to be a Christian it is a very dangerous thing to be friendly to Christ, when you come to mix up with God’s people, and help them, and befriend them. It often happens that the Lord, in return for a cup of cold water that is given to a prophet in the name of the Lord, gives the promised reward; and he that was but a friend becomes at last kith and kin with us and joins us. I am thankful to know there are those in this place that love the gospel in a way, and would stand up for it, and defend it, and delight to hear it preached; and though they are not yet saved, the gospel is growing, for it has some effect on them, and they shall have our earnest prayers that they may not be outside buttresses of the Church, but may be built into the walls of it.

We love some of you because you are always ready to help and defend the faith after your way. Cast in your lot wholly with us, I pray you. Take for yourselves the precious privileges of the gospel. May the Lord enable you. When we think of you, we feel like the Savior when he looked at the young man that had great possessions; it is said he loved him. But alas! the Savior also sorrowed for him when he went away. May we not have reason to sorrow for you who are so near to God, but lack the one thing needful? May you find it, and may you yet be brought in. That it grew, there was another proof, for even the vilest and wickedest people in Ephesus knew about Jesus Christ. How do I know that? Why, there were certain tramping vagabonds who came into Ephesus trying to deceive the people, and pretending to heal by magic, and they knew about the gospel. How? I am sure they did, because they said, “This name of Jesus is a very great name, and seems to have great power; we will try and conjure by it.” This was a villainous thing to do, yet it showed that the gospel had got at them and reached them. I like to hear little children in the street singing delightful hymns about Jesus Christ, for it shows me this, that the gospel has got at the very lowest strata of society, for those little children don’t hold their tongues when they are at home, depend upon it. It is very hard to make them hold their tongues anywhere. They have made father hear about “Jesus meek and mild,” and I should not wonder if the consciences of some of the ungodly men of London were touched by the words of their little children. I heard Lord Shaftesbury say a very good thing the other day, and I agreed with it. He said that the little children of London were very weighty ones, and where a missionary could not go the little children could

go, and, clambering on their father's knee, could sing the gospel, and thus in many a house where there is a man who scorns to go to a church or chapel to hear the gospel a little child, who has just given his father a kiss, is singing to him:

*“Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God! I come.”*

Lord, bless the little preacher, and save the father's soul! Who knows how many may be brought to Jesus so? It shows that the gospel spreads when even the worst of men know something about Christ. Even though they use the word to swear by, yet I am glad they know it. Though they put it to such a use as to try to be the devil's servants, with Christ's name on their lips, yet am I glad that the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto them.

One other proof that the gospel had come to Ephesus was this, that it affected their trade. A thing is pretty powerful when it begins to affect the trade of a town. Now in Ephesus there was a goddess called Diana. I have seen the thing at Rome. It is ugly enough, certainly, for anybody to worship. It is a female figure with a countless number of breasts, intended to signify the bounties of nature which she supplies to multitudes of men and beasts. Ugly and ill-formed, it was greatly worshipped at Ephesus. It was set in a niche in a temple, and generally covered with a curtain. This was drawn aside for worshippers, and on particular festival days people came to Ephesus from all parts of the world, and very seldom did one of them go home without taking with him a small image of Diana. Some of them were made of wood for the poorer sort, but many were made of metal — copper, brass, silver, and gold. Well, when Paul was preaching there during the third year there was a time when the great festivals were held. Ephesus was not anything like so full as it had been — it might have been almost as full, but there were not so many at the temple, and somehow the shops hadn't sold the shrines so readily — had not sold anything like the usual quantity; and one great mall had a factory and made many shrines, and he called his workpeople together and said, “Do you know, this year we have not sold as much as we did last year by 50 per cent? The fact is, you'll all be out of work. I can't keep you on full time. I can't sell the goods. Our trade is going to the dogs, and it is all through that fellow Paul. He has been here three years now, and he has turned the people to worship the invisible God, and they won't worship Diana.” Well,

these workpeople did not consider whether it was right or wrong, but it touched their pockets, and that is often a very powerful place in which to touch a man. They thought they might not have such good wages by-and-bye, so they rushed home and told other workmen that belonged to kindred trades, and then Demetrius came in and told them that Diana was being put aside by this Paul, who preached and turned away much people, and there was a great row, and they rushed to the theater, but the Recorder of the city addressed them very wisely, and they dispersed. This showed the power of the gospel; it began to affect trade. I wish the gospel would affect the trade of London; I wish it might. There are some trades that need affecting, need to be cut a little shorter. Oh! that God would so influence men that they were not given to bestial drunkenness as they are; that the money, which ought to go to their wives and children, might no longer be squandered in evil spirits, that make them evil spirits. Would God that the New Cut would become a place where men might walk on a Sunday. Not by Act of Parliament! Let Acts of Parliament leave us alone. We can fight that battle alone. But may it come to an end by the spread of the gospel. We do not wish to see any break the gospel Sabbath; it is a day of rest and worship, and we love to have it so. I have no faith in any reformation that does not come through men's hearts being changed. You may make them hypocrites, but you cannot make them right, except by the gospel coming into their very souls, and taking possession of them. Plant it everywhere all over London, north and south, east and west, in every court, and street, and lane, and, by the grace of God, yet shall souls be saved and churches formed; the wicked instructed, and even trade itself will have to take its shape. A better shape than it now has — under the moulding hand of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But now I must go on to another point, and that is this. While the Word of God thus spreads, we ought to consider how it was. This great spread of the gospel was due to the work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, that is quite correct. Let me say something else. This great spread of the gospel was due to the work of the Apostle Paul. I know the Holy Spirit works, but when he works he makes us work. Find me one instance in Scripture where the Holy Ghost ever moved a city like Ephesus by a lazy, idle minister that read other people's sermons on a Sunday, and did not care about the conversion of souls. I would like to meet with something of that kind, but I know I never shall. Where God works, he works with men that work. Notice those churches where, the preacher says, "It is the Holy Ghost's

work to seek souls, and God will have his own elect.” Very true doctrine! But mark those places where there is nothing on a Sunday but four or five doctrines ground out as on a barrel-organ, and the preacher does not care whether the people are lost or saved. Notice the people who seem to be fatalists, asleep in the belief that things are to be — where there is no Sunday School, no street preaching, no doing anything, no seeing whether God brings multitudes of souls to him, and whether he does make the population in their district tremble before their power. They get to be a miserable few, and they get some little Rehoboth (which they call Rehoboth), that is to say, a room — and it is a very little room indeed — and they gradually decay and die out; and so it must be. We cannot save a soul, and are powerless apart from the Spirit of God, yet wherever the Spirit of God is, he fills men with energy; he makes them earnest and intensely earnest. I read to you about Paul. There was that dear good man working all the week, making tents, in order that nobody might say he preached for what he could get. There he was making tents, and he says yet every day he preached from house to house, and in the big schoolroom of one Tyrannus, and everywhere else night and day, and he wept over them, he says, “night and day with tears,” and he prayed over them, and would not give them any rest unless they came to Christ. The man was always at it — he threw his whole soul into it — and a big soul it was too. Oh! beloved, if we are ever to see the Word blessed, and this great city saved, it will be by everyone of us being thoroughly awake in our Master’s service. Oh! that the Lord would stir up all the ministers in London! Methinks that we have got enough in number, if we had God’s power resting upon all. Oh! for God’s Jonah, who would from end to end proclaim a warning through the city! Oh! for one John the Baptist, who would preach “Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” What if I said, Oh! for one Martin Luther, whose thundering voice should make men hear! Oh! for one George Whitefield, who, with uplifted hands, would cry, “The life to come! The life to come!” and make masses gather to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ! Pray for it, dear friends. God won’t save the world without men; he will use instruments until Christ comes. And while you pray for it, pray for yourselves, that each one of you may be in earnest, for, other things being equal, God will bless that people most who work most for him, pray most to him, give most to him, sacrifice most, and are most obedient to his commands. God make us such.

Now the last point is this. The gospel not only grew, but we are told in the text: —

III. THE WORD OF GOD PREVAILED OVER SIN.

We have an instance given of how it prevailed, to which I call your particular attention. Paul, in his preaching, it appears, we, not at all like some who think they are very faithful when they abuse people. I daresay Paul, in his preaching, made the remark that God was not like unto images of silver and gold of man's making, but Paul never abused Diana. How do I know that? He never did, for the Town Clerk in the theater said, "These men are not robbers of churches, neither are they blasphemers of your goddess." Paul had just uttered the general doctrine that idolatry was a great sin; he had not poured out a great torrent of abuse on Diana and all the rest. In the course of his preaching I daresay he had remarked that magic and sorcery were abominations, but Ephesus was very much given to sorcery. There were certain things called Ephesian letters, supposed to possess great magical power, sold at Ephesus. There are many stories which every reader of classic history knows, such as that of a wrestler who always used to win the day because he wore round his neck one of these charms — all lying stories, but they were freely believed. Most of the Ephesians believed that the letters written round the base of Diana possessed potent charms. Now Paul, though he was not preaching about this, was preaching the gospel; yet the gospel found out this particular sin, and hit the nail on the head, and God worked with the gospel, for when the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, tried to practice magic and used the name of Christ, the evil spirit leaped on them and overcame them, and would have slain them, and they were held up to ridicule. Now there is one thing about the gospel in every place: it finds out the particular sin of that place, and it is quite sure to expose it. I have frequently in this congregation made remarks without knowing anything about the persons present, and they have come and asked me who told me about them. It has happened scores of times that the Word has so minutely described the case of a hearer that he has felt convinced that the preacher must have been instructed about his case, and told what to say, though in truth the preacher knew nothing about it, only the preacher's Master made his tongue to speak the Word so as to fit the case. Now by Paul's preaching, and through the providence of God, the people at Ephesus began to be convinced that the use of magic was a wicked and disgraceful thing, and many of them came forward and confessed that they had been guilty of it. They confessed it to the preacher;

they confessed it to the Church; they confessed it to the hearers; and when they had done this they proved the honesty of their confession, for they brought out all their charms and magic books, and made a great fire of them all. Why did not they sell them to somebody? They were worth so much money. Yes, but if they sold them they would have done mischief to somebody else, and the best thing was to destroy these vipers by burning them in the fire. Moreover, they showed their hatred of sin by burning the books, as they could not have done in any other way. And yet again, the burning of these books was a mighty sermon to everybody who saw it. “What is this you are burning? Why, that book is worth fifty pounds!” “Oh! it is a magic book, and we have done with it. The child of God has nothing to do with such things, so we have burnt them.” That was a better sermon than even Paul himself could have preached upon this subject. Look at the loss the people sustained. I daresay many of them were poor. Two thousand pounds in those days was a much larger sum than it is now, but they lost it all cheerfully to get rid of the obnoxious books, which once they had treasured in their houses. This is a triumph of the gospel when men give up what they prize, and when men are willing to suffer great loss in order to get rid of great sin.

Now I want the gospel to prevail like that in this congregation and all around. I don’t suppose you are, any of you, so silly and foolish — I don’t imagine there is anybody here so insane as to believe in any magic or fortune-telling, or anything of that sort. If you did, I might speak upon the subject, and show how detestable such a superstition is; but I do not suppose there is any such person here. But perhaps you have got something else. Mark you, if you have got anything wrong, if the gospel saves your soul, you will give it up. I recollect a good woman, who heard her minister preach a gospel sermon in which he was showing how the gospel made men give up their sin. When he saw her a week after, he said, “Well, I saw you at the sermon. What did you remember of it?” She said, “I had got a bushel at home that was not of fair size, and I recollected to burn it when I got home.” The best thing she could recollect! And under William Dawson’s sermon, a certain travelling pedlar heard about being “weighed in the balances and found wanting,” and he took his yard stick and snapped it, and said, “I have done with it.” Oh! that everybody in trade might do that, and burn the unjust thing, and have done with it. But have you been accustomed to the lascivious song, or those three-volumed beastlinesses that come out every now and then — I cannot call them, by

any other name — which some people delight to read? Have done with them; put them away. What have you to do with them? You will have enough of temptation in your own mind without going after these things. Is there any habit, any practice, that you have got that defiles your soul? If Christ loves you, and you come and trust in him, you will make short work of it. Have done with it, and have done with it for ever. Perhaps it is some bad practice by which you get your living. Is it the Sunday morning trade? Then, sir, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and hope to be saved by him, let those shutters never come down on another Sabbath day. Say you, as those Ephesians did, “Cost us what it may, we will have nothing that grieves God. We will have nothing, however precious in money-worth, that would endamage our soul,” for “what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” I have often looked at that question, and I have thought it might be cut down a good deal. What, shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world? Why, you won’t gain that! What would it profit you if you did, and lost your soul? But there are some people who gain only eighteen-pence on a Sunday! What shall it profit them if they gain eighteen-pence, and lose their soul? It is miserable to think how cheap souls are. The devil buys souls in the gross, and can pay for them in coppers — men are so miserably ruined by small gains and small pleasures. Time was when he had to bait his trap with the world; now he can bait it with the smallest things. A smile, from some eyes will make men sell their souls, and a flattering word from some lips will make men cast away eternal blessedness. I pray God that you may be led to trust in Jesus Christ alone and find him a Savior; and if you do, the next thing you will do will be to take a great bosom and sweep out of your house all the obnoxious things that God hates, and you will say: —

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee.”*

You will say; “I am a Christian, and I will have done with these things.” God grant it may be so with many; nay, with all of us, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

A GOSPEL PROMISE

NO. 3519

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DELIVERED BY C.H. SPURGEON,

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“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.” — Ezekiel 36:27.

THE blessing here promised is one of the most essential that men can need, or that God can give. Without this blessing, all the other, benefits of the covenant would be null and void. It is vain to have a Savior if we have not spiritual power to believe in Him. Of what use is it to us that there should be provided precious promises if we have no faith wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, whereby we can grasp those promises, plead them in prayer, and obtain their fulfillment? Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord; but holiness grows not in any human heart by nature; therefore, without the Spirit of God, who is the Author of holiness, no man could ever become an heir of immortality, or enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. The Holy Spirit is needed for the very meanest form of spiritual life, and is equally necessary for its highest development. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot go through the first gate, and without the Spirit we cannot pass the last. No man can say in his heart that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost; much less can any man attain to the perfection which is necessary to heaven, except through the work and power of the Spirit of the living God.

I am always apprehensive lest by any means in my ministry I should even seem to obscure this blessed and indispensable agency of the Holy Ghost. Oh! if the Spirit of God be not honored — if he take umbrage at our neglect — if he withdraw from us, of what avail will be our congregations? Of what use our earnestness, even if we could maintain it? To what purpose your assembling for prayer if you had not any wish to gather?

Without him, we can do nothing. He breathes all the animation into the Christian Church. Jesus is gone from us into heaven, but he continues to reign and rule in our midst by his vicegerent, the Holy Spirit. Let us honor him. Let us rely upon him. Let us earnestly seek him. Let it be ours to declare him, those of us who have to speak, and yours to receive him, those of you who have to hear.

I. WHO IS THIS SPIRIT?

He is spoken of in this text, and so often elsewhere. It is very necessary that we should talk over the commonplaces of the gospel and the simplicities of the Word of God. I do not doubt but that there are some here who do not understand the doctrine of the divine Trinity. I have been annoyed — I could have been amused but for the sadness of the reflection — at the ignorance of some who have come in here and learned for the first time the most elementary truths of the gospel. They know them now, and rejoice in them; they are even able to teach others. But when first they came, though not uneducated people, but well versed in some other matters, they had no more knowledge of the plan of Salvation, or even of the plain and simple fundamental verities of the gospel of Jesus, than as if they had come here from the center of China, or some region into which our Bible had never been carried. Let it then be understood that the Holy Spirit, of whom we so often speak, is a Person. He is not a mere influence. We speak of “the influences of the Holy Spirit,” and very properly so; but those influences proceed from a person who works upon the minds of men by his influence. It is right to pray for the influences of the Holy Spirit, but it is not right to think of the Holy Spirit himself as though he were an influence, for he is a person. Actions are ascribed to him which could not be ascribed to influences. He is said to be grieved, to be vexed, to have despise done unto him. Wonderful things are ascribed to him, which influences could not accomplish. The Spirit of God brooded over this earth when it was as yet without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. He brought order out of confusion. He garnished the heavens. The beauty of the tabernacle is attributed to the skill that he inspired. Or, turning to the holier tabernacle of our Savior’s body, it was formed and fashioned by the power of the Holy Ghost. The holy thing that was born of Mary was not born of natural generation, but by the energy of the Holy One of Israel. Not an influence, but a person was the agent. And when our Lord was raised again from the dead, his resurrection is ascribed in Scripture to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit wrought divers signs and

wonders in the early Church. He enabled the apostles to speak with many tongues; through him they had power to work divers miracles. He even gave commandment to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto he had called them; and still, beloved, he is in the Church, and we have fellowship with him. We commune with him. We can bear our witness that he maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered; that he helpeth our infirmities, and performs for us a thousand offices of love which make us feel, experimentally and consciously, that the agent of such things is a very person.

He is, moreover, God — truly God. Never let us think lightly of the Holy Spirit, as though he were in any secondary sense divine. In your baptism the three names were put together. You were baptized into the triple name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Take care that the three persons be ever associated in your minds with equal affection and with equal awe. The Benediction, which so constantly concludes our worship, gives to each his place: “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Father, and the fellowship or communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” The Holy Spirit, then, is divine. We do not now attempt to prove that which it is our business at present dogmatically to assert. The thing is capable of abundant proof from Holy Writ. Let it suffice that we teach you the fact. How is it that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, and yet that there are not three Gods, but one God? I cannot tell you. I know it is so, for so it is revealed; but how it is so it is not for us to guess, because it is not revealed or explained. Our understanding can adventure as far as the testimony, and no farther. Many attempts have been made by divines to find parallels in Nature to the Unity and the Trinity of God, but they all seem to me to fail. Perhaps the very best one is that of St. Patrick, who, when preaching to the Irish, and wishing to explain this matter, plucked a shamrock and showed them its three leaves all in one — three, yet one. Yet there are flaws and faults even in that illustration. It does not meet the case. It is a doctrine to be emphatically asserted as it is expounded in that Athanasian Creed; the soundness of whose teaching I do not question, for I believe it all, though I shrink with horror from the abominable anathema which assert that a man who hesitates to endorse it will “without doubt perish everlastingly.” It is a matter to be reverently accepted as it stands in the Word of God, and to be faithfully studied as it has been understood by the most scrupulous and intelligent Christians of succeeding generations. We are not to think of the

Father as though anything could detract from the homage due to him as originally and essentially divine, nor of the only begotten Son of the Father as though he were not “God over all, blessed for ever,” nor of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, as though he had not all the attributes of Deity — We must abide by this, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Jehovah”; but we must still hold to it that in three Persons he is to be worshipped, though he be but one in his essence. Understand, then, you who know but little of the doctrines of the gospel, that you must worship the Holy Spirit, and exercise your faith on him as God. Lay particular stress upon this, because it is written, “Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of God can, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.” Such awful sanctity surrounds the Spirit of God. As I think of him, I seem to see Sinai in a blaze with a bound set round about; and I hear a voice that saith to me, “Draw not nigh hither, for this is holy ground.” That sin against the Holy Ghost, I know, not what it is; in vain might I assay to define it. It stands like a beacon, as if God saw that an ungodly and stiff-necked generation would vex the Holy Ghost, and venture far in blasphemy; therefore, while all manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, the sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven. Take heed you do not harden your heart, lest you should commit it. I do not believe you have. I know you have not if you desire to be saved. I am sure you have not if you are willing to come and put your trust in Jesus Christ. Still, I admonish you to take care and treat with reverence the very thought of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Instructor of your souls. Your second question will be: —

II. HOW DOES HE FULFIL THIS PROMISE?

We understand by these words, that those who formerly loved sin shall be made to love righteousness; that those who found it hard at one time to break off their evil ways shall be induced to run with alacrity in the way of God’s commandment. Now this is a great thing to be promised, and a very great thing to be obtained. By no human power could it be brought to pass. As easily might the blackamoor change his skin to whiteness, or the leopard get rid of his spots, as could the man who is accustomed to do evil reverse the entire current of his habits and instincts, and learn to do well. The divine power that first fashioned the soul of man must re-mould it. Only the Creator who made the instrument can re-tune it, or restore its harmony. No unskillful hands can mend it. People sometimes cavil at the

doctrine of human impotence, but I can assure you that the actual evidence is far more convincing than the abstract theory. The practical pastoral experience that some of us have had would soon convince anyone that there is ample evidence of its truthfulness. We meet with those who have been a little awakened at our prayer-meetings and revival services. What, think you, is the first thing we have to concern about them? Why, some of them have never been in the habit of thinking about their souls before, and the moment they do begin to think, like a lad introduced into a carpenter's shop who has never seen tools before, they cut themselves with every tool they attempt to handle. These poor souls never were introduced to the spiritual world before. Self-examination is a novelty to them. If they think of sin, it drives them to despair; or if they think of mercy, that drives them to presumption. Whatever truth we put before them, they misuse and pervert it. They do not seem to have the sense or the wit to use any truth in a right way. You may teach the young enquirer with much earnestness, but you will find it difficult to guide him. For instance, if he seems resolved to despair, you shall try to comfort him, and use as many arguments as you can, but he will despair if he has made up his mind to do it. Some of these remind me of certain game that sportsmen try to hunt out of their holes. It seems in vain to send the ferret after them. When I have used arguments to get them out of one hole, forthwith they take refuge in another; and when I have stopped up scores of holes and have said to myself, "I shall have you now; you cannot answer that!" suddenly they seem to have found out quite another branch of falsehood and delusions. They are gone from me, and all my work is lost. Ah! then it is that the pastor feels that he must have the power of the Holy Spirit to help him, or else even the awakened and anxious sinner will evade conversion, put away from himself eternal life, and perish in his sin. Yes, brethren, experience will often prove more than controversy is prone to allow of the necessity of work of the Holy Spirit. And if in merely dealing with the elementary lessons of religion we find such palpable evidence of human inability, how much more is this the case in the matter of making a lover of sin become a lover of holiness! You may show him the proprieties of morality; you may lay before him the inevitable results of sin; you may charm him with the rewards of virtue; but the adder is too deaf for all your charming, and when you have charmed, and charmed, and charmed again, he still retains his venom, and is, an adder still.

But how does the Holy Spirit effect this? He operates, it is true, in many ways; he does it often by his quickening power. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all spiritual life. Speak of regeneration, the Holy Spirit is the Regenerator. No man can receive that divine life which comes into him at the new birth except by the Spirit of God. We are raised from our death in sin into a new and holy life by the working of the Holy Ghost, and by that alone. Now, if someone here, hitherto incapable of a holy life, or of serving God right because of his natural depravity, should be quickened by the Holy Ghost, what a change would be at once wrought upon him! What the spiritually dead man cannot do, the spiritually enlivened man can readily perform. How the Spirit quickeneth we know not. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." The effects are visible enough. You soon perceive that the man who was callous, without feeling, without emotion, becomes tender of conscience, eager in desires, and sensitive in his anxieties. He becomes, in fact, a livid, man, though he was steeped in death before.

The Holy Spirit continues to make a man practically new by the illumination he bestows. The man is blind; the Holy Spirit touches his eye with heavenly eye-salve, and he begins to see. The sinner, with the Bible in his hand, though anxious to understand it in a measure, makes a sorry muddle of its doctrines and precepts, apart from the instructions of that blessed Commentator — the Holy Spirit. The Bible is full of light, but the heart of man is very dark. To what purpose is the Scripture opened to the understanding, if the eyes of the understanding are covered with a thick film? It is the Holy Spirit who irradiates the truth which he has revealed broadcast over every object that lies in our path. In reading the Bible to find comfort and direction, take care to lift up your hearts to him who wrote it. As an author best understands his own books, so will the Spirit, who inspired the volume, let you at once into the secret meaning of that which the pens of inspired men have recorded. Wait upon God for instruction; his instruction is sure to lead you to holiness, for he instructs you in the evil of sin; he lets you see its heinousness, its demerit, its ingratitude and infamy; he instructs you in the beauty of holiness, and shows you the example of your Master. He teaches you the law, and writes it upon the fleshly tablets of your hearts. In this way, as an Illuminator as well as a Quickener, he makes us run in the ways of God's statutes.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit operates as a Comforter. Many men are wretched by reason of their sins, yet unwilling to renounce them. We have known people continue in present transgression because they are utterly hopeless of ever being forgiven their misdeeds in the past. But when the Spirit of God breathes holy comfort into the desponding sinner's mind, then he says to himself, "I will not fling myself away, after all; it is not meet that I, who have a better destiny before me, should live like those who have resolved to follow their own lusts, reckless of consequences, those who have made a covenant with hell, and a league with death. No; a thousand times no; if God doth all this for me, and bringeth his dear Son to me, and telleth me of pardons bought with blood, then away shall go my old sins, and henceforth it shall be my joy to serve with all my might the Heavenly Friend who hath been so kind to me." The Holy Ghost is always to his people the Comforter. Are any of you sad? Does that sadness make you unbelieving? Does the unbelief act upon you as a temptation to sin? Go to the Comforter to take away the root of the mischief. So shall you run in the way of God's commandments, because he has enlarged your heart and guided your footsteps.

The Holy Spirit also operates in the hearts of some as an Intercessor, helping their prayers. Some of you are downcast and desponding because you cannot pray. "Oh;" you think, "if I could but pray!" What strange ideas possess people's mind as to praying! One who took my hand the other day said to me, "I wish I could pray as you do, sir, but pray I cannot." Poor soul, when I saw his tears, and heard his cries to God, very broken as they were, I wished that I could pray as he did then. What is the use of fit words, fine sentences, fluent speech? These seem to me full often to be such deceitful acquirements that I would fain dispense with them, if so be that I might stammer out my soul's desires, and feel myself to be all the more sincere because I lacked expression to clothe my thought. Oh! no; the Lord does not require your long addresses. A groan, a sigh, a sob, that seeming to swell in your soul and become too big to find a way of escape that is prayer! When you cannot pray, remember the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. It is his office to utter greetings for us which we cannot utter, and by enabling the man to pray he enables the man to be holy, for prayer is a mainstay of holiness. To draw near to God, the fountain of all perfection, is to be helped against besetting sin, and the blessed Helper in prayer also becomes in this respect a Help to us in the paths of righteousness.

I do hope that any of you who have been saying, “I cannot do this,” and “I cannot do that,” will understand that it is quite true that you cannot, but it is equally true that the Holy Spirit can help you to do all things. You can do everything through his almighty aid. Wait upon him with earnest desires, and say to him, “Come, Holy Spirit, help a poor feeble worm; help me to mourn my sin; help me to look to Jesus with the eye of faith; help me to give up my sins; help me when I am tempted, that I may withstand the subtle arts of Satan; help me to overcome my bad temper, to get rid of the pride and naughtiness of my heart; kill my sloth; take away my disposition to put off and procrastinate; enable me to decide for Christ just now, and to come, all guilty as I am, and wash in the fountain of his precious blood, that I may be saved.” I tell you it is the Holy Spirit’s office to do this. He is never so happy, if I may use such a phrase concerning the ever-blessed One, as when he is thus, by his quickening, his illuminating, his comforting influences, bringing poor guilty souls to Jesus, and, by him, to the paths of holiness.

Furthermore, one of the Holy Spirit’s proper offices is to sanctify the people of God. Jesus Christ gives us a justifying righteousness which is imputed to us; the Holy Spirit gives us a sanctifying righteousness, which is imparted to us. The blessed Jesus brings to us his own righteousness, and clothes us with it. The Holy Spirit works in us a personal conformity to the will of God in our hearts, productive of fruit in our lives; as a sequel to that obedience even unto death, wherewith Christ made satisfaction for our offenses, and discharged the high obligation of that obedience we owed. This holiness is not the holiness of Christ, as some vainly say, but it is a personal holiness wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost. You, dear hearers, have perhaps said to yourselves, “I cannot be saved, because I am not holy.” The truth is you cannot be holy, because you are not saved, but being saved comes first. Holiness is never the root; it is always the fruit; it is not the cause, it is the effect. You must come to Jesus as you are, and trust him, and then he will give you the Holy Spirit to work in you the new heart, the new desire, and to make you a new creature. You say, “I cannot make myself holy.” That is true. You ought to do so, but the power is gone, and, alas! the will likewise; but if God has given you the will, he points you to him with whom the power is rested, namely, the Holy Ghost, who will dwell in you, and sanctify you through the Word of truth, and the application of the precious blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ. Nor must I omit to notice that one of the Spirit’s great works is to

dwell in his people. The Holy Ghost dwells in every believer in Christ. He has never been absent from him since he became a disciple. We may invoke his presence as we sing: —

*“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all thy quickening powers.”*

But that is a prayer for his special manifestation. The Holy Spirit is here. He lives in the Church. He has come as a comforter, who shall abide with us for ever. He dwells in the bodies of his people; God is in his temple. And, mark you, it is by this indwelling that the holiness of the believer is kept up. If the Holy Spirit left him, he would return, like a dog to his vomit, but because the Holy Spirit looks out of these eyes, and throbs in this heart, and moves these hands, when the man is fully obedient to the divine power, so the man is kept in the paths of integrity, and his end is everlasting life. To gather up all these thoughts in one, whatever offices the Holy Spirit sustains to God’s people, the result of all these offices will be to keep the man from going back to his old ways, and to cause him to walk in God’s statutes, and to keep God’s judgments, and do them. Do you wish, then, to be saved from sin, and to be made holy? look to the wounds of the bleeding Savior, and recollect that he has promised to give you the Holy Spirit, by whom you shall be made holy, and kept in holiness, till you stand hereafter without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, before the eternal throne. In closing, I want to: —

III. SAY A FEW GOOD AND COMFORTABLE WORDS TO SOME OF YOU WHO MAY BE ANXIOUS TO POSSESS THIS SPIRIT OF GOD IN YOUR HEARTS.

“Ah!” complains one, “the Holy Ghost would never look on me!” Why cast thou such a thought? Dost thou think to honor him by such reflections? Far rather cast thou shame thyself. Knowest thou not that he has looked on many such as thou art, and they are alive to tell of his condescending love? Wilt thou look to Jesus? Wilt thou cast thyself upon the great Surety who has deigned to become the scapegoat for sinners? If so, the Holy Ghost has looked on thee. The first desire thou has towards God comes from him. These inward strivings which thou feelest now (tenderly do I wish that thou mayest not stifle or quench them) come from him. That fear, that anxiety, that longing may be, and I trust they are, the initiative of a blessed work of the Holy Ghost within thy soul. Judge not of the Holy Spirit as though he were reluctant. Nehemiah spoke of the Spirit of God as “the

good Spirit.” So he is. He is the very essence of goodness, taking goodness in the sense of benevolence. He is good to men, full of generous love towards them. We read of “the love of the Spirit.” Sweet words! what must it be to appreciate them and to prove their meaning! The love of the Spirit! I marvel that the Spirit of God should come down into the valley of dry bones. I wonder that he should have contact with such corruption as ours, and make us live. I am surprised that he has not left us long ago, dullards as we are in his school, yet he patiently teaches us. It is amazing to me that he should dwell in such poor temples as our clay bodies. Still, he does; he condescendingly abides with us. You speak of the love of Jesus in coming down to earth, and enduring all its misery and shame. You cannot speak too well of that, but do not forget that the Holy Spirit has been abiding here these 1,800 years, and still the dispensation of his government lasts, and he is waiting and striving still, persuading, preciousy illuminating, grandly quickening. Thus he will continue to do until the Lord Jesus himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the dispensation of the Holy Ghost shall be perfected in the world to come. The Holy Spirit, then, is a good Spirit, and that should encourage you to repair to him with a full confidence in his person and works.

He is sometimes called “the free Spirit.” David saith, “Uphold me with thy free Spirit.” He is not bound by our bondage. He is not retrained, thank God, by the restriction of our desires. He is not withheld, even though our inability and our iniquity entangle us. He waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth he for the sons of men. As the dew comes in the morning on the dumb grass that cannot speak for it; as the stiff breeze blows over the silent mountains that cannot ask for it; and as on the sea, which cannot lift up its billows until the wind shall stir them, it aimed unsought, unasked, even so is the Spirit’s advent. So freely in real truth does he come. Oh! thou vilest of sinners, thou outcast, thou who art turned off by those who once loved thee, the Holy Spirit can even come to thee. He is a free Spirit; not even thy sins can withhold him. He can conquer thy desperate depravity, and come to reign and rule in thy breast, where devils have held a carnival these many years. I adore the power of God that he exerts over the minds of men, in so much that while I stand here to preach to you, willing or not willing as ye may be to heed his message, my Lord and Master will have his own way. What though you may be in the most unfit state to attend to the gospel call; though you may have come to ridicule the preacher, or catch him tripping in his speech; or it may hap you have designed to spend a

merry hour, the divine fiat is mightier than your fitful mood. How often has the Eternal Archer shot his arrows through and through the scorers, and left them as though they were dead, and then, having touched them with his life-giving finger, he has said, "Live!" The change has been wrought, though they knew nothing of it at the time. The Lord, according to his good pleasure, has done the work, and thus can this blessed free Spirit effect his purpose. Oh! my beloved brethren, pray for the unsaved. Pray for sinners, you who can pray. Full often have I thought what a blessed thing it is that the Spirit of God can obtain admission where we cannot. There is a house that is closed and barred against the gospel. The squire of the parish, perhaps, says that any of his servants going to the meeting-house he will discharge; he will take care that he will have none of this Methodism anywhere in his district. Very well, sir, if you propose to keep it out, you will need to have a great many watchmen, for, you know, if there be a sweet perfume in your house, you must use your diligence to keep it hermetically sealed, or else it will escape and diffuse its odour through every room by degrees. The name of Jesus Christ is "like ointment poured forth," it has a wonderful diffusiveness about it. Ere long the squire will discover that one of his servants has caught the sweet infection. Fain would he turn her away, were she not such a good nurse-girl that he cannot afford to lose her. And I have noticed that there is a divine contagion in the grace of God that bringeth salvation. In families, neighbourhoods, townships, and great cities, it will spread with strange rapidity. One or two conversions, like drops of rain, portend a shower. I knew a man who burned all the Bibles he had in his house; at least, he thought he had burned them all; but he had two daughters, who kept their books secreted under their pillows. When he found it out he was mad with rage. What he was going to do I do not know. His wife told him at length that she was of their mind, and took their part. "Ah! well," said he, "it is a nuisance that I cannot live without being pestered with this religion." Yes, and by the grace of God they shall not "live without being pestered." If they will not come and hear the Word from the minister, they shall hear it somehow else. A tract shall find him over whose head a sermon flies, and half a sentence shall break a rock in pieces where appeals from the pulpit might have been of no avail. Have good courage, then, you who seek the salvation of others, and you that are afar off from God yourselves, do not despair, for the Spirit of God is a free Spirit; he can come even to you.

Very powerful, too, is the Spirit of God, as well as good and free. There is no form of human obstinacy which he cannot overcome. Some operations of the Holy Spirit may be resisted and defeated. This I say without feeling that I cast any slur upon his Deity. A man, though he may be never so strong, need not put out all his strength, and when he puts out only a little of his strength a child may be able to overcome him. He may, perhaps, intend that it should be so. So the Holy Spirit in his common operations is vexed, and grieved, and quenched, by the ungodly. Quite otherwise when he comes to “the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe,” or when the Lord makes bare his arm in the eyes of all the people; then the Spirit comes as a Spirit of irresistible power. Who shall stay his hand, or say unto him, “What doest thou?” see how Saul of Tarsus, foaming at the mouth against the Church of God, cries, “What must I do to be saved? Who art thou, Lord?” Anon, he rises up to be led by the hand for three days in brokenness of heart to seek for the light of God’s countenance. How quickly can God turn the most fierce persecutors into the most earnest preachers of the gospel! Be of good heart, dear friends, for God’s cause in the world. We shall see greater things yet if we do but ask for them in faith, and faithfully expect them. If God does not raise up good men in the colleges to preach the gospel, he will find them in the warehouses and offices of our merchants. Or failing these, he will call them from the dregs of the population; it may be even from the dens and kens of thieves, if nowhere else. Who knows but he may provoke us to jealousy by a people of a strange tongue. My Master knew how to find Luther among the monks, and to fish out some of the bravest Reformers from amongst the idolatrous priests. And he can do the same again. The Church may come to a very bad tide, but there never shall be such a bad tide but the Church, like a galley with oars, shall be able to float. She shall not strike on the rocks. Have hope, ye soldiers of Christ! Whilst the ministry of the Holy Ghost can be invoked, never whisper of despair! Oh! sinner, have hope for thyself, wilful and wicked as thou mayest have been. If thou canst not amend thy ways and change thine heart, he can do it for thee. The iron bands of habit he can snap. The adamant net of lasciviousness he can break in pieces from the degrading abominations of drunkenness he can extricate thee. All the charms of worldliness he can dissolve. He can set thee free, though thou art now a captive fast in the inner prison with thy feet in the stocks. While the Holy Spirit lives, while Jesus intercedes, while the Father is willing to receive prodigals, let no one despair. Grace makes the most worthless creatures welcome to the most inestimable blessings.

What Paul said to saints I venture to say to sinners, “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOHN 14:21 — 31.

In this “sacred farewell” talk of our Lord’s, he gives us many a revelation of the soul’s way of intercourse with him.

21, 22. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them. he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*

Many a time have we asked that question with great admiration of the special sovereign grace of God, that he should manifest himself to us, and not to the world. It is an unanswerable question. It is “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

23. *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Where the grace of God has created love between us and Christ, there is a window through which Christ can manifest himself to us. Why he gave us that love we do not know, but when he has given us that love he will not deny us communion with himself.

24-26. *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

The Holy Spirit does not teach us any new doctrine. Fix that in your minds, for in the present age we have numbers of persons who talk about being inspired with the Holy Ghost, and who come with all kinds of crudities and fooleries. Believe them not. The Holy Ghost says no other and no more

than the Lord Jesus Christ himself said, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you.” The canon of revelation is closed. None can add to it without a curse. Do not accept any testimony that would add to it. Keep you to what is here found, and pray the Holy Spirit to lead you into the clear understanding of it.

27, 28. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I*

Christ had himself less than the Father in his state of humiliation, and now he is returning to the Father to be re-clothed with honor and majesty. Should we not rejoice in that?

29-31. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so do I. Arise, let us go hence.*

And he went; to his death bravely determined, to do the Father’s will, though it meant the drinking up of that bitter cup, which made his very soul to tremble within him. God give us such love to Christ as Christ had to the Father.

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“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” — Luke 13:33.

I CAN scarcely tell you under what singular feelings I am led to adopt this text. It has entered my mind, whispered in my ears, and I might almost say it has haunted my thoughts; for all the day long has it been fresh in my memory, and again and again it has recurred to me in the night watches. There is no comfort that I can extract from the meditation, and not much instruction that I can deduce from the oracular sentence. Conscience, however, lays on me a strong constraint. Any portion from the Word of God that Comes forcibly home to my own soul I am prone to accept, as it were, in trust for your sakes. So I aim to deliver unto you that which I also received. Be it void of comfort or charged with rebuke, God grant it may be owned to your profit and accepted to his praise! “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” Probably this was a proverb amongst the Jews, which our Savior used and endorsed. For many years Jerusalem had been stained with the blood of prophets. These godly men might have lived securely in the rural districts of Jude, and amongst her various towns and hamlets, and though sometimes annoyed, never exposed to violence; but so had the seat of judgment become the throne of iniquity that vengeance was reeked where justice should have ruled. Jerusalem, the metropolis of government, the center of religion and the priests, became notorious as the scene of judicial murder and vindictive martyrdom. It had been, through a number of years, the place where one after another of God’s servants had been stoned and put to death. Our Savior seems to have felt that he was safe while in Herod’s jurisdiction, but that when he got to Jerusalem he was in imminent peril from conspirators; that there a baptism of blood awaited him, when his life should be sacrificed, and he should become, as it

were, the Prince of Martyrs; an offering of the noblest life, a shedding of the richest blood that ever was poured out on the altar at Jerusalem. It seems strange that Jerusalem should have sunk so low as to monopolise the sin of murdering the prophets, that it should have become renowned for persecution and vindictive cruelty; a city within whose walls God's servants might look in vain for shelter; where popular feeling and the public courts were alike against them, where summary indictment and certain conviction were sure to be their lot. "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that stonest the prophets and killest them that are sent unto thee"! From generation to generation had they thus framed mischief and done violence; until our Lord accuses and holds them guilty of the slaughter of his servants from "the blood of righteous Abel unto that of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar." What a fearful contrast this presents to the name, that Jerusalem had received, and the position that had been assigned to her! Was she not called Jerusalem, the place of righteousness and of peace? Her bards had praised her in glowing sonnets as "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." How did the Psalmist draw lively, lovely images of her security, surrounded by mountains that served as natural fortresses to protect her, and did he not even picture the little hills that environed her as companions of the mountain on which the Temple stood? "Why leap ye so, ye high hills? This is the hill which God delighteth to dwell in." Where else did acceptable sacrifices smoke? As for the altars of the high places, they were an abomination to the Lord. The one altar at Jerusalem God had ordained for acceptable sacrifice. Thither the tribes came up to worship. It was the meeting-place and rallying point of all the families of Israel at their annual solemnities: —

*"Unto her gates, with joys unknown
Did Judah's tribes repair
The Son of David held his throne
And sat in judgment there."*

Her mountain was illustrious in history. It was on one of her pinnacles that Abraham drew the knife to slay his son; and on the spot where the plague was staved in David's day, when the outstretched hand of the angel was arrested by the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, was builded stone by stone the temple where God delighted to dwell. It was the source whence light went streaming through the land as from the sun, and at the same time it was the great lake into which the rivers of sacred prayer and

praise constantly flowed, gleaming in their fullness. Oh! Jerusalem, thy very name was dear to the captives as they sat mournfully down by Babylon's streams and wept, saying, one with another, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joys." Thou seemest so fair a city, so perfect a chrysolite; thy halls seem so truly made of agate, and thy gates of carbuncle, that in thy glory we see a type of the abode of the saints of God: —

***"Jerusalem, my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"***

And has it come to this? Well, then, might the Savior, whom thou didst despise and reject, weep over thee! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! has it come to this? "Thou killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee." Has it come to this? No marvel that thy house is left unto thee desolate, that the holy city is given up to the abomination of desolation, and is left to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles! Has it come to this? Oh! horror of horrors! what sorrows are too sad and heart-rending to follow at the heels of sin! Look, my brethren; that same sin which once cast down Lucifer from his throne degraded him from the royalties of heaven, and doomed him to the pit that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever, that same sin has plucked this pearl from the regal diadem of the King of kings, subjected it to the direst dishonor, and made it a byword in the earth. So is her beauty despoiled; so is her sacredness; and such are the wages of sin, and such the recompense of transgressions. As you think of this city of the great king converted into a place of butchery and a shamble for prophets, I would have you recollect that: —

I. THE LIKE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION IS STILL INFLICTED WHEREVER SIN SEEKS SHELTER UNDER THE SOLEMN SANCTIONS OF A SOUNDING PROFESSION.

Now and then we are startled. Someone who had stood foremost amongst the saints has all of a sudden excited public gaze, conspicuous as a fiend. I remember such a man. He preached the gospel, and seemed to preach it with intense sincerity; at any rate, there was such fervor in his manner that zeal seemed to animate his heart. His words moved many; souls were converted under his ministry, souls that shall make glad the angels of God

throughout eternity. He comforted the saints and many disciples were refreshed by his discourses. But in an evil hour he turned aside. His fall was precipitate. The sink was abysmal. Of drunkards he became one of the worst; of swearers the most profane; amongst licentious the most lewd; no slave of Satan more in earnest to destroy himself and to do his black master's bidding, than that same man who once ministered at the altar of God, and appeared to be a star in the right hand of Christ. And why may not such a collapse occur to me, and why may it not occur to thee, my brother? Every man, it has well been said, has not a soul of crystal whereby other men can read his actions. Thou lookest fair; thou seemest to be a saint; yet there may be a worm in the contra of thy fair plant after all. Sudden death often surprises those who appear to be in sound health, though slow disease has long been sapping the strength of their system. Be not deceived by appearances; make sure of thy salvation. Jerusalem killed the prophets. Maybe you will likewise belie your pretensions to virtue. You have heard of a woman out of whom seven devils were cast. Did you never hear of one into whom seven devils entered? There she stands. Never woman seemed more pure; never penitent wept more sparkling tears. Like another Mary Magdalene, she washed her Savior's feet with her tears. Yes, she seems to sit at Jesus' feet and love him with all her heart. Earnest in season and out of season, we admire her. But the time of trial cometh — that time which testeth the metal whether it be gold or not. She gives her heart to another than her Savior. Once led astray, no lips are more defiling than hers; no feet run more swiftly in the way of the Destroyer. It happened unto her that she did in theory know the way of righteousness, but the gracefulness of her profession was not the grace of God in truth; so presently she turned aside, and she, who seemed to be a Hannah, turned out to be a Jezebel, and she who once could sing, as we thought, the grateful song of Mary, must hence for ever weep a doleful miserere. Take care, my sister, that you be safely built upon the Rock of Ages. As Jerusalem killed the prophets, so may you. I say so because I find it in God's Word.

Have we not too often seen instances of those who were regular outward attendants upon God's house; who seemed to adorn the earthly courts and bid fair for heaven; who rejoiced continually in holy things with a full measure of assurance, and rather frowned on some of the brethren who were sometimes depressed, and filled with doubt and fears — have not we seen thee very church-members become the victims of some darling sin, the

prey of some base lust, which has driven them like bullocks to the slaughter? “There is a sin unto death.” Our eyes have seen the mischief; our ears have listened to the tale; our hearts have been pained by the recital hundreds of times. From my youth up I have felt indescribable terror when I heard of such an one who seemed to be a pillar in the Church moved from his place: “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world.” When I have heard of it, sometimes I have been ready to wail with the prophet, “Howl, fir-tree, for the cedar has fallen.” Those who seemed better than ourselves, more gracious, and far more gifted, have turned aside, and we have felt that it is only by a miracle of grace we have not done the same: —

*“So stones hang in the air
So sparks in ocean live;
Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give.”*

Jerusalem killed the prophets, and there is that secret wickedness in The hearts of every one of us that would have made us do the like a thousand times; that would have turned us from saints into devils, if the constraining, preserving grace of God had not defended us. Let us, then, humbly acknowledge all this; let us carefully search ourselves to see whether we be in the faith, and then let us gratefully bless that mighty hand which, having begun its gracious work, will not leave us until it has perfectly performed its purpose and fulfilled in us all the designs of love. Looked at thus, this passage conveys a very solemn warning. How terrible must be the death-bed of a man who, after having made a profession, and perhaps preached the gospel, has become an apostate! Can we picture the siege of Jerusalem? I believe that all human rhetoric must fail in the description, and that if a painter dipped his brush in blood he could not sketch the horrors of that awful time. If those days had not been shortened, surely the whole race had been swept away. There never was, and never shall be until the last tremendous day, anything that can be paralleled with the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian and Titus. In like manner, there is nothing, I think, that can parallel, certainly nothing that can exceed, the horrors of the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read the story of Francis Spire, or of John Auld, in the days of the last nonconforming reformation in England? If you ever read the stories of these death-beds, they will ring in your ears at night, and make you cry out, “O God, if I am damned, let it not be as an apostate! If I must perish, yet let me not perish as one who,

like a dog, returns to his vomit, or like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Jerusalem stoned the prophets! You young men, who are just putting on your harness, boast not as though you were putting it off.

Beginners in the way of grace, it is a great and solemn truth that every child of God will hold on until the end, but it is an equally solemn truth that many who profess to be the Lord’s are self-deceivers, and will turn out apostates after all. They will go back to the beggarly elements from which they appear to have escaped, and begin to stone the prophets, whom once they professed to reverence and love. How dreadful their doom! To see the Lord when fire blazes before him, and the clouds form a chariot beneath him; when “he shall come, but not the same as once in lowliness he came”; when he shall appear in rainbow wreath and clouds of storm, how dreadful will it be to those who turned their backs upon him! In vain shall they call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them; they must face him whom they deserted; they must be arraigned before him whom they treacherously betrayed. Oh! how they will fall in speechless, helpless, hopeless dismay before him! and oh! how he will trample on them in his anger, because they trampled on his blood in their perfidy, and crucified to themselves the Lord of life afresh! God save us from their eternal woes, for of all bitter remorse and fell despair, theirs must be the most tormenting. The privileges they enjoyed aggravate the perdition in which they are engulfed. Down from heaven’s gates they are thrust into hell by the back door. Their faces, once towards Jerusalem the Golden, now confront the accursed Gehenna. Far from the rayless, pathless outlook with which they bid farewell to mortal life to the dire reality of their dreaded doom they are launched forth, “wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” Such are trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. “God deliver us from their character and their conduct, lest we reap the consequence that is sure to close their career!” Now to draw a fresh lesson, let me remind you of: —

II. THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF OUTWARD PRIVILEGES UNLESS THERE BE INWARD PURITY.

Never was a city more richly endowed or more highly privileged than was Jerusalem of old. As we have already said, it was the city of the great king. There all the festivals were held. Her priests were her pride. The anointed

ministers of the altar thronged her streets, numerous as the flowers which bedeck the meadows in spring. There you might have heard the voice of sacred song every hour in the day. Within her gates the ritual of religion was observed with almost perpetual celebrations. All that Vegas comely, sacred, and holy seemed to have an exclusive abode within her precincts. Yet for all that these people were not a whit the better. They had a baneful monopoly that they shamefully coveted — a monopoly of killing the prophets, and of stoning those whom God sent unto them. The means of grace were evidently not blessed to them.

How plainly this shows the possibility of retaining sin, unsubdued and unchecked, notwithstanding all the righteousness that is taught in precepts, and all the grace that is exhibited in ordinances! Are there not regular attendants here who, though they mingle with the church, join in the hymns of praise, and listen to the words of exhortation, are as corrupt in their character and their conversation as if they went nowhere? Sit there not in these pews those who are as covetous, as bad tempered, and, in some cases, as licentious as if they never entered a place worship at all? For them our most earnest rebukes, invitations, warnings, are ineffective as the roaring of the wild waves of the sea, or the ringing of bells in a church tower; they produce no sort of moral or spiritual result. I speak solemnly of individuals, not censoriously of systems, when I affirm, without particularizing any denomination, because the same is true amongst ourselves, that I know there are thousands who go to church and believe, because they have conformed more or less to religious customs, and observed the sacraments, all is well with them, whereas neither the doctrine nor discipline of Christians exert the slightest influence upon their hearts or their lives. Their temper is as fiery or as morose; their greed for the world just as inordinate; their vanity and fondness of display quite as unseemly; and the petty vices of a degraded mind as freely indulged, as if they ranked themselves among the profane. They have all the outward signs of religion, but they have not a particle of vital godliness.

I remember a time when people wore rings round their fingers to cure their bones of rheumatism. It may have done them some good, though I doubt it; but that outward forms of religion can be of any avail to purge the heart or sanctify the soul I utterly disbelieve. What does it matter whether you go to church or not; whether you use a prayer-book or a hymn-book or not, or whether you bend your knee morning and evening or not, if these things have no effect upon you; if you walk after the flesh, and not after the

Spirit? You may as well leave off these religious fashions, though it may seem rather bold to say so. I would rather you put off every sham, because then you would know where and what you are. Religious presence only deceives others, and be fools yourselves. We always talk about this as a Christian country. We are wrong. It is not a Christian, it is a heathen country. There are some Christians in it, thank God! but the country is not a Christian country. The Metropolis is not Christian. London herself is a heathen city. Vice and violence, lewdness and licentiousness, are as ripe in her as they are in Paris or Vienna, Calcutta or Bombay. You need not go far afield; take the nearest court, or the blind alley that leads out of the main street, or go into some of the great houses at the West End, and you will see in, them such awful abominations as might convince you that their frequenters say, in their heart, there is no God, or, if they worshipped a deity, it was Buddha or Vishnu. Count the churches, reckon the chapels, take account of the mission stations, sum up all the outward privileges, and mark the condition. In the teeth of them all, we may say sin is growing more rampant. The more religion the more sin, if it be a religion of outward rites, without the power of godliness. Jerusalem was the worst of cities, and yet the most religious. It was the most profane, because it was the most sanctimonious, its piety being a mere empty profession. In no other city was there so much lip-service, cringing, and bowing. In offering oblations and burning incense, she was pre-eminent. Still no other city had such a renown for stoning the prophets. And it may be that your real character may be as little in keeping with your pretensions.

You may have prayers every morning, and Bible readings every day; you may resort to sacraments, practice genuflexions, observe festivals, and make pilgrimages, all to no purpose. Your seeming sanctity may be only a mask, covering up folly and vice. The balance is on the wrong side. Your creed has aggravated your crimes. Your religion has precipitated your ruin. The tag-raggery of vestments and ceremonials are but the histrionics of religion, in which amateurs delight. All their mystery and pomp are mere stage-play. No benefit whatever can you derive from such principles or such performances. All the trust you put in them must entail miserable disappointments; it may involve you in desperate consequences; no falsehood can be harmless; self-deception must be pernicious. Lend me your eyes, and I will show you the worst man in Jerusalem. What! do you think that I am going to point out that tax-gatherer? By no means. He is a scoundrel, I admit. He exacted three times as much as he ought of that

poor widow, and drained her resources. No doubt he is a real bad fellow, but I know a worse. Go knock at the door of yon affluent rabbi; you cannot be admitted just yet. Ask the servant where his master is. He will tell you that he is at prayers; he will not be at liberty for three-quarters of an hour at least. You must wait, I suppose, until this gentleman has finished his devotions. After a while he condescends to put in an appearance. You look at him with surprise. Whatever is that remarkable feature on his forehead? You might fancy he must have fallen down and bruised himself, and put a piece of plaster on his forehead. Oh! no; that little box on his frontal is inscribed with texts of Scripture. A Bible precept supplies him with a bold pretext. "Thou shalt bind them for a frontal between thine eyes." So, like a fool, taking the sound and leaving the sense, he has inserted a series of texts into a box and tied it on to his scalp. And, oh! what a deep fringe he has to his dress! It is half as long as his robe. What is that for? Because he is told to have a border to his garment, and so he has it broad; half an inch would have done, but he has it seven inches at least. He cannot do anything in moderation as it should be done. He must carry everything to an extreme. If you wish to speak to this gentleman, you find he really cannot attend to you, because he is just going up to the Temple; he has a little account to pay there. He shows it to you. Of course, he says he likes to show it. You can see how precise he is. It is a farthing, and an eighth part of it is for mint he has been using. He is very careful about tiny matters. Before he goes to pay that, he tells the servant to mind and strain out all the gnats, lest he should swallow any unclean animal when he drinks his wine. Follow him up to the Temple, and you will observe him standing by himself. He is saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." It is rude, perhaps, to pry into his private doings, but as he is gone out, just let us take a look into this little sanctum and see his accounts. We begin to look at them and we must be quick, for fear he should come and catch us. Look at this entry, "Half a dozen widows' houses devoured last week." Go on, and you will see all sorts of bad things that he has been doing. He would not have been such an atrocious villain had it not been for his religion. He wraps that about him as a cloak, and it prevents his seeing what a great sinner he is. Perhaps if he did not practice so much piety, he might be shocked at his lack of morality. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see; therefore, your sin remaineth."

This man pretends to be a saint, but he proves to be a devil. His soaring profession aggravates his heartless infamy. Surely, I think, this example falls fairly within the scope of my text. Jerusalem, as a locality the center of devoutness, became the cesspool of corruption. If you have the cherubim without the Shekinah; if you have the sacred symbols without the sanctifying Spirit; if you have the sound creed without the lively faith; if you have gospel in the pulpit without grace in the heart; if you have Protestant Christianity without a precious Christ, then the decadence of your religion will lead to the demoralizing of your character. The mere possession of the outward means of grace may have no better effect than that of making men worse; yet it entails a very solemn responsibility. No man can sin, after he has received light from above, so cheaply as he does who commits his transgressions in the dark. When you are warned, and entreated, and besought to turn from the error of your way, should you still pursue it, "Being often warned, and hardening, your neck," the sentence is, "you shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." I believe some hyper-Calvinists raise an objection to the responsibility of man whilst hearing the gospel, and there are several other things to which they likewise demur; but I hope we shall always accept the testimony of God's Word without distorting it, whether it be agreeable or distasteful to us. As for me, I have braved the sneer of men because I feared the frown of my Lord. But now they are dead that troubled me; and it is not likely that I shall cease to speak of unbelief as other than a grievous sin, a capital crime, and an aggravation of all other transgressions. The gospel is either savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to every one of you who hears it. If it be not a stone of help, it will become a stone of stumbling. You will either fall upon it and be broken, or it will fall upon you and grind you to powder. Beware, ye that hear the gospel and bide with it, lest it be said unto you, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." I believe that throughout eternity the punishment of the guilty will be aggravated for ever by the privileges against which they have persisted in sinning. To sink into perdition from the shadow of the gospel is possible; to go down with warnings of judgment and wooings of mercy sounding in one's ears is suicidal; to leap into the pit headlong, and to find out the deepest depths of dire despair is dreadful beyond description. To think of it conjures up thoughts from which we recoil. Oh! call it not a fatal mistake, for it is a foul crime. The heathen, who never heard of Christ, cannot accuse themselves of having wasted Sabbaths and rejected a Savior. But Sabbath after Sabbath you who have had the gospel delivered in your hearing — ye

will have to bear a reproach like this, “Ye knew the gospel, but loved it not!” This shall be the perpetual worm that shall never die. There was a time when God called. He himself says it, “I called, but ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded it; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.” In like manner Jesus says, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it shall be, more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you.” To privilege in each instance clenches the responsibility. Oh! may this solemn truth abide with each of us! Now let me, in closing, give a slightly different tone to our meditation. We have seen that Jerusalem had a monopoly of one sin — she killed the prophets.

III. THERE ARE SINS WHICH GOD’S PEOPLE, HIS REAL PEOPLE, TRUE AND GENUINE SAINTS, MAY BE CHARGED WITH — nay, of which they may accuse themselves, as exclusively their own. Possibly the very mention of them may lead us to repent, and bring us back again humbly and penitently to the foot of the Cross, that we may accept with the more gratitude the full atonement which our Savior made. You and I are, dear friends, the children of God in a sense in which other men are not; we are part of his great family. Being regenerated and adopted, we have received the nature of children, and been put into their status. Other men are but subjects under his law; we are sons. No servant can sin as a son can. A servant and a son may both be guilty of the same offense, but there is a difference in the degree of guilt, because of the relationship. A father may well say, “My servant ought not to have done this — he has offended me; but as for you, my own child, my beloved, you have grieved me to my heart, for you have sinned against a father’s love, as well as against a father’s authority. You are bound to me by ties so close that you ought to have been more scrupulous. I can understand a servant injuring my property or my reputation, but to my child both of these should be very dear.” There seems to me to be a baseness about the ingratitude of a child with which the unkindness of a friend will not compare. Sharper than an adder’s tooth is the conduct of a thankless child, because he is a child. I do not think it is possible for anyone not related to break and wound a mother’s heart as her own child can. You Christians can easily apply this reflection to yourselves. There is a peculiar wickedness about your sin. In the judgment of others it is the same, but in your own judgment, if you think of your heavenly Father and your nearness to him, it will seem to be far worse. Dear friend, remember you are not only a child, but sometimes you rejoice to think that

you are Christ's spouse. Now one's spouse lies very near one's heart. Another person may say something against me, and I might pass it over. A remark which, coming from a stranger, or even from a friend, we might slight, did it come from one's own spouse, would cut deep into the very soul. You would say, "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it; But it was thou — thou who dost rest in my bosom and enjoyest my perfect confidence — thou hast lifted up thy heel against me." Say, then, child of God, dost thou not see that thy sins may have a peculiar heinousness about them? They may be a stoning of prophets, and a crucifying of Christ in thy misdeeds, although still favored as a bride, never to be divorced; thy crime is bitter, and to be repented of bitterly.

There is one sin which has often oppressed my heart, and I dare say it has yours. We grow cold in love to our Savior. Some of you do not love your Savior with the same warmth and devotedness you did at first. There may be these among you who plead not guilty. I wish most of you could; but, alas! how many of you have to look back upon former days and say, "O that it were with me as in the days that art past!" More cause you have for loving him; more coals have been put on the fire, but yet it is less hot, and burns less brightly; more stones have been thrown on the cairn, and yet it is smaller than it was at first. Oh! strange it is — we sometimes even almost wonder to see it — that some who since they first came to Christ, and rested only on him, have had many gifts and graces vouchsafed to them, have almost put them in the place of him who gave them. Master Brookes says, "Suppose a loving husband were to hang his wife's ears with earrings, and put jewels about her neck, and rings upon her fingers, and she got so fond of all these pretty things that she forgot her husband, it would be a sad thing if love tokens should make us forget the hand that gave them." This case is just like ours; we begin looking at our own good works and graces, and get to be so pleased that we forget from whom they proceed, and look upon them as our own; whereas there is no lustre in them except that which is reflected, and we shall soon lose even the reflection if, we get contented with it. We must look to Christ, and him alone. Shame on us all Christians that we should be thus remiss and negligent of our deepest, tenderest obligations. This is a vice to which even the heathen are not prone. Do you ever hear of a nation forsaking its gods? Well might the prophet expostulate, since no other nation forsook its gods, yet Israel forsook hers. Worldly men do not forsake their pursuits with the indifference that you forsake yours. They grow more and more enamoured

of the flaunting charms of that woman Jezebel, the world, whilst our hearts, alas! are often forgetful of our fair, infinitely fair Lord Jesus, and go rambling abroad with some other love. This is a sin which none but Christians commit. And what shall I say of the doubts we cast upon the faithfulness of God, after having proved it so conspicuously? No unconverted person can have proved it as we have done. There are promises of which anyone, especially the stranger within our gates, might have availed himself. The world, however, discredits sheer worth. But some of you have gone to the throne of grace with pleas based on promises not once only; peradventure, if I should say you have gone hundreds and thousands of times, I should not exceed the number of proofs you have made of the divine faithfulness. Fifty years have transpired since some of you came to the Lord, and you never found him slack. He never dishonored his own word; he has been faithful and true in the midst of all that was fleeting and transient. Yet your heart flutters and your lips murmur when a fresh exigence arises. How canst thou be so distrustful, so provoking? Airy says, "If there be a God, if prayer can prevail, if there be any kind of piety that is not a baseless presumption, are moot questions with the men of this generation"; but you know there is a God, you know he hears prayer, you know he honors obedience, and fulfils every tittle he has spoken. Why should you ever harbor a doubt, or cherish a misgiving? Is it not monstrous? Doubt now? What fresh pledge, what further guarantee, can you require? Do strive earnestly; do pray constantly that this accursed unbelief may be cast out of you. Are you not heirs of heaven? Are you not looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God? Shall your faith be steadfast as to the goal, and yet in suspense as to the journey?

With such seed thoughts have I ruminated on my text, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." Jerusalem! thy name suggests to me all that is beautiful for situation, and all that is precious for privileges; and yet I tremble at thy history, for it is a record of mischief and misery. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! rather had I sung thy praise than rehearsed thy crimes! But, O God! let! the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alike acceptable to thee! May such warnings be fruitful; as any wooings in drawing reluctant hearts to right allegiance. This is my last word — Believe and live. Amen.

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“Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” — Titus 1:15.

I SHALL not profess this evening to enter into a full exposition of this text, for there are many deep things in it, and many intricate questions are suggested by it. I shall only make some observations upon it intended to be of practical service.

This text has often been misused — made to mean what was never in the Apostle’s mind. He does not mean that a wrong thing becomes right to a pure-minded man; that is the very opposite of what he does mean. He means that when men’s minds are pure, other matters become pure to them, but when their minds are impure then they use these things for impurity. We shall endeavor to pick out the meaning as we go along, but it by no means means that I may pretend that I am of pure mind, and that that, therefore, sin make impurity itself pure. That would be to prove, if I found any pleasure: in impurity, that my mind was impure. The true solution of the conduct of a man who professes to be pure in mind, and yet commits himself to an unholy course of life, is not that the man makes that unholy life pure but that the fact that he falls into unholy living proves that his mind is not pure at all.

Our text has in it to-night two kinds of men — the pure and the defiled and unbelieving; and secondly, it has two kinds of effects produced upon these men by outward things: to the one all things are pure; to the other there is nothing pure. First, let us talk about these: —

I. TWO KINDS OF MEN.

First, the pure — where shall we find them? Where are they born? We answer, no men are born so. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No! not one. As our parents have sinned, we, their children, are born with tendencies to sin; we are impure even from the birth. There are none pure but those who are made so by a second creation. The first time they are marred upon the wheel. They must go under the Creator's hand a second time; they must feed the power of the purifying Spirit of God creating them anew, before they can be called pure at all. And these are not absolutely pure. Even in those who are entitled to be called "pure in heart," there remains impurity. If any man shall question that, let him remember the first Epistle of John, the first chapter, at the eighth verse: — "If any man say he heath no sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There is sin in the best of men, and if they do not perceive it, it must be because they are blinded with a foolish self-conceit, for in the purest heart there still remains connected with it the old nature and the impurity inherited from the first Adam. This makes life a perpetual conflict until life's close. Still, we name men by their predominant characteristics. The partial impurity of a good man does not entitle him to be called impure. If the master-principle within him, the reigning principle, be purity, he is a pure man. A man may once in his life have spoken an untruth; he may have been surprised into saying that is a thing which is not; but if the general tenour of his life be stern integrity, we do not, therefore, condemn him and brand him as a liar, otherwise where were the men living upon earth who would be worthy of a name implying praise? The godly are pure — have been made pure by regeneration, and they are pure, though not absolutely so. They are pure in their affections. They love not that which is unchaste, unhallowed, untruthful, unlawful before God. Their soul loves that which God approves; they seek after that which Cod himself commands. If they do not always keep God's statutes, yet they love them; and if they do not always walk in his ways without slipping, yet they lose his ways and desire to walk in them without a single turning aside to the right hand or to the left. The set of the current of their soul is towards purity. They mourn over those currents and eddies into which they are turned by temptation. They are the

last men to excuse them; the rush and current of their soul, their deepest and truest life, is that they may be cleansed from all false ways and from sin. And as they are pure in their affections, they become pure in their actions. They, if they be, indeed, the people of God, cannot run with the multitude to do evil. The swine may find its pleasure in the mire, but God's sheep love cleanly pastures. The raven may feed upon its garbage and be at home there, but not so the dove, — it likes the clean garner and the clean roosting-place. The child of God shuns not only the darker sins which defile so many, but even those which others think but a trifle; and what some would permit and rejoice in, the Christian mourns, abhors, laments, and avoids. The actions of the Christian — I do not claim perfection for them, but I do claim that the true Christian strives after perfection in his actions, that he seeks after it, aye! and that, as a rule, he comes nearer to it than his enemies would allow, or than even his own reflections, when he is examining himself, would permit him to believe. God has a people who walk uprightly still in the world. There are still some that are as pillars in the house of God upon whom he has written the name of our God; some who have not defiled their garments who shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy made, so by his grace. And these men being thus pure in their affections and in their actions are most of all pure in their desires. Their greatest desire is towards purity. I am sure I speak the language of every renewed heart when I say that if the Lord were to appear by night unto, you, and say to you, as he did try Solomon "What shall I give thee?" there is no renewed heart here that would say, "Lord, give me riches!" there is no one that would say, "Give me health!" We may desire both of these things in a secondary degree, but our main desire would be this, "Lord, give me that holy character which would please thee and bring honor to the religion I profess." Holiness, holiness, holiness — it is a thing which every renewed heart longs after beyond everything else. I would have perfect orthodoxy in my head if I could, but I know even if I had that, an unhallowed life would render it of little service to me; but could I have the clean heart, other things would come with it, and from it, for the pure in heart shall see God; and if they see God, what is there else that he shall not see, for the eye which has glanced on God himself will be able to perceive the difference between truth and error, and will not be liable to be deceived. The Christian is pure in his desires. Now if it be so, that in his affections within, and his actions without, and in the desires of his entire nature, he would be pure, he is entitled to this name, and God has given it to him.

But there are some, on the other hand, who are defied and unbelieving. These two things appear to go together. Now it was denied some time since that every unbeliever is unclean in his life, and I think there is some ground in the denial. I should not like to stand here and say that I believe every infidel, every rejector of the religion of Christ is a man unfit for the social circle, and a sinner against the laws of decency. I do not believe it. Honestly, I must say that there are some men who have rejected the gospel — I grieve that they have — have denied God, and yet somehow they have been a vast deal better than their creed, and they have managed to walk in a consistency of moral conduct towards man which has almost been worthy to be set up as an example to Christians. I believe such cases are not the rule, and that candour, when it has made the admission which I have made, is compelled to add that this is an extraordinary thing, and cannot have been produced by the creed, for the creed itself of the godless is necessarily logically and properly the creed of the unbelieving, producing sin. Why should they obey a law if they do not believe in a law-giver, or, if they only believe in a law-giver who will not punish, and who cannot reward? When men have denied God, they have surely given up the sanction which should lead them to anything like purity, and if they live as most of them do live, it cannot be said that they are inconsistent with their creed.

Yet, indeed, as a rule, and as a rule without exception — having said what I have said (and I do not contradict myself) — as a rule without an exception, the unbelieving heart is a deviled heart for all that. For what did we admit? That the man who rejects his God is not, therefore, a thief. Has he not robbed God? What did we say? That the man who rejects Christ is not, therefore, licentious. Is that purity which rejects perfection? Is that heart pure that cannot see loveliness in the character and the person of the Redeemer? What did we admit? That the unbeliever is not seditious. Yet is he a loyal subject of God who denies the Godhead, who rails against God, and who lives from day to day as if there were no God at all? Men, if they were called sinners, would not shudder at the word; they admit it. Call them criminals, and at once they are angry and defend themselves — the reason being, I suppose, that with the mass of mankind it seems a trifle to offend against God, but a very serious thing to have offended against man. And here is the whole stress of the matter; the defilement of the unbeliever lies always God-ward, even when it is not apparent man-ward, and when the unbeliever, somehow or other, keeps his garments clean as before his fellow-men, yet as before his God what is he? He is one who has cast off

all obligations to his Maker, who denies all responsibilities to his King, who receives bounties from Jehovah's hand, but is not grateful, and will not even acknowledge that the mercies come from that hand at all; who lives in habitual contempt of the adorable — destitute of all admiration for the infinitely glorious — who does what angels must shudder to think of — lives without love to Christ, without trust in the promises of God. There is a defilement there, which, I venture to say, is even greater, if looked at in a right light, than any form of defilement which becomes perceptible by men as between themselves.

But notice in this text that it seems to correct a good deal of the mental philosophy we have heard of. For instance, I have heard it asserted that conscience is God's vicegerent among men. I have often heard expressions from the pulpit, and read them in books, which fed me to infer that every fallen man had got not only something good in him, but some strong principle almost akin to the Divine. I believe in the fall of man, and I believe that to be total, and that conscience — is a power which has fallen with all the remit, and that there does not exist in the world a pure conscience, except so far as God has purified it by the work of his Spirit. Conscience itself is a defiled thing; and so far from being a representative of God, I could not think for a moment of comparing it with that ever-blessed and pure being. The fact is that conscience, although it must be to man practically his guide, is not a safe one ever, for the true guide of every man is the Bible, the revealed will of God. That is true, and pure, and right, but my conscience may often be a dark conscience, an ignorant conscience, a perverted conscience, and my business is not to follow my conscience as I find it, but to go to God and ask him to enlighten my conscience, and guide it. Neither is it an excuse for a man for doing wrong when he says he was conscientious in doing it. It is an excuse as far as men are concerned, but not before God. God's law is not of variable quantity or quality depending upon the quantity or quality of the conscience; it is fixed and definite. Just as if a man were to take prussic acid believing that it would benefit him — he would die, despite his conscience; or as if a person were to walk northward, expecting to reach his home in the south, he would not do anything of the kind; or as if a man were to go to sea in a leaky vessel, and a storm came on, his conscience would not save him — so it is with you; if you are astray, you are astray. Your business was to have waited upon God to have had that conscience corrected; your business was to have laid that conscience at the foot of the cross, and ask the Master to

purify it — to have waited upon the Holy Spirit for his teaching, and consulted the infallible oracles of God's book, to know what was the will of the Most High. It is not, therefore, for every man to be crying up his conscience. I believe in conscience by all means among men, but there is none perfect before God. There conscience should be bowed to God's law, to God's gospel, to believe his teachings, and to obey his precepts. Conscience no more than any other power, is irresponsible. It is under law in him. He created man, and put the conscience within him, which conscience has been despoiled and injured by the Fall. Now there are men in the world with defiled understandings and defiled consciences. They cannot judge rightly; their understanding is defied. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. "A man cannot do that," says one. He does do it. There are thousands in this world who deliberately judge amiss, and who, when they sit down even to think of a question (which, alas! we cannot often bring them to do), naturally come to a wrong conclusion because the scales which they weigh are out of gear. The measure which they use is not the measure of the sanctuary. Their understanding is defiled. And even when they bring their moral sense to bear upon some question, they are inevitably mistaken because their conscience itself has become defiled also. A sad state for men to be in, but into this state each man, according to his degree, is brought, until his will turneth unto God, and is rectified by the great Spirit. We are all impure — impure in every part. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint"; we are all fallen. In manhood's vast temple there stands not a solitary pillar that is quite erect. Here and there, there are masses that seem as though they stood as once they were, to let us know how grand a thing human nature might have been; but there is enough upon the whole to let us see that it is all in ruin, and in such ruin that unless he who built it at the first shall put forth his omnipotent power and use again the old fiat which created the world, it will still be a ruin and desolation — a den of all manner of unclean things. Thus have I spoken upon the two sorts of men, the pure and the defiled. But now, secondly, here is the main point that we have to speak of: —

II. THE TWO AFFECTS PRODUCED ON THESE TWO KINDS OF MEN.

To those who are pure all things are pure; to those who are impure and unbelieving, everything becomes impure. Only a few things by way of specimen.

First, let us think of the attributes of God. To the believer in Christ, whose heart is pure, how glorious is God! And every time we think of him, adore him, and have fellowship with him, we grow purer for it. The true believer cannot think of God and draw nearer to him without becoming more like his God. But look at the unbeliever. Oft-times his very thoughts of God have been themselves defiled by the defilement of his understanding, irritating him, filling him with wrath and abhorrence. He does not delight in the holiness of God; he says it is severity. "How can a man be happy with such laws to bind him?" He does not delight in the wisdom of God in providence; he thinks things are ordered very much amiss, seeing they do not all conduce to his pleasure in the ways of sin. And, especially, if you set before him God's mercy, that most blessed of all attributes which, to the believer, is purifying to the last degree, you will find the unbeliever saying, "God is Merciful," and making that an excuse for his continuing in sin. How sad it is that when we preach the gospel, and give the invitations of infinite mercy, there are many who will say, "Ah! then, I can turn to God just when I like, and he is very gracious, and he will forgive me; therefore, I will continue in my rebellion against him." And when we have been pathetic, and our soul has poured over from our eyes as we have spoken of those saved at the eleventh hour, while there have been some minds that have been led to Christ thereby, there are some who have drawn the horrible inference that they, too, might wait until the eleventh hour, and venture their eternal interests upon the mercy of God at the last. Brethren. I believe you cannot preach of God without some men making mischief of it, even of just so simple a truth as his mercy. But when you come to his sovereignty — a deep that can never be fathomed — how many have been drowned in it! I believe we ought to speak about it. I am not of those who say we should be silent upon it, but how many have been drowned in those deeps, wilfully, because they leave said, "Who hath resisted his will? Why doth he find fault? If it is to be, it is to be. If it will be, it will be." They have even dared to make God the author of their sin, and drawn an apology for their unrighteousness from the thrice holy King of Kings. To the pure in heart all things are so pure that we ourselves sink into nothing in humility and penitence before him; but to the ungodly, even God himself becomes an argument for continuance in sin.

Now take another. It is so with God, but it is equally so with the gospel. The doctrines of the gospel are to the believer very pure. There is not one of them but what has a practical effect upon his life. I take the doctrine of

election. Then if he hath chosen us, he has chosen us to be a peculiar people zealous of good works, and special love we feel binds us to special service. We often sing: —

*“Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn
Chosen of him ere time began,
We choose him in return.”*

So with the doctrine of redemption that he hath redeemed us by his precious blood. The inference from it is, “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his.” Take the sweet doctrine of final perseverance, “The righteous shall hold on his way.” Now the godly man feels that he must so live as to prove that he is a godly man by persevering, and he looks for daily grace to hold him on, and to keep him to the end. He blesses that infinite affection that does not turn aside from him, and he feels drawn to it by constant watchfulness. I might mention all the doctrines, but every Christian will admit at once that he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself. But take the effect of these truths upon the unbelieving and the impure. Why, you know how they will pervert election. How often men have made that a coverlet for the grossest licentiousness. As for the redeeming blood, alas! how many have made the cross, which is the tree of life, to be the tree of death to them! It has become a savor of death unto death to them. We have known some whose damnation is just — who have said, “We are the children of God, and we will live as we like,” and they have, therefore, given themselves over to uncleanness. Surely of all blasphemers, they must bear the palm; they stand among the worst. But when men thus turn the gospel into licentiousness, are we to say it is the gospel’s fault? Are we to keep back some of these doctrines? By no means, for “unto the pure all things are pure”. Unto the unclean and unbelieving, these holy things will always be impure. You might as, well forbid the sun to shine because when his beams fall upon a dunghill, it brings forth unwholesome reeking. Yes, but that same sun, when it falls upon the flowers, makes them shed their aromatic perfume on every hand. It is doing incalculable good. It is not the sun, but the dunghill that must be blamed. And when the truth is perverted, you must not blame the truth, but blame the unclean, unbelieving heart that turns it into sin.

Now the like thing is true of the ordinances of the gospel, and dreadfully true here too. When you come to the ordinances of the gospel, such, for

instance, as the preaching of the Word — the true believer every time he hears the Word is purged by the Word. “Now ye are clean, ye are purged through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” The truth of God shows him his own sinfulness. He seeth his face in a glass, and endeavors to remove the spots which the Word of God reveals to him. But an ungodly man hearing the Word, grows the worse, perhaps, not only openly, but in his heart worse. Oh! there are some that sit in this very place — have done so for years. I thank God they are getting very, very few now. I hope there will be none such soon. May grace grant there may not be one. But you will notice that the very truth which made them tremble once does not now; and whereas some years ago the preaching of the gospel often brought tears to their eyes and sent them on their knees, it does not now; and sins which they were fain to give up at one time, and which pricked their conscience, are now indulged in without compunction, for the same gospel which softens hardens, as the sun, which shines on wax and melts it, shines on clay and hardens it. Even the blessed ordinance of preaching — the hearing of the Word — may make some men to become yet more and more unclean. Alas! that it should be so. But see how baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both of them (for I cannot now stay long to discriminate), have been misused. Whereas these are both of them ordinances to lead men to remember precious truth — the death and burial of the Lord in the one case, and the soul’s feeding in the other case, on the precious body and blood of Jesus, and rejoicing in him as blessed spiritual meat, how is it that we have been told (and it is preached from thousands of pulpits in England) that baptism washes away sin, and absolutely regenerates the soul? And though I have been chidden for putting too strong a sense upon the word “regenerate”, I have lived to see a stronger sense put upon it by some than I put until it has become with some simply a superstitious ordinance, and nothing more, full of mischief. And as to the Lord’s Supper, they tell us that there in it a power to forgive all sin, even the most heinous. And this is not spoken now and then accidentally — a slip of tongue, but is printed and scattered all over England as true doctrine. Well, these men’s minds are impure, and, therefore, even those two precious ordinances are turned into superstition and into impurity, and I suppose it always will be so. But if the mind becomes pure, and becomes believing in Christ, it will never exalt mere bread and wine into the place of Deity, and water into the place of the divine Spirit itself. God save us from having our minds rendered so impure as to fall into superstition by simple ordinances which are full of instruction. I do not doubt that there are many that are now

depending for eternal life upon having gone to the Sacrament or Mass, and are expecting to enter heaven because they have reposed their confidence in a man who was arrogant enough to call himself the exclusive priest of God. God save us from having our understanding defiled, for it must be before it can submit to the belief of such superstition as this.

But I must pass on. I have often noticed how the Church of God itself becomes to pure minds one thing, and to impure minds another. You shall find a man a member of a Christian church, who will tell you that wherever he has gone in that church he has met with brethren full of love, full of earnestness, and he has been delighted to associate with them. I have been at the bedside of a venerable brother just now, whom nearly all of you know, and if you were to hear his opinion of the church of which he is a member he would speak of it in the most glowing terms. The reason is that he sees in his fellow-Christians very much what there is in himself. The man who is loving comes to love the brethren. The man who is chaste, pure, and zealous, attributes to others a like spirit, and believes they are pure, and they are to him so assuredly. But you shall meet with another, a carnal, worldly-minded professor, and he says, "Oh! there's no love!" He has not any. "There's no zeal" saith he. There certainly would not be if all were like himself. "Ah!" says he, "I don't see any of the apostolic living that I read of in the Scriptures now." There is no apostolic living in his own case. He didn't see it because he hasn't got it. To use an old illustration — if you send a kite or a buzzard flying over a tract of country, what will it see? Why, it will be looking out for all the dead carcasses and it will be sure to be able to tell you how much carrion there is about. But if you send a dove over that same space, it won't have an eye for it, for it has no taste for it, but it will tell you of everything that is fair and beautiful, like itself. So is it with the pure mind in the midst of God's people; it sees purity. It cannot shut its eyes to impurity, but it rejoices in the truth, and speaks of it, and speaks it as well as it can at all times with a charity that thinketh no evil. But with the impure and the unbelieving, every place is defiled, and the man tarts everything with the filth that is in his own bucket.

Now the events of providence — I will not detain you much longer, but let me observe that all the events of providence, are to some men one thing, and to some men another. Is a man with a pure mind suddenly lifted up in the world in wealth — he uses that for the poor of the Church of Christ. Is he impure then that wealth allows him to gratify his impure taste, and he sinks deeper in impurity. Does a pure man come to poverty — then his

poverty drives him nearer to God, and he seeks to make himself useful among the poorer brethren where he dwells. But if he is impure, he assumes the most grovelling tastes, and becomes the more wicked. Is a man a Christian — then health is a delight to him — to consecrate it all to his Lord. Has a sinner health — then that health shall enable him to go farther it to sin, or, at any rate, to indulge himself the more, for he will not consecrate it to his God. Anything that happens may be used two ways, and the pure shall see in every event something which he can turn to God's glory, and the impure can see in everything, a means by which he may indulge himself.

Now it is so if you mingle with the sons of men and see their sins.

We are grieved at them. But when the Christian sees sin he thinks, "This is what I should be but for the grace of God." So he praises God for his grace. "This is what I shall be," saith he, "if I am not watchful." So he becomes the more watchful, and out of the very sin of his fellow-men he extracts some reasons for greater holiness, and grows more pure because he observes the loathsomeness of impurity, and turns from it the more earnestly. But the ungodly man is carried away by the evil example; his conscience is more deadened by it, and he becomes bolder in sin in consequence of what he sees in others. I am sure you will have observed it so, that where the good man gathers grapes, another finds nothing but poisoned apples, and where the Christian turns over this mans depravity and finds in it a reason for greater holiness in his own person, the ungodly man only sees the more excuse for himself for the past, and the greater licence for himself in the future.

Take another list of things, namely, the treatment of men to us. Suppose men praise us. The Christian man says, "I must be watchful, for the praise of man is often inconsistent with the favor of God." The ungodly man says, "Everybody praises me. What a silly fellow I must be!" There is a foulness of pride which comes upon him. The man who lives near to God, if he is sneered at by the sons of men, says, "It comes upon me for God's sake; I will bear it"; but the other says he will not have any more of that, and turns aside from a path which becomes rough, even though he knows that path to be right. How often has unjust treatment driven the ungodly man to anger, and in some cases to malice, and to resolutions of revenge! To the impure an injustice makes him more impure. But see the Christian who is like his master. Every injustice makes him cry for grace to forgive, and

when yet more injustice heaped upon him, he forgives the more, and tries to heap yet more coals of fire upon the head of his enemy by doing him the greater kindness if by any means he may win his soul. So out of the worst of things the Christian extracts the best, while from the very best of things an unhallowed mind may extract the worst.

Let us close — though there are many, many illustrations that might be given of this — by saying, Here you have tonight means afforded for judging yourselves. Do you find in God's Book that which makes you angry with God? Do you find in the gospel that which makes you complaisant with yourself while you are unregenerate? Do you find in Providence that which irritates you, or which seems to excuse you in sin? Then your mind is impure, for these things are with you according to what you are. "It is dark," say you. It is your eye that is dark; the light is light and bright. "It is bitter," say you, when we bring you the honey of the gospel. is not the honey that is bitter; it is your mouth; it is your mouth that is out of order. How often ought people to recollect this when they hear a true gospel sermon! George Herbert says, "Judge not the preacher; he is thy judge." And very often when a man has condemned the sermon he had far better condemn himself. He has not agreed with it! No; if he had, it would not have been true. When sometimes we have heard some man of low life railing at us, We have said, "Thank God! Supposing that wretch had praised us, we should have known there was something amiss about us. There are public prints which, if they praised a man, you would know at once that the man deserved hanging, or something near approaching to it. Their censure is the only homage, they can give to that which is right. So when any soul kicks against Christ, the precious blood of Christ, the gospel of God, the purity of God, do we condemn God because this man condemns him? Nay, but God is glorified by the unrighteous nature of this man rebelling against him. If God were other than he is, an unrighteous man might love him, but, being hated and despised, and forgotten of ungodly men, it does but prove that God is not such as they are, but infinitely superior to them. Let us judge ourselves, then, by this.

But, provided we are obliged to come to the conclusion that our minds are not pure, we need not end there, for there are means by which they may be made so. Glory be to God, if my mind and conscience are defiled, they need not always be so. There is cleansing. I cannot effect it for myself, nor can any outward forms do it.

*“No outward form can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within”*

But God has set forth Christ to be a Savior, and he shall save his people from their sins, from their sinfulness too, and whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus, that is, trusteth in him, there is already in him the beginning of purity. God the Holy Spirit will give him more and more of the likeness of Christ, for he that believeth shall be saved from sin, from indwelling sin, from all sin, from the power as well as from the guilt of it; faith will cleanse him, applying to him the precious blood and the water which flows from the side of Christ; faith will, by the Holy Spirit's power, become a cleansing as well as a saving grace. God grant it to us, and may we all be among the pure, unto whom all things shall be pure. We ask it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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“Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” — Titus 1:15.

I SHALL not profess this evening to enter into a full exposition of this text, for there are many deep things in it, and many intricate questions are suggested by it. I shall only make some observations upon it intended to be of practical service.

This text has often been misused — made to mean what was never in the Apostle’s mind. He does not mean that a wrong thing becomes right to a pure-minded man; that is the very opposite of what he does mean. He means that when men’s minds are pure, other matters become pure to them, but when their minds are impure then they use these things for impurity. We shall endeavor to pick out the meaning as we go along, but it by no means means that I may pretend that I am of pure mind, and that that, therefore, sin make impurity itself pure. That would be to prove, if I found any pleasure: in impurity, that my mind was impure. The true solution of the conduct of a man who professes to be pure in mind, and yet commits himself to an unholy course of life, is not that the man makes that unholy life pure but that the fact that he falls into unholy living proves that his mind is not pure at all.

Our text has in it to-night two kinds of men — the pure and the defiled and unbelieving; and secondly, it has two kinds of effects produced upon these men by outward things: to the one all things are pure; to the other there is nothing pure. First, let us talk about these: —

I. TWO KINDS OF MEN.

First, the pure — where shall we find them? Where are they born? We answer, no men are born so. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No! not one. As our parents have sinned, we, their children, are born with tendencies to sin; we are impure even from the birth. There are none pure but those who are made so by a second creation. The first time they are marred upon the wheel. They must go under the Creator's hand a second time; they must feed the power of the purifying Spirit of God creating them anew, before they can be called pure at all. And these are not absolutely pure. Even in those who are entitled to be called "pure in heart," there remains impurity. If any man shall question that, let him remember the first Epistle of John, the first chapter, at the eighth verse: — "If any man say he heath no sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him." There is sin in the best of men, and if they do not perceive it, it must be because they are blinded with a foolish self-conceit, for in the purest heart there still remains connected with it the old nature and the impurity inherited from the first Adam. This makes life a perpetual conflict until life's close. Still, we name men by their predominant characteristics. The partial impurity of a good man does not entitle him to be called impure. If the master-principle within him, the reigning principle, be purity, he is a pure man. A man may once in his life have spoken an untruth; he may have been surprised into saying that is a thing which is not; but if the general tenour of his life be stern integrity, we do not, therefore, condemn him and brand him as a liar, otherwise where were the men living upon earth who would be worthy of a name implying praise? The godly are pure — have been made pure by regeneration, and they are pure, though not absolutely so. They are pure in their affections. They love not that which is unchaste, unhallowed, untruthful, unlawful before God. Their soul loves that which God approves; they seek after that which Cod himself commands. If they do not always keep God's statutes, yet they love them; and if they do not always walk in his ways without slipping, yet they lose his ways and desire to walk in them without a single turning aside to the right hand or to the left. The set of the current of their soul is towards purity. They mourn over those currents and eddies into which they are turned by temptation. They are the

last men to excuse them; the rush and current of their soul, their deepest and truest life, is that they may be cleansed from all false ways and from sin. And as they are pure in their affections, they become pure in their actions. They, if they be, indeed, the people of God, cannot run with the multitude to do evil. The swine may find its pleasure in the mire, but God's sheep love cleanly pastures. The raven may feed upon its garbage and be at home there, but not so the dove, — it likes the clean garner and the clean roosting-place. The child of God shuns not only the darker sins which defile so many, but even those which others think but a trifle; and what some would permit and rejoice in, the Christian mourns, abhors, laments, and avoids. The actions of the Christian — I do not claim perfection for them, but I do claim that the true Christian strives after perfection in his actions, that he seeks after it, aye! and that, as a rule, he comes nearer to it than his enemies would allow, or than even his own reflections, when he is examining himself, would permit him to believe. God has a people who walk uprightly still in the world. There are still some that are as pillars in the house of God upon whom he has written the name of our God; some who have not defiled their garments who shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy made, so by his grace. And these men being thus pure in their affections and in their actions are most of all pure in their desires. Their greatest desire is towards purity. I am sure I speak the language of every renewed heart when I say that if the Lord were to appear by night unto, you, and say to you, as he did try Solomon "What shall I give thee?" there is no renewed heart here that would say, "Lord, give me riches!" there is no one that would say, "Give me health!" We may desire both of these things in a secondary degree, but our main desire would be this, "Lord, give me that holy character which would please thee and bring honor to the religion I profess." Holiness, holiness, holiness — it is a thing which every renewed heart longs after beyond everything else. I would have perfect orthodoxy in my head if I could, but I know even if I had that, an unhallowed life would render it of little service to me; but could I have the clean heart, other things would come with it, and from it, for the pure in heart shall see God; and if they see God, what is there else that he shall not see, for the eye which has glanced on God himself will be able to perceive the difference between truth and error, and will not be liable to be deceived. The Christian is pure in his desires. Now if it be so, that in his affections within, and his actions without, and in the desires of his entire nature, he would be pure, he is entitled to this name, and God has given it to him.

But there are some, on the other hand, who are defied and unbelieving. These two things appear to go together. Now it was denied some time since that every unbeliever is unclean in his life, and I think there is some ground in the denial. I should not like to stand here and say that I believe every infidel, every rejector of the religion of Christ is a man unfit for the social circle, and a sinner against the laws of decency. I do not believe it. Honestly, I must say that there are some men who have rejected the gospel — I grieve that they have — have denied God, and yet somehow they have been a vast deal better than their creed, and they have managed to walk in a consistency of moral conduct towards man which has almost been worthy to be set up as an example to Christians. I believe such cases are not the rule, and that candor, when it has made the admission which I have made, is compelled to add that this is an extraordinary thing, and cannot have been produced by the creed, for the creed itself of the godless is necessarily logically and properly the creed of the unbelieving, producing sin. Why should they obey a law if they do not believe in a law-giver, or, if they only believe in a law-giver who will not punish, and who cannot reward? When men have denied God, they have surely given up the sanction which should lead them to anything like purity, and if they live as most of them do live, it cannot be said that they are inconsistent with their creed.

Yet, indeed, as a rule, and as a rule without exception — having said what I have said (and I do not contradict myself) — as a rule without an exception, the unbelieving heart is a deviled heart for all that. For what did we admit? That the man who rejects his God is not, therefore, a thief. Has he not robbed God? What did we say? That the man who rejects Christ is not, therefore, licentious. Is that purity which rejects perfection? Is that heart pure that cannot see loveliness in the character and the person of the Redeemer? What did we admit? That the unbeliever is not seditious. Yet is he a loyal subject of God who denies the Godhead, who rails against God, and who lives from day to day as if there were no God at all? Men, if they were called sinners, would not shudder at the word; they admit it. Call them criminals, and at once they are angry and defend themselves — the reason being, I suppose, that with the mass of mankind it seems a trifle to offend against God, but a very serious thing to have offended against man. And here is the whole stress of the matter; the defilement of the unbeliever lies always God-ward, even when it is not apparent man-ward, and when the unbeliever, somehow or other, keeps his garments clean as before his fellow-men, yet as before his God what is he? He is one who has cast off

all obligations to his Maker, who denies all responsibilities to his King, who receives bounties from Jehovah's hand, but is not grateful, and will not even acknowledge that the mercies come from that hand at all; who lives in habitual contempt of the adorable — destitute of all admiration for the infinitely glorious — who does what angels must shudder to think of — lives without love to Christ, without trust in the promises of God. There is a defilement there, which, I venture to say, is even greater, if looked at in a right light, than any form of defilement which becomes perceptible by men as between themselves.

But notice in this text that it seems to correct a good deal of the mental philosophy we have heard of. For instance, I have heard it asserted that conscience is God's vicegerent among men. I have often heard expressions from the pulpit, and read them in books, which fed me to infer that every fallen man had got not only something good in him, but some strong principle almost akin to the Divine. I believe in the fall of man, and I believe that to be total, and that conscience — is a power which has fallen with all the remit, and that there does not exist in the world a pure conscience, except so far as God has purified it by the work of his Spirit. Conscience itself is a defiled thing; and so far from being a representative of God, I could not think for a moment of comparing it with that ever-blessed and pure being. The fact is that conscience, although it must be to man practically his guide, is not a safe one ever, for the true guide of every man is the Bible, the revealed will of God. That is true, and pure, and right, but my conscience may often be a dark conscience, an ignorant conscience, a perverted conscience, and my business is not to follow my conscience as I find it, but to go to God and ask him to enlighten my conscience, and guide it. Neither is it an excuse for a man for doing wrong when he says he was conscientious in doing it. It is an excuse as far as men are concerned, but not before God. God's law is not of variable quantity or quality depending upon the quantity or quality of the conscience; it is fixed and definite. Just as if a man were to take prussic acid believing that it would benefit him — he would die, despite his conscience; or as if a person were to walk northward, expecting to reach his home in the south, he would not do anything of the kind; or as if a man were to go to sea in a leaky vessel, and a storm came on, his conscience would not save him — so it is with you; if you are astray, you are astray. Your business was to have waited upon God to have had that conscience corrected; your business was to have laid that conscience at the foot of the cross, and ask the Master to

purify it — to have waited upon the Holy Spirit for his teaching, and consulted the infallible oracles of God's book, to know what was the will of the Most High. It is not, therefore, for every man to be crying up his conscience. I believe in conscience by all means among men, but there is none perfect before God. There conscience should be bowed to God's law, to God's gospel, to believe his teachings, and to obey his precepts. Conscience no more than any other power, is irresponsible. It is under law in him. He created man, and put the conscience within him, which conscience has been despoiled and injured by the Fall. Now there are men in the world with defiled understandings and defiled consciences. They cannot judge rightly; their understanding is defied. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. "A man cannot do that," says one. He does do it. There are thousands in this world who deliberately judge amiss, and who, when they sit down even to think of a question (which, alas! we cannot often bring them to do), naturally come to a wrong conclusion because the scales which they weigh are out of gear. The measure which they use is not the measure of the sanctuary. Their understanding is defiled. And even when they bring their moral sense to bear upon some question, they are inevitably mistaken because their conscience itself has become defiled also. A sad state for men to be in, but into this state each man, according to his degree, is brought, until his will turneth unto God, and is rectified by the great Spirit. We are all impure — impure in every part. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint"; we are all fallen. In manhood's vast temple there stands not a solitary pillar that is quite erect. Here and there, there are masses that seem as though they stood as once they were, to let us know how grand a thing human nature might have been; but there is enough upon the whole to let us see that it is all in ruin, and in such ruin that unless he who built it at the first shall put forth his omnipotent power and use again the old fiat which created the world, it will still be a ruin and desolation — a den of all manner of unclean things. Thus have I spoken upon the two sorts of men, the pure and the defiled. But now, secondly, here is the main point that we have to speak of: —

II. THE TWO AFFECTS PRODUCED ON THESE TWO KINDS OF MEN.

To those who are pure all things are pure; to those who are impure and unbelieving, everything becomes impure. Only a few things by way of specimen.

First, let us think of the attributes of God. To the believer in Christ, whose heart is pure, how glorious is God! And every time we think of him, adore him, and have fellowship with him, we grow purer for it. The true believer cannot think of God and draw nearer to him without becoming more like his God. But look at the unbeliever. Oft-times his very thoughts of God have been themselves defiled by the defilement of his understanding, irritating him, filling him with wrath and abhorrence. He does not delight in the holiness of God; he says it is severity. "How can a man be happy with such laws to bind him?" He does not delight in the wisdom of God in providence; he thinks things are ordered very much amiss, seeing they do not all conduce to his pleasure in the ways of sin. And, especially, if you set before him God's mercy, that most blessed of all attributes which, to the believer, is purifying to the last degree, you will find the unbeliever saying, "God is Merciful," and making that an excuse for his continuing in sin. How sad it is that when we preach the gospel, and give the invitations of infinite mercy, there are many who will say, "Ah! then, I can turn to God just when I like, and he is very gracious, and he will forgive me; therefore, I will continue in my rebellion against him." And when we have been pathetic, and our soul has poured over from our eyes as we have spoken of those saved at the eleventh hour, while there have been some minds that have been led to Christ thereby, there are some who have drawn the horrible inference that they, too, might wait until the eleventh hour, and venture their eternal interests upon the mercy of God at the last. Brethren. I believe you cannot preach of God without some men making mischief of it, even of just so simple a truth as his mercy. But when you come to his sovereignty — a deep that can never be fathomed — how many have been drowned in it! I believe we ought to speak about it. I am not of those who say we should be silent upon it, but how many have been drowned in those deeps, wilfully, because they leave said, "Who hath resisted his will? Why doth he find fault? If it is to be, it is to be. If it will be, it will be." They have even dared to make God the author of their sin, and drawn an apology for their unrighteousness from the thrice holy King of Kings. To the pure in heart all things are so pure that we ourselves sink into nothing in humility and penitence before him; but to the ungodly, even God himself becomes an argument for continuance in sin.

Now take another. It is so with God, but it is equally so with the gospel. The doctrines of the gospel are to the believer very pure. There is not one of them but what has a practical effect upon his life. I take the doctrine of

election. Then if he hath chosen us, he has chosen us to be a peculiar people zealous of good works, and special love we feel binds us to special service. We often sing: —

*“Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn
Chosen of him ere time began,
We choose him in return.”*

So with the doctrine of redemption that he hath redeemed us by his precious blood. The inference from it is, “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his. “Take the sweet doctrine of final perseverance, “The righteous shall hold on his way.” Now the godly man feels that he must so live as to prove that he is a godly man by persevering, and he looks for daily grace to hold him on, and to keep him to the end. He blesses that infinite affection that does not turn aside from him, and he feels drawn to it by constant watchfulness. I might mention all the doctrines, but every Christian will admit at once that he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself. But take the effect of these truths upon the unbelieving and the impure. Why, you know how they will pervert election. How often men have made that a coverlet for the grossest licentiousness. As for the redeeming blood, alas! how many have made the cross, which is the tree of life, to be the tree of death to them! It has become a savor of death unto death to them. We have known some whose damnation is just — who have said, “We are the children of God, and we will live as we like,” and they have, therefore, given themselves over to uncleanness. Surely of all blasphemers, they must bear the palm; they stand among the worst. But when men thus turn the gospel into licentiousness, are we to say it is the gospel’s fault? Are we to keep back some of these doctrines? By no means, for “unto the pure all things are pure.” Unto the unclean and unbelieving, these holy things will always be impure. You might as, well forbid the sun to shine because when his beams fall upon a dunghill, it brings forth unwholesome reeking. Yes, but that same sun, when it falls upon the flowers, makes them shed their aromatic perfume on every hand. It is doing incalculable good. It is not the sun, but the dunghill that must be blamed. And when the truth is perverted, you must not blame the truth, but blame the unclean, unbelieving heart that turns it into sin.

Now the like thing is true of the ordinances of the gospel, and dreadfully true here too. When you come to the ordinances of the gospel, such, for

instance, as the preaching of the Word — the true believer every time he hears the Word is purged by the Word. “Now ye are clean, ye are purged through the Word which I have spoken unto you.” The truth of God shows him his own sinfulness. He seeth his face in a glass, and endeavors to remove the spots which the Word of God reveals to him. But an ungodly man hearing the Word, grows the worse, perhaps, not only openly, but in his heart worse. Oh! there are some that sit in this very place — have done so for years. I thank God they are getting very, very few now. I hope there will be none such soon. May grace grant there may not be one. But you will notice that the very truth which made them tremble once does not now; and whereas some years ago the preaching of the gospel often brought tears to their eyes and sent them on their knees, it does not now; and sins which they were fain to give up at one time, and which pricked their conscience, are now indulged in without compunction, for the same gospel which softens hardens, as the sun, which shines on wax and melts it, shines on clay and hardens it. Even the blessed ordinance of preaching — the hearing of the Word — may make some men to become yet more and more unclean. Alas! that it should be so. But see how baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both of them (for I cannot now stay long to discriminate), have been misused. Whereas these are both of them ordinances to lead men to remember precious truth — the death and burial of the Lord in the one case, and the soul’s feeding in the other case, on the precious body and blood of Jesus, and rejoicing in him as blessed spiritual meat, how is it that we have been told (and it is preached from thousands of pulpits in England) that baptism washes away sin, and absolutely regenerates the soul? And though I have been chidden for putting too strong a sense upon the word “regenerate”, I have lived to see a stronger sense put upon it by some than I put until it has become with some simply a superstitious ordinance, and nothing more, full of mischief. And as to the Lord’s Supper, they tell us that there in it a power to forgive all sin, even the most heinous. And this is not spoken now and then accidentally — a slip of tongue, but is printed and scattered all over England as true doctrine. Well, these men’s minds are impure, and, therefore, even those two precious ordinances are turned into superstition and into impurity, and I suppose it always will be so. But if the mind becomes pure, and becomes believing in Christ, it will never exalt mere bread and wine into the place of Deity, and water into the place of the divine Spirit itself. God save us from having our minds rendered so impure as to fall into superstition by simple ordinances which are full of instruction. I do not doubt that there are many that are now

depending for eternal life upon having gone to the Sacrament or Mass, and are expecting to enter heaven because they have reposed their confidence in a man who was arrogant enough to call himself the exclusive priest of God. God save us from having our understanding defiled, for it must be before it can submit to the belief of such superstition as this.

But I must pass on. I have often noticed how the Church of God itself becomes to pure minds one thing, and to impure minds another. You shall find a man a member of a Christian church, who will tell you that wherever he has gone in that church he has met with brethren full of love, full of earnestness, and he has been delighted to associate with them. I have been at the bedside of a venerable brother just now, whom nearly all of you know, and if you were to hear his opinion of the church of which he is a member he would speak of it in the most glowing terms. The reason is that he sees in his fellow-Christians very much what there is in himself. The man who is loving comes to love the brethren. The man who is chaste, pure, and zealous, attributes to others a like spirit, and believes they are pure, and they are to him so assuredly. But you shall meet with another, a carnal, worldly-minded professor, and he says, "Oh! there's no love!" He has not any. "There's no zeal" saith he. There certainly would not be if all were like himself. "Ah!" says he, "I don't see any of the apostolic living that I read of in the Scriptures now." There is no apostolic living in his own case. He didn't see it because he hasn't got it. To use an old illustration — if you send a kite or a buzzard flying over a tract of country, what will it see? Why, it will be looking out for all the dead carcasses and it will be sure to be able to tell you how much carrion there is about. But if you send a dove over that same space, it won't have an eye for it, for it has no taste for it, but it will tell you of everything that is fair and beautiful, like itself. So is it with the pure mind in the midst of God's people; it sees purity. It cannot shut its eyes to impurity, but it rejoices in the truth, and speaks of it, and speaks it as well as it can at all times with a charity that thinketh no evil. But with the impure and the unbelieving, every place is defiled, and the man tarts everything with the filth that is in his own bucket.

Now the events of providence — I will not detain you much longer, but let me observe that all the events of providence, are to some men one thing, and to some men another. Is a man with a pure mind suddenly lifted up in the world in wealth — he uses that for the poor of the Church of Christ. Is he impure then that wealth allows him to gratify his impure taste, and he sinks deeper in impurity. Does a pure man come to poverty — then his

poverty drives him nearer to God, and he seeks to make himself useful among the poorer brethren where he dwells. But if he is impure, he assumes the most grovelling tastes, and becomes the more wicked. Is a man a Christian — then health is a delight to him — to consecrate it all to his Lord. Has a sinner health — then that health shall enable him to go farther it to sin, or, at any rate, to indulge himself the more, for he will not consecrate it to his God. Anything that happens may be used two ways, and the pure shall see in every event something which he can turn to God's glory, and the impure can see in everything, a means by which he may indulge himself.

Now it is so if you mingle with the sons of men and see their sins.

We are grieved at them. But when the Christian sees sin he thinks, "This is what I should be but for the grace of God." So he praises God for his grace. "This is what I shall be," saith he, "if I am not watchful." So he becomes the more watchful, and out of the very sin of his fellow-men he extracts some reasons for greater holiness, and grows more pure because he observes the loathsomeness of impurity, and turns from it the more earnestly. But the ungodly man is carried away by the evil example; his conscience is more deadened by it, and he becomes bolder in sin in consequence of what he sees in others. I am sure you will have observed it so, that where the good man gathers grapes, another finds nothing but poisoned apples, and where the Christian turns over this mans depravity and finds in it a reason for greater holiness in his own person, the ungodly man only sees the more excuse for himself for the past, and the greater licence for himself in the future.

Take another list of things, namely, the treatment of men to us. Suppose men praise us. The Christian man says, "I must be watchful, for the praise of man is often inconsistent with the favor of God." The ungodly man says, "Everybody praises me. What a silly fellow I must be!" There is a foulness of pride which comes upon him. The man who lives near to God, if he is sneered at by the sons of men, says, "It comes upon me for God's sake; I will bear it"; but the other says he will not have any more of that, and turns aside from a path which becomes rough, even though he knows that path to be right. How often has unjust treatment driven the ungodly man to anger, and in some cases to malice, and to resolutions of revenge! To the impure an injustice makes him more impure. But see the Christian who is like his master. Every injustice makes him cry for grace to forgive, and

when yet more injustice heaped upon him, he forgives the more, and tries to heap yet more coals of fire upon the head of his enemy by doing him the greater kindness if by any means he may win his soul. So out of the worst of things the Christian extracts the best, while from the very best of things an unhallowed mind may extract the worst.

Let us close — though there are many, many illustrations that might be given of this — by saying, Here you have tonight means afforded for judging yourselves. Do you find in God's Book that which makes you angry with God? Do you find in the gospel that which makes you complaisant with yourself while you are unregenerate? Do you find in Providence that which irritates you, or which seems to excuse you in sin? Then your mind is impure, for these things are with you according to what you are. "It is dark," say you. It is your eye that is dark; the light is light and bright. "It is bitter," say you, when we bring you the honey of the gospel. is not the honey that is bitter; it is your mouth; it is your mouth that is out of order. How often ought people to recollect this when they hear a true gospel sermon! George Herbert says, "Judge not the preacher; he is thy judge." And very often when a man has condemned the sermon he had far better condemn himself. He has not agreed with it! No; if he had, it would not have been true. When sometimes we have heard some man of low life railing at us, We have said, "Thank God! Supposing that wretch had praised us, we should have known there was something amiss about us. There are public prints which, if they praised a man, you would know at once that the man deserved hanging, or something near approaching to it. Their censure is the only homage, they can give to that which is right. So when any soul kicks against Christ, the precious blood of Christ, the gospel of God, the purity of God, do we condemn God because this man condemns him? Nay, but God is glorified by the unrighteous nature of this man rebelling against him. If God were other than he is, an unrighteous man might love him, but, being hated and despised, and forgotten of ungodly men, it does but prove that God is not such as they are, but infinitely superior to them. Let us judge ourselves, then, by this.

But, provided we are obliged to come to the conclusion that our minds are not pure, we need not end there, for there are means by which they may be made so. Glory be to God, if my mind and conscience are defiled, they need not always be so. There is cleansing. I cannot effect it for myself, nor can any outward forms do it.

*“No outward form can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within”*

But God has set forth Christ to be a Savior, and he shall save his people from their sins, from their sinfulness too, and whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus, that is, trusteth in him, there is already in him the beginning of purity. God the Holy Spirit will give him more and more of the likeness of Christ, for he that believeth shall be saved from sin, from indwelling sin, from all sin, from the power as well as from the guilt of it; faith will cleanse him, applying to him the precious blood and the water which flows from the side of Christ; faith will, by the Holy Spirit's power, become a cleansing as well as a saving grace. God grant it to us, and may we all be among the pure, unto whom all things shall be pure. We ask it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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“And he shall be for a sanctuary.” Isaiah 8:14.

MANY of the Rabbis, and I think with good reason, refer this to the Messias. We refer it to Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, the Son of God who is the Messias of God to our souls. We are, no doubt, justified in referring it to our Lord Jesus Christ, because Peter, speaking by the Holy Ghost, uses the next part of the verse in reference to him. He declares that it was written that Jesus should be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. If, then, the latter part of the verse be by divine authority interpreted as belonging to Christ, we may be pretty sure that the, former part of the verse requires the same construction.

So then, as a subject for our present meditation, we take the fact that Jesus Christ shall be for a sanctuary. He shall be for a sanctuary in three respects, upon each of which we shall speak with all possible simplicity. First, Jesus shall be for a sanctuary: —

I. IN WHICH WE, AS POOR GUILTY SINNERS, SHALL FIND A SHELTER.

A sanctuary was a place where a criminal who dared not appear before the tribunals of his country found a shelter. Such sanctuaries once abounded in England. Certain shrines which were considered sacred had this privilege or this curse — I do not know which it was — accorded to them, that whenever a criminal had fled to them he was beyond the arm of justice. There was such a sanctuary in Westminster and another not far from this Tabernacle; but they were ultimately abolished. Among the Jews the privilege of the sanctuary was kept in proper check, yet it was not forbidden. Certain cities were set apart to which man-slayers, who had

accidentally slain anyone, might flee for security. We find also that amongst the Jews some, hoped to find shelter in the precincts of the Temple. Joab went to the altar, and laid hold upon the horns, and thought himself secure, though when Solomon sent and bade him come without, he said, “Nay, but I will die here,” so that the altar in those days was not a sanctuary. It was not until later times that it was unjustifiable to smite men when they had entered into holy places, and hence holy places and sanctuaries became places of refuge.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a place of secure refuge for every soul that flies to him. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus he is safe, and continuing to believe he remains safe in life, safe in death, safe in judgment, safe in eternity. The passing out of self-righteousness into confidence in Christ is the act that saves the soul. When thy faith doth lay its hand upon the dear head of the Redeemer, what if I say upon the horns of the altar of his sacrifice, then is thy soul secure and nothing can destroy it.

Let us explain this mystery. Why is it that believing in Jesus makes the soul safe? It is because when God was angry with men and must needs smite men for their sins, Jesus interposed. The blows that ought to have fallen upon men fell upon the Savior. The debt which was due from the multitude of sinners to the great God, Jesus paid.

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

It will be manifest to you all that if Jesus Christ suffered thus in our stead, we shall not be called on to suffer the penalty he discharged. If Jesus paid our debts, they are cancelled, and we are in debt no longer. If Jesus Christ became our substitute and stood for us before God, then our warfare is accomplished, and henceforth the law can exact nothing at our hands. Do you ask for whom did Jesus Christ thus shed his blood as a substitute, a representative? We answer, for as many as believe on his name. “For God so loved the world” — now, mark, here is the gauge, this is the test; I have heard people dwell on that word “so” as if it were something boundless and unqualified, without measure or limitation; but listen to the passage “For God so loved the world” — so much and no more — “that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The work of Christ thus begins and ends with “Whosoever believeth on him.” If you believe dying as you are, the death of Christ has nothing to do with you, except it be to plunge you into yet

deeper despair. It is only to the man that believeth that the blood is applied. No other soul under heaven has any share in the merit of that glorious sacrifice, or shall be accepted thereby, but the men who believeth. But for every soul that believeth in him, Jesus Christ has borne all the punishment that soul deserved to have borne. God cannot in justice punish that man, for he has punished Christ instead of him. For every soul that believeth, Christ has drank the cup of wrath to the very dregs. There is not a drop left in that bowl for anyone that believeth on Christ, for Christ has drained it. By Jesus the debts have all been discharged; he has not left one of them in the book of God's record. Every soul that believeth is secure before the courts of heaven, because Jesus stood for him. My main enquiry here must be, "Dost thou believe in Jesus?" I will put it in other words. To believe is to trust. Dost thou trust in Jesus? Dost thou rely upon him? If so, then Jesus stood for thee.

Now do you see how Jesus Christ becomes a sanctuary? Just in this way. Because I fear God's anger for my sin, by faith I put myself beneath the cross of Christ. There God's anger fell upon the innocent victim. Divine justice was clear when it allowed the Holy One to be condemned and put to death. But that same justice demands a full release for those on whose behalf he mediated. Their faith furnishes the evidence of their freedom. If God has punished Christ for my sin, he will not also punish me for it. If Christ has paid my debt, then paid it is; nor will God, the Judge of all, bring the handwriting of ordinances which was once against me, to indict me for charges that have been fully satisfied. Where is common equity if the Substitute should suffer, and then the man for whom the Substitute suffered should suffer again? Thus justice itself puts a canopy over the head of the ransomed sinner. When the fiery sleet of God's wrath descends he smiles, because he has found a retreat, a sanctuary. The fury of the storm spent itself upon the great Substitute. He bore it all, and the sinner escaped. Oh! what a blessed truth! He who has never realised it for himself has never known the gospel. I care not how high your professions, nor how great your boastings, nor to what church you belong, if you have not come to rest in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, you do not know the first letter of the gospel alphabet. May the Lord, the Holy Spirit teach you, for this is the gospel of the grace of God which we declare unto you, knowing that we shall have to answer for our preaching at the last assize!

Mark, the Lord Jesus Christ in this way becomes a sanctuary to us from all our deadly fears. Who among us is not sometimes disturbed with the

recollection of his past life? Surely it has not been as it ought to have been with us. What black spots does our memory conjure up? How much of our time has run to waste! Were you called to die now — and oh! how soon the summons will come; every week takes some of you away — in the solemn hour of death, would not your past life bring up dismal fears, deep regrets, and dark forebodings? What, then, would you do? Why, what should you do but — as you have done before — fall back upon this great truth that Jesus died for him that believeth, and, trusting in him, you would say: —

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Be thou my strength, my righteousness,
My Savior and my All.”*

So might you lean your head back upon your pillow, and feel it sweet to die with confidence in Christ. Thus, beloved, from God’s wrath and from our deadly fears, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a sanctuary to those who trust him.

A sanctuary he is likewise from all our cares. From anxiety and disquietude, who among us is exempt? In the midst of trials and troubles, be they in mind, body, or estate, from pain, poverty, or pressure of any kind, is it not a blessed thing to say: —

*“His way was much rougher and darker than mine
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”*

The remembrance of what he endured for you becomes a sanctuary from dejection and despair. The Friend you trust will prove true. He will treat you tenderly, to whatever cause you trace your hardships.

Permit me, to ask each and every one of you individually — Have you ever fled to this sanctuary? Can you answer “Yes.” Then happy are you. Do go and tell others about it. Let not your tongue be silent. Let others know that there is a covert from the tempest, and a shelter from the rough wind; and that you have found and prayed it. Be not afraid to speak. There is more reason to fear silence than speech with such a safeguard from sins, and snares, and sorrows. Publish it to the worst and vilest, if you meet with them; let your kinsfolk and acquaintances know that there is a safe sanctuary in Christ, and that you have tested its virtues and its validity. The weight of your personal testimony may be blessed by God’s Spirit to their

conversion; at any rate, your duty to your fellow-creatures and your devotion to your heavenly Benefactor demand this grateful service. Or haply you may never have resorted to this sanctuary. Then be sure that your peril is fearful and your doom is imminent. Out of Christ there is no hope. He that believeth not on him is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God. At this present moment — and who can tell how critical the present moment may be! — the wrath of God abideth on you. It rests on you, moral though you may be as a citizen; virtuous though you may be as a young man; or pure and affectionate as a young woman, seeing you have not believed. The one thing needful is wanting. No plea you can offer is valid. You have put yourselves out of court. The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God. That is the category in which you place yourselves. You have forgotten God; you have neglected Christ; you have never reached a resting-place.

Oh! listen. Do you not long for an asylum, a sanctuary, a safe retreat? Are you anxious to reach it? You may easily find it, as you run eagerly, you will read clearly. If you are really humbled and brought to know your want of a Savior, he is easy of access. Just give up all your doings, and cast yourselves into his arms. I have used this illustration before, but it will answer any purpose again. There is a boy in a burning house. He is clinging yonder to a window-sill; if he falls to the ground, he will be dashed to pieces. But a strong man standing underneath cries, “Boy, drop; I will catch you”; his hands let go and he falls safely into the arms that are stretched out to rescue him. That letting go is an act of faith, and he is saved thereby. Such faith I would have you now exercise; let go everything you have been clinging to; just drop into the Savior’s arms; and on his sacred bosom you shall find rest. Depend on him, and on him alone. ‘Tis all that it asked of you. Will you tell me that you are not fit? Did you ever hear of fitness in connection with a sanctuary? Why, the worst of thieves, and even murderers, were accustomed to fly to the sanctuary. So, however vile you may be, Christ sets the sanctuary of his atonement wide open before you, that you may go to it and find shelter.

*“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you,
‘Tis his Spirit’s rising beam.”*

Right joyful should I be if, by the Holy Spirit's power, I might persuade some of you to flee to Jesus, and depend alone upon him. This would be the happiest day of your lives, the beginning of a new life. Well do I recollect when I looked to my Lord and Master, and found salvation in him. Never can I forget the happy day when Jesus took my sins away. Most affectionately and earnestly do I entreat you to look to him; so shall your eyes be enlightened. Depend on a Crucified Savior, and you shall find peace and comfort to your souls. Secondly, Jesus Christ is a Sanctuary in the sense of: —

II. A PLACE OF WORSHIP.

We often hear people talk nowadays of exclusively holy places. They will sometimes call some edifice, be it a parish church or a private chapel, a sanctuary. I take it that this is a mistaken use of the word if used exclusively. No one place is a bit more sacred than another. Those who would draw near to the Lord should remember that: —

*“Wherever we seek him, he is found,
And every place in hallowed ground.”*

It is nothing but a relic of Judaism, or a result of Roman Catholic superstition, to suppose that there are specially holy places constructed of bricks and mortar, or consecrated stones. Your bedroom, where you bow the knee, may be as near the gate of heaven as the grand cathedral along whose vaulted roofs the music of song has resounded for centuries. Jesus Christ, however, is a sanctuary. There is the holy place of his people's worship. Treasure that up. You may worship God anywhere if you get with Christ, but if you forget Christ, you can worship nowhere. “No man cometh unto the Father but by me,” saith Christ. You can never have an acceptable worship of the Most High except through Jesus Christ. I will take you for a moment into that which was called the holy place under the old Jewish law, the holy of holiest. What was there there? Only two things which could be seen. The one was the golden censer, and the other was the mercy-seat, and both of these things were instructive. Now, beloved, when you go to the Lord to worship, the first thing you want is somebody to render your worship acceptable. See there, in the person of your Lord Jesus Christ, a golden censor, representing the sweet merit of his prevalent intercession by which you also are accepted. When the High Priest went into the holy place, he filled this golden censer and waved it to and fro till the sweet perfumed smoke went up before the mercy-seat. That is just

what Jesus does in heaven for us. We burn the incense here below, and the sweet perfume of his merit continually ascends before the throne of the Most High and Holy God, and beneath the cloud of the smoke we worship. Jesus becomes a sanctuary for us, and you can never worship God aright till you feel that Jesus merits go with your worship. If your prayers are perfumed with the incense of your own merits, and you think they will be acceptable, you know not what you are doing, but if you see that golden censer, and look to God through the smoke of Jesus merits, then do you really worship, and Christ thus becomes to you a sanctuary.

The other article of furniture in the holy of holies was the mercy-seat — a square casket upon which were set cherubim with outstretched wings. It was before this mercy-seat, perhaps, that all prayer had to be offered. There was only one place where Israel's gifts could really come up before God, and that was before the mercy-seat. Now, beloved, when we go to God we cannot go directly to him; we must go to the mercy-seat first. "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," said Luther, and he was quite right. We may not come unto God except through Jesus Christ. We look towards God in the person of his dear Son. God in the son of Mary; God in the man of Nazareth; God in the bleeding sufferer of Calvary — we look there, and we look through Jesus Christ up to the unseen, but ever-glorious Father, and with his merits before us, with his precious blood before our mind's eye, we come to God through Jesus Christ, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

But, beloved, I am afraid that many Sundays, and many weekdays too, we try to worship God without Christ. It will never do; it cannot succeed. If ever you come out of your closet without the sense of having put the blood before God, you have had a lost season of retirement. If you ever go out of this Tabernacle feeling that in all the worship there has been no sense of Christ's presence, no thoughts of his precious blood, that worship has been worthless, the season has been wasted. Without the incense of his merit, without the mercy-seat of his substitutionary sacrifice, there is no sanctuary, there is no worship, there is no drawing near to God.

Inside the mercy-seat, if you had been permitted to open the lid and to look in, you would have seen three things. First, you would have seen a golden pot of manna. Now communion is one of the sweetest portions of worship. Communion is set forth in Scripture by eating bread with one another. So the eating of manna with God is typical of communion, but we get no

manna unless it comes out of the golden pot of Christ. I find no manna, except it be concealed beneath the mercy-seat — no eating with God unless we come through Jesus Christ. Do not, I beseech you, attempt to commune with God apart from a precious sense of a crucified Savior. It is at the cross' foot that Jacob's ladder stands, the top whereof is in heaven. If you would see a covenant God, you must get the telescope of faith and stand at the foot of the cross and look, for you shall see God nowhere but in Jesus. You shall feed upon heavenly manna nowhere but as you feed upon Christ.

Another mode of worship is that of service; for to work for God is the best of service. Inside the ark there was Aaron's rod that budded. What was that? It was Aaron's symbol of work when he was called to work for God. Do you want to know whether you are called to work for God? Look for your Aaron's rod in Christ. You will never have a rod that buds if you look askance from the Lord to the visible Church. The Church may call you when you have no divine vocation. There are thousands of priests who have had bishops' hands upon their hands, who are neither God's ministers nor truly called to minister among men. But if you see your calling in Christ, if you get Aaron's rod that budded, full of life and vigor, the Spirit of God will maintain you in your work. In your worship, then, and in your service, Christ must be your sanctuary.

One other thing was in the ark, and that was the tables of stone, the perfect tables of the unbroken law fairly written out. If you desire to have the law written in your hearts, if you desire to have perfect righteousness in keeping the law of God, you must not try to approach God for yourselves, but you must come through the Mediator. Jesus Christ. He who would offer to God a perfect obedience must take the imputed righteousness of the immaculate Son of God, and being arrayed in that he shall worship God aright, Christ being a sanctuary for him.

I am very, very anxious that every believer here should draw a ring, as it were, around himself, and ask his heavenly Father for help, that he may draw nigh through the rent veil of the Savior's pierced body and come spiritually, with heart, and soul, and strength, near to the throne of God, worshipping the Most High. Our third point is that Jesus is a sanctuary in the sense of: —

III. A DWELLING-PLACE.

This is an unusual sense, perhaps, but it is a Scriptural one. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. “In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon the rock.” The priest under the old law only went into the holy of holies once in the year, but every priest unto God — and you are all such who have believed — every priest unto God goes in and never goes out again — at least, he never needs to go out. He may abide always in the holy place — a place where in the morning he sings his waking song, and a place wherein at night he sups with Christ.

The sanctuary was a place in which only one person ever dwelt, and that was God himself. The mysterious light which they called the *Shekinah* shone from between the wings of the cherubim; there were the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—the symbols of the divine presence. It was God’s house. No man lived with him; no man could. The High Priest went in but once a year, and out he went again to the solemn assembly. But now, in Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we find a sanctuary to reside in, for we dwell in him; we are one with him. God was in Christ, reconciling, the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and as God was in Christ, so is it written, “You in me, and I in you.” Such is the union between Christ and his people. Every believer is in Christ, even as God is in Christ. So Christ is the sanctuary where God and man may meet together and live in perpetual delight and solace. My beloved, do you always dwell in Christ? I wish I did. I find it comparatively easy to get fellowship with Christ, but oh! it is so difficult to keep it up. When one climbs the mountain, gets one’s forehead bathed in the sunlight, talks with God, and feels the world to be far below in the valley, one feels that it is good to be there, but ah! we are soon down again, mixing with the people, marrying and giving in marriage; we are fighting our battles, and buying and selling again! Oh! that we could have Peter’s wish and build three tabernacles, for it is good to be there, where the transfigured Master reveals himself to his delighted people. OH! that we could always live in the banqueting-house, and see that love-banner always floating over us! And let me tell you, we may do so. There have been some of the saints who have been helped to do it. They have been as much with God when they have been trading across the counter as when they have been bowing the knee, as much with Jesus in their daily toils as in their Sabbath rest. Why should it not be so with us? I covet. I covet

beyond all luxuries, to walk with God. If I might have this, I would not ask for anything else beneath these skies.

*“Oh! that I might for ever sit
With Mary at the Master’s feet
To hear his gracious voice!”*

Oh! that I might go into the door of his house and never find the way out. If we leave the table, it is not because the feast is over or the Master has dismissed the guests. Oh! never. Ye are not straitened in him, but in yourselves. The deep bottomless sea of his precious love is all before you; if thou thirst, it is because you will not drink. If you live in the cold Arctic regions, distant from Christ, it is not because the sunlight of his love would not warm and cheer you. If you would come into the equatorial regions of a simpler faith and a more abundant trustfulness, you might yet have all the luxuriance of a tropical heat sent into your souls. Come up higher, brethren and sisters! From the lowest chambers come to the highest ones. From the Master’s feet come to his bosom, and from his bosom come to his lips. From the outside court or tabernacle come to the court of the priests, and from the court of the priests come to the holiest of all. Advance! Come boldly! The Lord help you by his Spirit to come and dwell in the sanctuary! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ROMANS 10:1-20.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Now these people had persecuted the Apostle. Wherever he went they had followed him up; they had hindered his work: they had sought his life: and yet this was the only return that he made to them — to desire and pray that they might lye saved. Let us never be turned aside from this loving desire for those among whom we dwell. We wish them nothing worse — we cannot wish them anything better than that they may be saved. Let us not only desire it, but let us pray for it. Let us turn our desires into the more practical and holy form of intercession.

2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Always make allowance for anything that is good in those who, as yet, are not converted. We must not be unjust with them because we desire to be faithful to them.

3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

And that is the great mischief with persons who are not saved. They are very sincere, very earnest, but they will not submit to the righteousness of God; they will not agree to be made righteous by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; but they "go about" — that is the Apostle's word. It is very expressive of the energy men will put into it, and the shifts to which they will have recourse, in order to work out a righteousness of their own. They will go about, aye, even to the very gates of hell; they will try to climb up by prayers, even to the gates of heaven. They will go about to establish their own righteousness, but they do not know the righteousness of God, and they refuse to submit themselves to it.

4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

He that believes in Christ is as righteous as the law could have made him, if he had kept it perfectly. The end of the law is righteousness; that is, the fulfilling of it; and he that hath Christ will see the law fulfilled in Christ, and the righteousness of Christ applied to himself.

5, 6. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,

Ah! that is a very different sort of thing. It does not speak about doing and living, "but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise."

6-9. Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord

Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

There is the gospel in a nutshell. What a very simple way it is — to believe these great facts about the Lord Jesus Christ — really to believe them so that they became practical factors in your life. This is all the way of salvation. Christ has not to be fetched down. He has come. He has not to be fetched up. He has risen from the dead. The work is finished. What thou hast to do is to believe in that finished work and accept it as thine own, and thou shalt be saved.

10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the month confession is made unto salvation.*

How different all this from that going about to establish our own righteousness, this setting up of prayers, and tears, and church-goings, and chapel-goings, and good works, and I know not what beside! Instead of that, here is Christ set forth, and “ye are complete in him.” If you take him to be yours, you are “accepted in the Beloved,” and “being justified by faith, you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh! what a blessing is this!

11. *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

Though he did much that he need be ashamed of, yet when the law so brought him to believe in Jesus Christ for righteousness, he is righteous, and he is so righteous that he shall never be ashamed of his righteousness, nor ashamed of his faith in Christ. Would God that some who are going about after a righteousness of their own would be led to try this method, and believe in Jesus Christ.

12. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:*

What a blessed word that is — “There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile”! There are some that want to keep up that difference. They say that we are Israel, or something of the kind. I do not care what we are. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.

12. *For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

Someone said to me, “I think that the Romish Church cannot be the Church of Christ. I do not think that the Church of England is the Church

of Christ. Do you think the Baptists are the Church of Christ?" And my answer was, "The Church of Christ is to be found mixed up in all churches, and no churches at all." It is a people that God has chosen from among men, and they are to be found here and there and everywhere, a spiritual seed that God has marked out to be his own; and they are known by this — that they call upon the Lord, and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

13. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

We call upon that name by having confidence in it; by *speaking* to God in prayer, using that name; by adoring and reverently proclaiming the majesty and the name of God. Whosoever shall call upon or invoke that great name shall be saved.

14. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

For at the bottom of the saving invocation or call there must be real faith. There cannot be any true worship of God unless it be grounded and bottomed upon faith in God.

14. *And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*

There cannot be such a thing as believing what has never been spoken in our hearing, and has never been made known to us. Of course, reading often answers the *same* end as hearing. It is a kind of hearing of the Word; but a man must know, or he cannot believe.

14. *And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

How is that possible? Do you see the machinery of the gospel? There is the calling upon the name. That comes of faith. There is the faith that comes of hearing; but there is the hearing that comes of preaching. Now a little farther.

15. *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*

Poor preaching. It will not be the kind of preaching that produces believing hearing, except they be sent. If God does not send the man, he had better have stopped at home. It is only as God sends him that God will bless him. He is bound to back up his own messenger when he delivers God's own message. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?"

15. *As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.*

And they are so beautiful because, you see, God has put them at the root of everything. God makes the preacher whom he sends to be the source of so much good, or the channel of so much good, for by his preaching comes the hearing, and by the hearing comes the believing, and out of the believing come the calling upon the name and the salvation.

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

“But.” A sorrowful “but” is this. Oh! this is the mischief of it. The gospel, then, has an authority about it; or else the Apostle would not speak of obeying the gospel. Men are bound to believe what God declares to them, and their not believing is a disobedience. “They have not all obeyed the gospel.”

16. *For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

As if there were so few that did believe it, that he had to ask who they were.

17. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

You are wise, therefore, dear friend, if you are seeking salvation to be a hearer of the Word; but mind that it is the Word of God that you hear, because the word of man cannot save you. It may delude you. It may give you a false peace; but the hearing that saves is hearing which comes by the Word of God. Oh! take care, then, that you do not run hither and thither just because of the cleverness of certain speakers; but keep you to the Word of God whoever preaches it, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

18. *But I say, Have they not heard?*

These very people for whom the Apostle prayed — have they not heard?

18. *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.*

The preaching of the gospel went forth amongst those Israelites, who rejected it. Wherever they went, the gospel seemed to follow them like their shadows. They could not escape from it, but they did not believe it.

19. *But I say, Did not Israel know?*

Assuredly, Israel did know, but did not believe.

19. *First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*

Moses told them that it would be so if they rejected Christ. Christ would be preached to the Gentiles, and those whom they thought to be foolish would come in and accept what they had rejected.

20. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not: I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

He told them, therefore, that God would save a people who hitherto had never sought after God — that he would send the gospel to a people that were dead in sin, and had never asked to receive the light and life of God.

A TYPE AND ITS TEACHING

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself
a lamb for a burnt offering.” — Genesis 22:8.*

How stern the trial; how striking the triumph; how sublime, both in action and passion, was the faith of Abraham in that terrible crisis. It pleased God to try him on a very tender point. Abraham had received a great promise, on the fulfillment of which he greatly relied. Year after year elapsed, but no sign of the long-looked-for child appeared. At length old age crept over the patriarch and his wife. Still he looked steadfastly for the promise, because he believed implicitly in the Promiser. He considered not the infirmities of his own body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb; but he waited patiently, nothing doubting that God would in due time, according to his promise, give him a son. What marvel that this son, when born, should be the object of his fondest affection! Moreover, a strange halo of hope gathers round the lad's head, for God has made him the heir of a covenant. It is in Isaac and in Isaac's seed that God will fulfill his covenant which he has made with Abraham. Nay, something more mysterious still is linked with that youth's life. It is in him that all the nations of the earth must be blessed. And now when the Lord says, “Take thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest,” there is a cut in every word at the most tender part of Abraham's soul. To slay his own son, to cut off his hope of posterity, to sacrifice for a burnt-offering that son who was a special gift of God's bounty, to kill him in whom he looked for a further fulfillment of God's promise, to stop that golden pipe through which mercy is to flow to the whole world, to dam up that silver stream which is to enrich nations yet unborn — that were to blast Abraham's brightest hopes, as well as to wound his tenderest affections. God has cherished in him high

anticipations. He has been pleased to give him strength of mind and faith of heart enough to see these expectations realised in a vision. And must that vision, after all, flit from before his eyes; must his faith become a delusion, and all his hopes a mockery? So it would seem. And yet mark the faith of Abraham. He not only submits to the loss of his choicest jewel, and to rend away one who was bound to his heart by ties stronger than flesh and blood, but in doing this he staggers not; for he still believes that God will be true to his promise. It strikes me that this was the master-work of Abraham's faith. To sacrifice Isaac was a wonder of patient submission and devout resignation, but the faith which was at the root of it all challenges our highest admiration. Still to believe that God is able to raise Isaac from the dead, or to turn the stones which were wet with Isaac's blood into a new offspring, or (for I know not which theory Abraham may have adopted) to believe that the whole covenant was spiritual, and that he must wait to see the seed of Isaac in another world, and not in this — in any case to believe that God must be true; that though Isaac died, God would keep his overdo and that he is able to do so notwithstanding all apparent impossibilities — that he will transmute stones to men, or raise that body after it has been slain, into newness of life — here was the climax of a faith that realised the grandeur and the goodness of the divine attributes and perfections, for he simply and sincerely believed and relied upon God.

Ah! brethren, there are some men who can make great sacrifices for God; they have done so, and herein they have emulated the example of Abraham. But the patriarch showed a clear understanding; an unwavering calmness, a full assurance of hope, to which few have attained. When in the very fact of presenting to God your sacrifice, can you account that you are losing nothing, but committing your treasure to his custody? Can you believe that the promise of God is not perilled by your parting with the earnest that gladdened your eyes? Has God given you a son, such an one as you can say of, "For this child I prayed"? Is he the pride of your life, and the joy of your life? Do you think of him as the solace of your age, and the perpetuator of your name in the world? What now if God shall call you to devote him as a missionary? Could you readily comply? Would you count it all gain? Should you interpret it as a blighting of your own prospect, or as a blooming of God's purpose? Have you Abraham's faith? then let God be true, if heaven should reel and earth should rock. Though the sons of men pass away like shadows and death entomb us all, the counsel of God's heart shall stand, and his Word shall endure for ever.

Stagger not, my friends, at the promise of God through unbelief. Be assured that whatever he has promised he is able to perform.

Such reflections, though prolific of instruction, I must not tarry to pursue. I rather want to impress the scene and interpret the sentence brought before us in our text.

The scene itself suggests to us three pictures. The first picture will naturally rise up in your imagination without my attempting any graphic description of it. The old man, a kind and doting father, bears in his hands ,a sharp knife, and hot blazing coals of fire. The younger man, perhaps five-and-twenty — so Josephus thinks — possibly thirty-three years of age, and, if so, very manifestly the type of Christ, who was about that age when he came to die; the young man comes toiling up the side of the hill, bearing a load of blood upon his back. He knows that that wood is destined to burn some victim, for his father carries the fire and the knife. He understands that they are about to worship God yonder in the most solemn manner by a sacrifice of blood. On the way he puts but one question, marvelling where the victim can be. He sees the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? saith he. Abraham tells him, with a bursting heart, that: —

I. GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB.

Little did Isaac think that he was to be that lamb. They came to the spot. No doubt Abraham there tells Isaac what God had bidden him do. The young man is strong; the old man has lost some of his youthful vigor. If that young man chose to struggle, the intent would be frustrated. But he, like his father, is ready to say to that sovereign command of God, “Here I am.” He suffers himself to be bound by his aged sire, nay, helps to put himself upon the altar; and there he lies, a willing victim, cheerfully consenting to be bound, willing there and then to die at God’s command.

Here you have a picture of the Almighty One, whom we every day address as “Our Father, who art in heaven.” You see his son, his only, Son, whom he loveth; his Isaac, who hath filled his heart with gladness. He bears upon his back the load of wood — the cross; nay, heavier than the cross is the load which the antitype of Isaac, our blessed Jesus, bears — the sin of all his people lay heavy upon his shoulders. He turns upwards to the hill of Calvary; and there, in that thick darkness, through which no human eye could peer, however much it might desire it, God the eternal Father binds his Son. He cheerfully submits himself to be fastened to the tree. The

Omnipotent hand unsheathes the knife to slay his Son, and draws not back, but in sovereign vengeance slays him. That picture of Abraham the knife in his hand, about to execute Isaac, presents to you a picture of the God of gods about to smite his only-begotten Son upon Mount Calvary.

Beloved, the one point at which I wish to concentrate your attention is the emotion of the Father. Oh! what grief, what love, what pity! What stern resolves, and strong affections must have striven together in Abraham's bosom! We read in ancient story of a father whose two sons were taken prisoners; they were both condemned to die. The old man appeared on the scene to offer up his life — all that he had to offer — and to die himself, if his sons' lives might be spared. For some reason the soldiers, melting to pity, went as far as they could, and told him he might have whichever of his sons he chose to be spared for the ransom. He looked first at one, and then at the other. He would fain say, "Spare that one," but then they would put the other to death; and he would fain say, "Spare this one," but then the other must die. And so the old man alternated between one and the other, undecided which should be released, till both were slain. History tells us of another case at the siege of Benda. A German nobleman, seeing a young man charging the hosts of the besiegers, remarked to those who stood by how valiantly he was fighting; he felt that a hero was in the camp. The enemy gathered so thickly round the warrior that at length he fell. "Give that young man a public funeral," said the nobleman. His counsel was accepted, a charge was made, the body was rescued. But judge his surprise as he looked down upon the face of the young man and perceived it was his only son. He stood aghast for a moment, no tears could he shed; his eyes were as though they would start from the sockets; he seemed transfixed; he fell backward; his heart was broken; his soul had taken its flight. Such a surprise, such a sorrow, such a sense of the loss he had sustained overwhelmed him. In neither of these cases had the father any hand in the death of his child. The parent in each instance was passive. Here, however, the knife must be handled by none other than the sire, and plunged into the vitals of his son. Oh! Abraham. Ah! Isaac. The tale of your trial makes my nerves tingle. But who of all the heavenly host, what angel near the throne can tell of the Eternal Father, how his heart was moved, how his bowels yearned! Do I speak after the manner of men; how else can I speak?

Reprove me when you can believe in a God who has no feelings, no emotions, no affections, no life, no love. Hardly could I subscribe to the

dictum of theologians who pronounce God incapable of suffering. Surely he is capable of anything. He is sovereign of all senses and sacred sensibilities. His benignant tender Fatherhood are as clear to my faith as his eternal power and Godhead. How, then, can I conceive of his putting his own Son to death without a grief that I must defer to as possible, because I cannot describe it as actual? If we may not liken ourselves to God, yet may God liken himself to us. This he has done; else had we not known him. Can you smite your own child without feeling more anguish than you inflict? Solomon says, Spare not for his crying; but it is hard to keep Solomon's advice, for the crying of your child makes you weep more shall he does. Yet, behold how God, full of love, his very name being Love, smites even to the death his Only-begotten, till that darling cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And this was done out of love to us. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with hint also freely give us all things?" Oh! what love! His love is an indefinite quantity. It is expressed by an indefinite, word — so! "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." What measure or gauge can compass that wonderful affirmation — he so loved? Rude as my sketch may be, royal indeed is the scene. Let it be vividly portrayed on the tablet of your memories. Let its gracious effect diffuse itself over your hearts. Oh! for such love as angels cannot know, let us reciprocate, with a love intense and vehement that inflames our whole heart: —

***"Had we a thousand hearts to give
Lord, they should all be thine."***

Even now, with adoring gratitude, offer your homage to the Father, who gives his Son, and to that Son, who cheerfully submits to plead by the altar for our sins.

A second picture rises to our view. You will remember that our Lord Jesus once said, "Abraham saw my day." When did he see it? Why, methinks it must have been on this occasion. The venerable patriarch certainly had in his son Isaac: —

II. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE SON OF GOD.

When you see that his hand is stayed, you perceive at once that the portrait is not complete. A ram is caught in the thicket; this ram is caught, laid hold on, dragged out, and put into the place of Isaac. So far the delineation is

accurate, for the ram dies; it is really slain, even as Christ was sacrificed for us. But the vision changes its form. Isaac goes free; not so the ram. Isaac's blood still flows in his veins; not so that of the poor ram, the knife sternly severs his arteries, and the blood flows out. There he is laid upon the wood, which forthwith begins to glow and smoke for a burnt offering. Isaac gazes on himself in a figure burning he owes his life to the victim that was presented as a substitute. Look earnestly, gaze intently, linger fondly on the picture, for it represents your own salvation. Let us take the place of Isaac; it is ours. We are children according to promise. If we, beloved, have "fled for refuge to the hope set before us," we are saved.

How we are saved ye know. Because our Lord Jesus Christ, the ram of God's burnt-offering, did burn upon the altar for us, we are spared. It would baffle me to tell how Isaac felt when cords were unbound, and he saw how narrowly he had escaped from death. Nor can I tell you how I felt when standing at the foot of the cross.

*"I beheld the flowing
Of my dear Redeemer's blood,
With assurance, knowing
He had made my peace with God."*

How canst thou perish, believer, now that Christ hath died for thee? There is not a cord on Isaac as thou seest him now; he is free. So art thou, my friend; there are no bonds on thee. Most gratefully canst thou cry with David, "I am thy servant; and the son of thine handmaid; thou best loosed my bonds." As you gather round the Lord's table, do let the thought of substitution be fresh in your mind. He bore, that we might never bear the divine wrath; he drank the cup, even to its dregs, that we might never drink a drop of it; in short, he suffered hell's torments for us, that we might never enter its gates. My hearers, did Christ thus suffer for you? Yes, surely, if so be you are believing and depending upon him, then he was your true and proper substitute. Or if in his life you have no interest, then in his death you have no redemption, and his blood shall never save you; alas! alas! you must perish in your sins.

Pass from that scene; inspect it more narrowly, more privately another time. Let me now unveiling you another picture. Behold the aged parent, with glistening eye and placid brow, receiving his son, as it were, alive from the dead, when the angel stayed his hand. How joyously he cuts those cords; how they seem to leap together! I think I see them going homeward

down the side of the hill to the tent where Sarah was. With what elastic step, with what grateful emotion, with what heartfelt joy they journey! And of what is this an emblem?

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST JESUS, and in that of the resurrection of every believer. The Apostle Paul says that “Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure.” Now our covenant God and Father has received his Only-begotten from the dead, not merely in figure, but in reality. The morning has broken, the sun has risen on the third day. He cannot be holden by the bonds of death any longer. He snaps them asunder, and in beauty, incomparable the once slain Savior arises from his sleep refreshed. The stone had been rolled away aforetime by the angel. He passes out, and the watchmen, in terror, fall on their faces affrighted. He manifests himself to Mary, and then to his disciples afterwards, saying, “Peace be unto you,” and in due time he ascends up to the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Angel hosts escort him with trumpets’ joyful sound.

*“They bring his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clap their triumphant wings, and cry
‘The glorious work is done.’”*

Oh! ye saints, celebrate the triumph afresh. Your Lord and Savior is risen and ascended. Isaac is not dead. He, in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, lives, forever lives. In him, the child of promise, the seed of the woman, art thou now a heritor of the blessing if thou believes. In him shalt thou rise again. Though thy flesh shall see corruption, thou shalt burst the bonds of death, and, because he lives, thou shalt live also.

*“Nor doth it yet appear
How great thou shalt be made,
Yet when thou seest thy Savior here,
Thou shalt be like thy Head.”*

Have these pictures impressed your minds? May the meditation they excite prove instructive to you! But lend me your ears while I proceed to commend to you the sweet prophetic words of Abraham.

The name of the Lord — that particular name, Jehovah-jireh — has been the comfort of many an indigent believer, and sustained him under great difficulty. Sometimes it has been to him like the cake baked upon the coals, of which Elias partook when he journeyed for forty days. Oh! how

graciously God has provided himself a burnt-offering; the choicest substitute for the most undeserving criminal. Lies there a wretch in Newgate, for whom a royal scion would stand surety? No novelist would broach such a fiction. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure for a good man one might even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." If every one of us had been left to endure the penalty of our own transgressions, had no substitute been found to bear our sins, God would have been unimpeachably just and infinitely glorious.

The voice of our torments would have only been a deep bass note to tell out to the universe the terrible justice of the Most High. It could not have impeached his mercy. To find a substitute was an act of gratuitous, undeserved grace. Such provision was not only undeserved, but it was most unexpected. What amazement must have wrapt the sky when celestial creatures heard that a substitute for man was found! Where among angels, principalities, or powers? No; but at God's right hand. The co-equal Son himself becomes the substitute for rebel man. Nor less in dignity than the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person, is he who takes upon himself flesh and blood, and subjects himself to our infirmities, that he himself may bear our sins, in his own body on the tree. Are we indifferent, or are incredulous, or what manner of men are we that one can talk and another can listen to so startling a fact, to so astounding a revelation, without a thrilling emotion, a faltering tongue, and tingling ears? Throughout eternity this will be a ceaseless wonder in heaven. That the Creator should stoop to bear the creature's sin will never cease to be a mystery of mercy that challenges endless admiration. God did indeed provide such a provision as makes his providence startling! What a gospel it is. Great God, wilt thou redeem sinners, at such a cost, at no less price than blood and that the blood of Immanuel? And is it so that Jehovah must veil himself in human flesh? Must the Infinite become an infant? Must the Omnipotent hang on a woman's breast? Must the eternal self-existent God breathe out an expiring life in ignominy and torture? Must all this be experienced by the Man who is Jehovah's fellow? Yes. Manhood comes into such union with Deity that we cannot divide the two. There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Oh! what a step was this from the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe! Well did an apostle say, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of

Christ.” Silver and gold! what are they in comparison with this costly sacrifice? The merest tinsel, the sweepings of dross, not worthy to be thought of in the same minute, as the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

St. Augustine somewhere holds a kind of controversy with himself as to whether Christ shall die or not. As if he said, Yes, let the sinner live, but Christ must die. No; he must not die, he is far too good, too great to die; then let the creature die. Nay, but we cannot let the creature perish, God’s mercy would prevent that. Then he must die. Then he seems to say, No, the price is too great. Sooner let them perish than buy them at such a price. A company of worms redeemed by the blood of the Son of God! The price is too high; yet God paid it. Oh! let us love and bless His name!

Though it was so costly a provision, it was the most suitable that could be devised! Who else could have borne our sins but God? No mere man could possibly have stood as the substitute for millions of the human race. He might, if innocent himself, suffer for one, and so save one; but unless Deity should lend its unutterable perfections, it was not possible for human nature to sustain the weight of human guilt. But now by the suffering of a man the law is vindicated and honored; by the personal interposition of God, sacred validity and sovereign efficacy are imparted to the great work he has achieved. And oh! what an effectual provision it is! For the blood of Christ has saved, does save, and will save millions of souls. Whatever else may be a myth, the atonement is a veritable fact. Whatever empty rites and worthless pretensions may be foisted on credulous men and silly women, you cannot exasperate the power of the blood of Christ. Come hither come hither, ye blackest, foulest, vilest of mankind; try it, and see if the crimson streams do not wash your crimson stains, and make you white as snow. Come hither, ye old transgressors, steeped in infamy quivering on the brink of hell, see if the drops of this blessed stream cannot cool your fevered brow, and give your troubled conscience rest. Come hither, ye distracted maniacs, who would fain lay suicidal hands upon yourselves, and rush blood-red into your Maker’s awful presence, and see if, bowing down before that awful cross, you do not hear a voice that saith, “Peace be still. Go thy way; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.” Yes, there is life in a look at the Crucified One. None shall ever look to him in vain. Millions of spirits around the throne rejoice in the efficacy of God’s provision. Jehovah-jireh is extolled to-day in matchless songs of human praise around

the starry throne, and here on earth we repeat their strains with glad accord.

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

And then, once more, it is an ample provision. God has provided a ram for a burnt-offering, and there is enough efficacy in that sacrifice for all that seek the ransom it supplies. I do not preach a stinted salvation blessed be God. I have seen in my soul the vision that Zachariah saw. He saw a young man, with a measuring line in his hand. “Whither goest thou?” said he. “To take the dimensions of Jerusalem,” he replied; “to see the breadth and the length thereof.” “Run, speak to this young man,” said the angels “measure not the city; Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitudes of men therein.”

Some people have a strange disposition to use the measuring line, and count the population, and number the souls that are saved by the precious blood of Jesus. Their estimate is commonly limited to a very few. Let us not measure it, for we know not what countless multitudes will be given to Christ for the travail of his soul. A multitude that no man can number has gathered already; on the way there is a host, defying human arithmetic, that will lie marshalled there, and still they muster day by day. O beloved, this one thing we know, without entering into any vexed questions of particular redemption or general redemption, there is enough in Christ for every sinner that desires salvation and comes and puts his trust in the Savior; enough to cleanse the vilest sin that ever disgraced humanity; enough to wash you white, though you are ever so begrimed; it is provision for the sins of all ages, of all ranks, of all conditions. The harlot, cleansed here, becomes chaste, and sings, with Rahab, the new song. The thief, washed here, becomes forgiven, and is accepted in the Beloved. If you are the most abandoned of sinners, and have strolled in here to gratify curiosity or to idle away an hour, let me tell you that he who died, the just for the unjust, ever liveth; he is mighty to save. Rest on Jesus, there is provision here to save you; with his infinite foreknowledge he has foreseen your case. You shall never find a case too hard for the Master; no sin too heinous for him to forgive; no circumstance so extravagant in its guilt as to go beyond the grace and the generosity which are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and the

goodness and virtue flowing from his wounds. I have painted the pictures; I have proclaimed the purpose; let me conclude with: —

IV. A POINTED QUESTION.

Since God has provided so great a sacrifice, has he provided it for me? Am I a participator in the blood of Christ? To how many thousands of you do I speak? Do let each one put the question to himself. My weak voice will soon exhaust its emphasis. Is there no echo in your conscience? What I say may drop from your memories. Do let every soul among you earnestly enquire, “Have I Christ?” Give yourself a candid reply concerning yourself. Do you put your trust in him? I do not ask you what possessions you can boast. The poor are very welcome in God’s house. I do not ask you what reputation you have. The wise are not elected for their wisdom with God; the foolish and the base are not rejected for their worthlessness. What I do ask is this, “Have you Christ for your portion?” Remember, soul, that whosoever believeth in Jesus receiveth him as God’s gift to his soul. Trust Christ, and he is yours. Fall flat upon your face upon the promises of God in Christ. Have done with all the props on which you were wont to lean, with all the pleas on which you were wont to rely, with all the works of which you were wont to boast. Go as thou art to Christ, trust him. To him the Spirit of God leads every earnest, anxious seeker. If you trust him, heaven and earth may pass away, but the promise of your salvation shall not fail. You shall be his in life, in death, in judgment, and all eternity, safe from hell, secure of heaven.

What though you struggle with all your natural feelings as Abraham did? The more simple your faith, the more signal will be your triumph. Believe in the dark, and you shall soon come into the light. Immediately you believe, there are signs following. Venture to-day to lay your hands upon that dear head of the victim Lamb, and to-morrow I will summon you as witnesses who can testify to others that there is joy and peace in believing. “He will deliver thy soul from going down into the pit, and thy life shall see the light. Lo! all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living!” May this be yours! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

HOSEA 11.

1. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,

God remembers what he did for us when we were young; and sin against him is much aggravated by his long kindness to us. He brings this up against his rebellious people, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him.” Some of you may remember your childhood with deep regret — when you used to sing your hymn, and bow your knees on your mother’s lap. Times have greatly changed since then, but God remembers them.

2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

These people only had to be called away, and away they went. There are come of that sort. You have only to beckon them anywhere. Like a dog that is whistled to, they will follow anybody’s call. They leave God for anything, for nothing. These people went and forgot the true God, and burnt incense to graven images.

3. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms: but they knew not that I healed them.

God describes himself as acting like a nurse that holds a child up by its arms and teaches it its first steps. Yet they did not know what God was doing for them. God has done great things for many of us, and perhaps we have never recognized his command. Years of mercy, and yet never a day of gratitude. It is sad that it should be so.

4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

As the good husbandman, when the oxen come to the end of the field, takes off the yoke and puts on the nosebag, so has God often done with us in the day of our trouble. Tie has unyoked us, and he has relieved our wants, and fed us. Yet we have forgotten him.

5, 6. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. And the sword shall abide on his

cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels.

When men will have their own way, God sometimes lets them have their way, and that turns out to be the most unhappy thing that can be. They make a rod for their own backs. They pile the faggots for their own burning. It is a great pity that it should be so, but often and often have we seen it.

7. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

There is a propensity in the human heart to go away from God — even in the hearts of God’s own people. Oh! how sad it is that, though often called to God by the voice of Providence, and by the call of his Word, yet none at all would exalt him!

8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee. Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

God represents himself as holding a controversy within himself, “These people I must punish. These people I love. I shall have to give them up. I cannot give them up.” Justice debating with mercy, and mercy triumphant over justice.

9. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return, to destroy Ephraim: for I am God. and not man: the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not enter into the city.

Remember that when God entered into Sodom and saw its sin, then he destroyed it; but he determines to have pity upon Samaria, and not to enter into it lest, seeing it, he should feel compelled to destroy it.

10. They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion:

If God can make his people follow him when he roars like a lion, how we ought to follow him. who is the Lamb of God, that takes our sins upon him!

10. When he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

When God puts on the lion’s form, and his grave, majestic voice is heard, full of thundering threatenings, then men are constrained and tremble.

11. *They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria:*

They shall come on hasty wings, trembling along, to find a shelter.

11, 12. *And I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit:*

It is a dreadful thing when men go to God and, as it were, make a ring round about him, and compass him about with falsehood and with lies. Many profess to worship God when they are not worshipping at all. Their *bodies* are in the assembly of the saints, but their minds are far away.

12. *But Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.*

And it was to the honor of Judah that it was so. When others are false, then is the time for God's servants to be true. If you held your tongue before, speak out for truth and God in the day when God is compassed about with deceit.

“DO I LOVE THE LORD OR NO?”

NO. 3524

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

*“Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?”
— John 21:17.*

THIS is a pointed question, which demands a personal answer and should, therefore, stir up full and frequent self-examination. “Lovest thou me?” It is a probing question that is likely to excite much grief when pressed home to the sensitive, tender-hearted disciple, even as Peter was grieved because the Lord said unto him the third time, “Lovest thou me?” Yet it is a pleasing and profitable question to so many of us as can give a like solemn and satisfactory response to that of Simon Peter, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

I. IT IS VERY NECESSARY THAT ALL DISCIPLES, EVEN THE MOST PRIVILEGED, THE MOST TALENTED, AND THE MOST FAMOUS, SHOULD OFTEN BE ASKED THE QUESTION, HEAR IT IN THEIR SOULS, AND FEEL ITS THRILLING INTENSITY, “SIMON, SON OF JONAS, LOVEST THOU ME?”

It must have been momentous indeed, or the Savior would not have repeated it to Peter three times at one interview. He tarried on earth but forty days after his resurrection. These opportunities for conference, therefore, with his disciples would be few. On what subjects, then, should he speak to them but those which appeared to him of the weightiest import? Of the times or the seasons that must presently transpire, he refrains to divulge a secret. With the fulfillment of ancient predictions that prompted the curiosity of the Jew, or the solution of metaphysical problems that harassed the minds of Gentile philosophers, he did not meddle. I neither find him interpreting obscure prophecy, nor expounding mystic doctrine; but instead thereof I do find him inculcating personal

piety. The question he propounds is of such vital importance that all other questions may be set aside till this one question is positively settled, "Lovest thou me?"

Hence, beloved, I infer that it is of infinitely more consequence for me to know that I love Christ than it is to know the meaning of the little horn, or the ten toes, or the four great beasts. All Scripture is profitable to those who have grace to profit by it; but wouldest thou both save thyself and them that hear thee, thou must know him and love him to whom patriarchs, prophets, and apostles all bear witness that there is salvation in none other, and no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. You may whet your appetite for logic, but you cannot with your heart believe unto righteousness while you occupy your thoughts, your tongues, or your pens wrangling about Calvinism and Arminianism, sublapsarianism and supra-lapsarianism, or any of the endless controversies of the schoolmen and sectarians! "Lovest thou me?" that is the moot point. Canst thou give an affirmative answer? Will thy conscience, thy life, thy God, attest the verity of thy love to him? then, though thou be no doctor of divinity, though thou canst not decipher the niceties of systematic theology, though thou art unable to rebut one in a thousand of the subtleties of the adversary, yet thou hast an unction from the Holy One; thy love approves thee; thy faith has saved thee; and he whom thy soul loveth will keep thee; for time and for eternity thou art blessed. To my mind, I say, the gravity of the question is palpable from the time at which it was put. During the few days of our risen Lord's sojourn, he would not have given it such distinct prominence had it not been in Peter's case the evidence of his repentance, his restoration, and the full recognition he received.

But, brethren, what question can more closely appeal to ourselves, to each one of us? Love is one of the most vital of the Christian graces. If faith be the eye of the soul, without which we cannot see our Lord savingly, surely love is the very heart of the soul, and there is no spiritual life if love be absent. I will not say that love is the first grace, for faith first discovers that Christ loves us, and shall we love him because he first loved us. Love may be second in order, but it is not second in importance. I may say of faith and love, that these are like two roes that are twins; or rather of faith, and hope, and love, that these are three divine sisters, who mutually support one another; the health of one betokening the vigor of all, or the decline in one the weakness of all. "Lovest thou me?" Why, the question means, Are you a Christian? Are you a disciple? Are you saved? For if any man love

wife, or child, or house more than Christ, he is not worthy of him. Christ must have from every one of his disciples the heart's warmest affection, and where that is not freely accorded, depend upon it, there is no true faith, and consequently no salvation, no spiritual life. On thine answer to that question hangs thy present state. Dost thou love Jesus? If the verdict be "No," then thou art still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. But if the truthful answer of thy soul be, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," then, weak as thou art, thou art a saved soul, and with all thy mourning and trembling, thy doubts and misgivings, the Spirit of God bears witness with thy spirit that thou art born from above. The sincerity of your love to Christ shows more plainly than aught beside the verity of your relation to him.

Oh! what searching of heart this question demands! Do not flatter yourselves with any false confidence. Many persons have been deceived upon this matter. Alas! they are partial judges, who sit in judgment of themselves; for every defect they have an excuse; they find mitigating circumstances to palliate their basest crimes. No marvel to me, but infinite pity for them that they choose their own delusions and become the dupes of their own infatuation. Their feelings, enhanced by the music of a hymn, or impassioned by the fervor of a sermon, they mistake for an inspiration of faith and love; and when the emotions pass off, as they quickly do, they grow loud in their professions. At first their own hearts were deceived; at length they practice deception on others. O ye church members! I beseech you, do not conclude that you are members of the invisible Church because you are members of the visible Church. Though your names may be inscribed on the roll of the faithful here, do not be too sure that they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Never take your position before God for granted. Do not shrink from a rigid scrutiny as those who never dare ask the question; do not disparage self-examination like those who affect to think it is the devil sets them to the task when he would beset them with legal terrors. Believe me, Satan is too fond of lulling you into presumption to aid or abet in awakening you to make sure of your condition. There is a gross infatuation which is the counterfeit of faith in God. Its credulous victims believe a lie, and fondly they cling to it like limpets to a rock. But sound believers are not afraid of vigilant self-examination; they are prepared to endure a severer test; they say, "Search me, God, and try me." It is your hollow dissemblers who resent all questionings, and take umbrage at any suspicions. The man who knows that he has pure gold to

sell is not afraid of the aquafortis with which the goldsmith tests it, nor even of the crucible into which he may cast. Not so the impostor who hawks a baser metal; he entreats you to be satisfied with his warranty, though it is as worthless as his wares; search yourselves; examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" By yonder wreck, cast away upon the rocks of presumption; by the cries of souls who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck, while they dreamed they were sailing gloriously into harbor — I beseech you make sure work for eternity, and take care that your answer to the question, "Lovest thou me," is well weighed, truthful, and sincere, lest you should split on the mane reefs and be lost, for ever lost!

And, dear friends, I am sure the more closely we examine ourselves, the more need for self-examination we shall discover. Can you not recollect much in the tone of your thoughts and the temper of your actions that might well lead you to suspect that you do not love Christ? If this be not so with all of you, I know it is so with me. Mournfully must I confess that when I look back upon my past service for my Master, I could wish to blot it out with tears of penitent compunction, so far as my share in it has been concerned. Wherein he hath used me let him have all the glory, for to him it belongs. His be the praise. For me there remaineth shame and confusion of face, because of the coldness of my heart, the feebleness of my faith, the presumption with which I have trusted to my own understanding, and the resistance I have offered to the motions of the Holy Spirit. Alas for the carnality of our minds, the worldliness of our projects, and our forgetfulness of God in times of ease. It is strange to me if we have not all cause to mourn over delinquencies like these. And if it be so with those of us who still can honestly say that we know we love our Lord, what scruples, what perilous scruples might some of you entertain whose conduct, character, and the tenor of your lives may well raise a graver question! You imagine that you love Christ. Have you fed his lambs? Have you fed his sheep? Have you given that proof which our Savior imperatively requires of you? What are you doing for him now? It is poor love that spends itself in professions and never comes to any practical result. Let this enquiry, then, pass round: —

***"What have I done for him who died
To save my precious soul?"***

Alas! then, if instead of having, like the believed Persis, labored much in the Lord (Romans 16:12), might we not, some of us, suspect ourselves of having so acted as rather to dishonor his name? Are you not tenderly conscious that Christian people full often lend their sanction, by a loose conversation and lax habits, to the sins which the world has allowed and applauded? Jerusalem becomes a Comforter to Sodom when those who call themselves people of God conform to the usages of society, and of such society as is corrupt at the core. They say, "Ah! you see, there is no harms in it; for the saints themselves indulge in it. They are of the same mind as we tare; they make a great presence, but to no great purpose, for they do as we do." God forgive us if we have opened the mouths of the lord's enemies after this fashion. Surely such failures and such offenses make it necessary for us to ask whether we love the Lord or not. And though we may hesitate to answer the question, it is well to raise it, lest, closing our eyes in carnal security, we should go on to destruction. Let us put the question to ourselves again, and again, and again, for the question will not mar our faith, nor even mar our comfort, so; long as we are able to fall back upon Peter's reply, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." And now, presuming that we are, all of us, convinced that the question is expedient and becoming, let me remark that: —

II. IT IS A QUESTION WHICH, WHEN RAISED, OFTEN CAUSES GRIEF.

Peter was "grieved," but the Lord Jesus Christ never grieved one of his disciples heedlessly. This goes again to prove the need of the question. He was rather for comforting, cheering, and blessing them. He inflicted no needless pain. He shielded them from bootless anxiety. Yet Peter was grieved. Now why should you and I be grieved when the enquiry turns upon our sincerity? You know that if we do not canvass the matter ourselves, our foes will be prompt enough to suspect us, especially if we are in a public position. The clearer your character the keener the assault. Satan — and he is the accuser of the brethren — said, "Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him?" The devil's taunting question has become a proverb with the profane. What worse can they say of the Christian minister than this, "Is he zealous for nought? Has he not a motive? Is there not selfishness in the background?" Base insinuations will, I suppose, be freely uttered about you whatever may be your position in the world. Of the tradesman who fears the Lord, they will say, "Of course, he makes it pay." As for the merchant who consecrates his wealth for the love of Christ, they ask, "Do not you see that he is seeking

notoriety? Is it not a cheap way of getting up a name?" We are sure to have the question raised. Sometimes it sorely grieves us, because of our pride.

We do not like to have our feelings chafed in such a manner. I cannot help thinking there was some sin in Peter's grief. He was grieved as one who felt himself aggrieved — "Is it not too bad to ask me three times! Why should the Lord thus distress me? Surely the blessed Master might have put more confidence in me than to press a question which stings like a reproach." Yet what a poor simpleton he was to think so. How much harm comes from answering in a hurry. When our profession is canvassed, we ought not to be angry. Did we know our own hearts, we should keenly feel the accusations it would be reasonable to lay against us, and the poor defense that conscience could make. When my enemies are finding fault with me, and forging lies to injure me, I sometimes think to myself that though I can exonerate myself from their charges, there are other faults of which they are not cognizant that humble me before God beyond their utmost surmise. Their conspiracies cannot explore the secret of my confessions when I lay the imaginations of my heart before him against whom only I have sinned. How dare we whisper into the ears of our fellowmen the wish, the whim the like, or the hate that haunts one's breast, or aught of the multitude of vanities that float along the rapid current of one's mind? What would they think of us who do not know how rightly to think of themselves? Surely pride is put out of countenance, for the worst opinions our enemies can form of us are probably as good as we dare to entertain of ourselves, taking the evil of our hearts into consideration. The heart is a very sick of evil; if we have not perceived it, we have it yet to discover. The voice Ezekiel heard speaks to us: "Son of man, I show thee greater abominations than these." Little charm ye can find, because little cheer ye can get out of these sermons, which wither your vain conceit. But they are not the less profitable. You prefer the small still voice of a kindly promise, or the rich tones of a glorious prophecy, and then you congratulate yourselves upon the happy Sabbath you have spent. I am not quite so sure that your emotions are the truest test of your interests. Is that always the most wholesome food your children get which has most sugar in it? Do they never get surfeited with luxury till they need medicine? Is comfort always the choicest blessing we can crave? Alas! we form so high an estimate of our estate, that to question whether we love the Lord Jesus Christ or not, lowers our dignity, annoys, vexes, and sadly grieves us.

Not that price is the only incentive. Shame crouches full often in the same obscure corner where pride nestles. Both alike are disturbed by a gleam of daylight. Peter must have felt, when he heard the question for the third time, "Lovest thou me?" as if he could hear the cock grow again. He recollected the scene and circumstance of the dark betrayal hour. Doth not the Lord remember my fear and my cowardice, the falsehood I told, the cursing and swearing I gave way to, and the paltry excuse that edged me on when the taunt of a poor silly maid was too much for an apostle? Ah! she annoyed me, she irritated me, I was conquered. I became a traitor, a blasphemer, almost an apostate. The tears, the bitter tears he wept on the morning of the crucifixion when Jesus looked upon him, welled up again from his heart into his eyes as the risen Lord looked into his face, and made him conscious how richly he deserved to be asked the question, "Lovest thou me?" Yes, and like bitter memories may cover some of us with shame. Bitter as gall must the recollections be to some of you who have so backslidden as to publicly dishonor Christ. I do not want to say an unkind thing to you, but it is good sometimes to keep a wound open. The Bible tells of some sins God has freely forgiven and yet fully recorded. It is no marvel if we cannot forgive ourselves for having in any way brought dishonor and reproach upon the cross of Christ. The grief is healthy. We sing: —

***"What anguish does that question stir,
if ye will also go?"***

But what deeper anguish may that other question stir, "Lovest thou me?" Our cheeks may well mantle with a crimson blush when we remember what grave cause for suspicion we have given to our Lord.

Not that wounded pride and conscious shame are the only sensations. Peradventure fear distressed him. Peter may have thought to himself, Why does my Lord ask me three times? It may be I am deluded, and that I do not love him. Before his fall he would have said, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee; how canst thou ask me? Have I not proved it? Did I not step down into the sea at thy beck and call? I will go through fire and water for thee." But Simon, son of Jonas, had learned to be more sober and less loud in his protestations. He had been tried; he had attempted to stand alone, and he had proved his palpable weakness. He looks dubious, he seems hesitant, he feels scrupulous. He is alive to the fact that the Lord knows him better than he knows himself. Hence the diffidence with which he, asserts his

confidence — “Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I do love thee.” A burned child is afraid of fire, and a scalded child shudders at hot water. So a precocious Peter feels the peril of presumption. His timidity troubles him. He hesitates to give his word of honor. Distrust of self distresses him. He dreams his former downfall o’er and o’er again. The hypocrisy of his own heart horrifies him. What can he say? He answers the accuser, or rather he appeals to the appellant, “Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” His previous guilt causes his present grief. Should like horrors haunt you, friends, give no, place to grievous misgivings. Do not encourage them. Hie away to the cross; behold the thorny crown. Fly at once, poor guilty sinner, to the great atonement which was made by the Lord upon the tree, and let that fear be ended once for all.

Not that it was all pride, or all shame, or all fear; I think there was also love in it. Peter did love his Master, and, therefore, he did not like to have, a doubt or a dark suspicion cast on his sincerity. Love is a very jealous emotion, and keenly sensitive when questioned by those on whom it intensely coats. “Why,” Peter seems to say, “my Lord and Master, what would I not do for thee? Though I was so false, and so faithless in that hour of trial, yet I know that I am true in the very bottom of my heart. My fall has not been a total one, nor a final one. There is in my soul, my Lord, a true, deep, and honest love to thee; I know there is.” He could not bear to have that love questioned. What would the wife say if her husband should ask, “Lovest thou me?” and after she had given a fond assurance of affection, he should repeat the question solemnly, and with an earnest and a penetrating look, especially if she had done much to grieve him, and to make him suspect her? Oh! I can understand how her love at last would make her heart feel as if it must burst. With what earnestness she would exclaim, “Oh! my husband. If you could see my heart, you would see your name written there.” It is hard, even in the conjugal relationship, to have a suspicion cast upon your affection. Because of the tenacity of his love, Peter was grieved. Had he not loved Christ so ardently he would not have felt the grief so acutely. Had he been a hypocrite he might have fired with anger, but he would not have grieved after this fashion. I tell some of our dear young people who get into trouble, and say they are afraid that they are hypocrites, that I never yet knew a hypocrite who said he was afraid he was one, and those who say that they are afraid they do not love Jesus, and are timid and trembling — though I do not commend them for their trembling, yet I have a much better hope of some of them than I have of

others who are loud in their protests and vehement in asserting, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." One is comforted to hear the confidence with which some of our young brethren can speak. Their warm expressions of love refresh us. Yet we cannot help feeling that they have got to be tried. Perhaps they will not be less confident in Christ when trial comes. They will be less confident in themselves; and it is just possible that, though their voices may be quite as sweet, they will yet not be quite so loud. Years of trial and temptation, and especially any experience of backsliding, will pluck some of the feathers out of us, and make us feel humble before the Lord. This grief of Peter, what a complex passion it was!

III. BUT IF IT HAS GRIEVED US TO HEAR THIS QUESTION, IT WILL BE VERY SWEET IF WE CAN TRULY GIVE THE ANSWER, "THOU KNOWEST ALL THINGS; THOU KNOWEST THAT I LOVE THEE."

Surely the preacher need not say any more if the hearers would just say what is in their own hearts. Let the question go round. With all your imperfections and infirmities, your wanderings and backslidings, can you nevertheless declare that you do love the Lord? Can you join in that verse:

*"Thou know'st I love thee, dearest Lord;
But, oh! I long to soar
Far from the sphere of earthly joy,
and learn to love thee more?"*

If you can say that you love Christ from your very heart, how happy you ought to be! That love of yours is only a drop from the fountain of his own everlasting love. It is a proof that he loved you as ever the earth was. It is also a pledge that he always will love you when the heavens and the earth shall pass away. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus' hand is on thee, or ease thy heart would not be on him, and that hand will never relax its grip. He himself has said it, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Now let your heart say, "What shall I do? What shall I render to him whom I love?" And the Savior's answer to you will be, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." You know his "commandments," as to the holiness of

your life, the nonconformity of your spirit to the world, your private communion with him. You know his commandment concerning your profession of your faith by baptism. You know his commandment, “This do ye in remembrance of me,” as often as ye break bread and take the cup of fellowship. You know his’ commandment, “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep.” Remember this, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

As for you who do not love my Lord and Master, what can I do but pray for you, that his great love may now overcome your ignorance and aversion — until, having first been loved of him, you love him in return. Jesus Christ would have you trust him. Faith is the first grace you need. Oh! come and depend upon him who did hang upon the cross. When you rest in him your soul is saved, and, being saved, it shall become your constant joy to love him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOHN 21.

Verses 1-3. *After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee. and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.*

They could not do better. Idleness is the most injurious condition in which a man can be found. A preacher is much better occupied fishing than doing nothing.

3. *They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.*

Even apostles may fish and catch nothing. Do not be discouraged, you who, when you are endeavoring to fish for souls, for many a day catch nothing.

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

Yet he was their old familiar friend. Was it their unbelief? Let us hope not. Was it that a remarkable change had passed over the Master — that, after his resurrection from the dead, there was a glory about him quite unusual, such as they had never seen before, except when they were with him on the holy mount? Perhaps so.

5. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, hate ye any meat?

Just the kind of language you would expect from him — to call them children, and to inquire even about their temporal wants. For evermore the Lord had an eye to the temporal condition of the twelve, as well as to their spiritual. “Have ye any meat?”

5, 6. They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Christ knows where fishes are. He knows where you are then, my friend, though you do not, perhaps, know where you are yourself. You have got out of your own latitude, mentally and spiritually. You could not describe yourself, but Christ knows every minnow in the brook, and every fish in the lake, and knows where you are. Christ can bring fish where he wants them to be. He brought them into the net. Christ can bring souls into his net to-night. At his will, their will shall sweetly yield itself up, and they shall come into the net.

7. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Wow when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,)

He was in his undress.

7, 8. And did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

It is all very well of Peter to be in such a hurry, but somebody must keep hold of the net. It is not always the most venturesome that is the most practical. We are glad to have some splendidly rash brethren, but we are equally glad that the rest are not quite so rash and are a little more prudent.

9. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw afire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread.

Christ had provided this. We are to earth fish as if we should have nothing to eat if we did not, but yet we are to depend upon him as if we never caught a fish ourselves. Do everything as if you had to tic everything; trust in God as if you had to do nothing. The blending of these two will make a wise believer. "They saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread."

10. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*

"I do not need it in order to entertain you, for I have fish here already; still, bring it." Nothing is given in vain; use it.

11, 12. *Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net*

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

Inwardly conscious that it was Christ's habit to speak as he had spoken. Nobody could have caught his manner, and besides, what secret instinct enabled them to discern their meek and lowly Lord, even through the glory which surrounded him?

13, 14. *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them. and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, niter that he was risen from the dead.*

Count the visits of Christ. "This is now the third time." We ought to remember Christ's visits to us so well and so thoroughly that we could tell how many times he has been with us. "This is now the third time."

15-17. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Nobody can feed Christ's sheep unless they love him, and when we love Christ the most practical way of showing it is by taking care of his lambs — his little ones — and of all those that are his — his sheep. Love will teach us how to do it. Love will sign our commission, and ordain us to the work.

The Master went on to say: —

18. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shall be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*

Peter, thou wilt have to be girded with an iron chain, and taken off to prison, and taken off to the cross to die.

19. *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

That is your life business. Follow me, even though you end, as I did, on a cross. Follow me. I am a shepherd; you must be a shepherd too; and as the sheep follow you, so do you follow me.

20, 21. *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?*

What about this man?

22. *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.*

We ought not to be curious about the future of anybody. We must not be inquiring into what is not revealed; and what the Savior said on this occasion was misunderstood; and if the words of Jesus, even when he spoke them, were misunderstood so as to become the foundation of a false tradition, you may judge how little value can ever be put upon tradition in the Church.

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*

The Word of God is to be trusted, and not tradition, for in the handing of a message from mouth to mouth it generally varies. It sometimes loses its very essential spirit, and sometimes may be made to say the very reverse of what was said. Stick to the word, and leave the traditions alone.

24, 25. *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

Such a full life — so pregnant with meaning — so active, and all its activity so intensely real and spiritual, that to write a life of Christ is an impossibility: and though there have been ninny very admirable “lives of Christ” in our time, I recommend you to keep to one which is the best of them all, and that one is written by four. The Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the best life of Christ out of sight. All others must be but mere helps to the understanding of these four.

GOD'S OVERTAKING MERCY

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“And he [the angel of the Lord] said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.” — Genesis 16:8.

“And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?” — Genesis 16:13.

HAGAR had lived for many years in Abraham's family. This was no small advantage. While all the rest of the world was in heathendom, the light shone brightly in Abraham's tent. Not only was Abraham himself a worshipper of the Most High God, but he commanded his household after him. We may rest assured that there were family gatherings for devotion — that the patriarch took occasion, both by precept and example, to teach the knowledge of the true God to all that were in his service. His was the central spot of light in the world, and all around him was the thick gloom of heathenism. Yet I do not find that Hagar, during the years she lived with Abraham, even when she saw his faith in going forth from his kindred and his country, and dwelling in tents in the promised land — I do not find that she herself received any personal call from God, or had a word from the angel of mercy to her own soul. And truly in this she is like very many servants, ay, and sons and daughters too, in godly families who are surrounded by the light, but yet see not; who are where God speaks, and yet he has not spoken personally to them; who enjoy the means of grace,

but have never yet got the grace of the means — who are themselves strangers in the midst of Israel, foreigners, though they dwell in the land itself. Now it would be a source of the greatest imaginable joy to many of us if some of these should be called as Hagar was should hear the voice from heaven, and he enabled to make the double discovery which she made, namely, that God saw her, and that she might come into contact with God — might look to him who had seen her.

At this time I shall first direct your attention to a very interesting circumstance, namely: —

I. THE SINGULAR SEASON CHOSEN BY GOD FOR THE INTERPOSITION OF HIS MERCY.

Let us dwell on that a moment. God displays his sovereignty in saving souls, both in the souls whom he chooses to save, in the instrumentality he uses in calling them, and in the conditions of mind in which he finds them when he it pleased to look upon them in mercy.

Now Hagar at that time — at the time when the angel called to her seemed to be in somewhat an unlikely state to be visited of God. She was, first of all, at that moment smarting under a sense of wrong. She felt that Sarah had not treated her well, and in all probability Sarah had not. The Eastern mistress is often very tyrannical towards her servants, and Hagar stood very much in the position of a slave. We do not doubt but what the jealous wife had been very severe — unjustly severe towards the woman. There she sat by the well, feeling bitterness in her own soul, that in the house of good people where she had expected better things she had been treated with injustice. It did not seem likely that the God of Abraham should call her, when her heart was seething like a pot with indignation against the household where God was worshipped. At the same time, as she turned the matter over and her soul grew more and more bitter within her, I should not wonder but what she felt she had brought a good deal of it upon herself. She was but the servant, and she had desired to play the mistress. She had despised the mistress; no doubt spoken to her very contemptuously; and now it had returned upon her, and she was made to suffer for her own pride. Her proud, fierce spirit, perhaps, did not admit it, but yet she must have felt in her conscience that much of what was wrong about her she had, notwithstanding, brought upon herself. Now when a person is under such a feeling as that, disturbed, tossed to and fro, vexed,

distracted, it does not seem a likely time for them to hear the voice of God speaking to their souls.

Moreover, at that moment she was leaving all that was good; she had turned her back upon the household, the chosen household — left it, I will not say deliberately, but at any rate she had left it; she was going down into Egypt — going “anywhere, anywhere out of the world,” so that she could but get away from the place where her bondage had become irksome. She was going she scarce knew where, but she did know probably that she was going into heathendom, among heathenish people. The best she could hope to meet with was separation from God. She could not but feel that it was black darkness which was before her, and she was rushing, madly into it because her high spirit would not bend — would not bow — would not yield before the majesty of the Most High. I think I see her there, her eyes red with weeping, her spirit broken down with the hunger of her journey, sitting a while and refreshed a moment, and resolved not to stoop and never to go back, and then again shuddering at the darkness that lay before her, and afraid to go on. It was in such a state as that that God met with her; to all intents and purposes she was a friendless, outcast woman. She had left the only tents where she could claim a shelter; she had gone into the wilderness — no father, no mother, no brother, no sister to care for her. She turned her back upon those who had any interest in her, and now she was left alone, alone, alone in a desert land, without an eye to pity or a hand to help. It was then, under those peculiar circumstances of trial and of sin commingled, that God met with her.

I have been wondering in my soul, when I burned over this text, whether there would stray into this Tabernacle some kindred case, and whether, though no angel spake, yet the voice of man might be to-night the voice of the messenger of the covenant to some poor soul. I know thee not by name, nor face, yet I know well thy feeling. It may be to-night thou art sorely angry, greatly vexed, smarting, wrathful, thou hast made up thy mind to choose the world and give up every semblance of that which is good. It may be to-night that thou hast lost everything that makes earth worth living in. Thou longest for death, thou wouldest almost seek the place where the lamps quiver on the dark river, for thy spirit is bitterness itself, thy lamp of hope is gone out. Oh! but it may be that this is the night when God’s mighty mercy is ordained to meet with thee — the very evening in which the Lord shall call out thy name, and thou shalt feel that he knows thee, thy case, and thy circumstances, and that he has come to

call thee to himself an thou never mightest have been called had not these extremities of shine brought God to thy rescue and to thy salvation! I do not suppose that there will be anyone whose case exactly resembles that of the text, but it has sometimes happened that the turning point of human life has been the point of great sorrow, and great penury, and distress of mind on account of some gigantic fault, or it has been the time of some dreadful alternative put before the soul, in which it seemed as though it must be God or devil that night, heaven or hell that night, eternal joy or eternal misery that night. On some such strange occasion as this in your mental history you have come here to-night; may God, who is here, speak with you. A singular season for mercy. Now, secondly, let us look at: —

II. THE MODE OF MERCY, OR THE HOME QUESTIONS WHICH THE ANGEL PUT TO HER.

She is sitting there by the well; it is in a desert; it may be a little oasis on the road; but there is no one within sight, nor any probability of any caravan passing that way. As she sits quite still she hears a voice, "Hagar." She starts, she looks up, and there is a brightness like the sun above her; brighter than the sun at noonday does it shine. She can scarce bear the light, and she hears it again, "Hagar, Sarah's maid." Whoever it is that is speaking knows who she is, and what she is, and all about her. "Whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?" She is so startled, she has just been thinking of the place from whence she came, and that dismal question had just been starting her mind. "Whither wilt thou go?" She felt that there was no place for her to go to. It was only a choice of equal horror she knew not where to go. Now remark this, that very often the gospel call comes to the sons of men not by a voice heard by the ear, but through the ministry in the way of describing the person's case with minute accuracy. It was the Savior's way of doing it when he was on earth. The woman was by the well; the Savior spoke to her. The words did not seem to take effect. He turned the subject, and he said, "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband," said she. If she could blush, she blushed then — "I have no husband." "Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband,' for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now best is not thy husband. In that midst thou truly." Then the shock went to her very heart; she perceived that he who spoke was something more than man. And when the gospel fully preached describes the sinner, paints him, photographs him, holds it before him, and makes him say, "Why, that is myself; he speaks of me — it

is even me," then it is that the soul perceives what Hagar perceived, that God saw her, and that she might look to God.

Now I shall not endeavor to make any picture of you, dear hearer. If I were to try it I could not do it; it is only the Lord himself that guides us in such matters; but I will put the question to you, "Whence comest thou?" Did you come into the condition in which you now are out of a godly parentage? Have you got into London sin, but was there a time once when you knelt at your mother's knee at eventide and repeated a gracious prayer? Ah! you have spent many a day and many a night in the haunts of sin! You were once a teacher in the Sabbath school — once a lover of the gospel (at least professedly so) which now you turn from and abhor. "Whence comest thou?" From old impressions that have been forgotten, from an old profession that has been disgraced, honorable once, dishonorable now — a servant of God once ostensibly, but now a servant at the devil's altar — a ringleader in sin it may be, though once thou wert at heaven's own gates. "Whence comest thou?" Remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent. And "whither wilt thou go?" Oh! let me put the question! You stand to-night just here, "Whither wilt thou go?" Another sin tempts thee to-night; wilt thou commit it? I would fain stand with thee, as the old Scythian did of old when his country was about to be invaded by the foe. He drew a line before the chieftain of the invading host, and said, "Cross that line, and there is war for ever; stay there, and there may be peace." I put a line before your steps to-night; in the name of the everlasting God, I charge you cease from that sin. Once more commit it, and it may be that no mercy's trumpet shall ever sound out a message of forgiveness to thee again. "Whither wilt thou go?" Oh! go not like a dog to thy vomit, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing; go not further, for "whither wilt thou go" in the future? A man who sins today will sin worse to-morrow, and the next day worse. Many a young man when he has commenced with what are called the follies of London life had no idea that he would end it debauched, depraved, and abandoned. Many a woman when she has once begun to trifle with sin had no idea that her name would be coupled one day with infamy. Many a young man at his master's till is scrupulously honest to-day, and never dreams that he will one day be a thief. Yet he is about to take a step that will surely make him so — the first step to evil. Oh! "whither wilt thou go?" I believe that many a man, many a woman, if they could go back twenty years and be young people again and have their history written, the true history as they lived it, would say, "I

never shall live so. Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" They would have been indignant at the supposition that they could ever be capable of the transgression into which they have now actually fallen.

"Whither wilt thou go?" Halt! halt! ye that are marching on to evil, halt! in the name of him that liveth, halt! lest you march to damnation, and take one step that shall be your inevitable ruin, for this is the worst of it.

"Whither wilt thou go?" The way of sin is the way of destruction. Men cannot sin and be happy. The end, the end, the end, the end of it, oh! think of it! It is not to-day, nor to-morrow, but it is that dying hour; nay, it is not that only, it is that hour when, up from among the dead, you shall arise amidst the ringing of the last judgment trump. It is that opening of the books, that reading of the several dooms that separation of the righteous from the wicked — it is that which hangs upon this question, "Whither wilt thou go?" Oh! go not to the judgment unforgiven go not to the judgment to be condemned, to be cast into the place "where their worm dieth not, and their fire its not quenched." God save you, sinner; may he says you to-night instrumentally by the force of those two questions, "Whence comest thou? Whither wilt thou go?"

And now let us notice, attentively, having observed the remarkable season and the home questions, let us notice attentively: —

III. THE DISCOVERY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The description had been so accurate; "Hagar, Sarah's maid." The questions had been so pertinent, had stuck so close to her soul; "Whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?" that she said, "It is God, it is God that speaks to me." And there came home to her what she had often heard before, but never felt. "There is a God; God is not an impalpable somebody up there, who has nothing to do with me, but there is God here, here, and he sees me; it is God that deals with me — not far away, asleep, or blind, but God sees me." Oh! it is a glorious thing when a soul starts up to that conviction, "I am not alone, I am not friendless after all, there is a God, and a God who sees me and who takes such notice of note that he speaks to me." A man is never saved until he gets to feel something of the nearness of God, God in Christ Jesus, but yet God. Consciousness of Deity is one of the marks of salvation. Now Hagar's thoughts must have been something like this. After all, there is somebody that has seen me, and marked all my past life, though I did not see him. He knows everything that I have done or thought, or said, and I perceive now that he has spoken to

me, that he cares about me. I thought Abraham did not care for me, Sarah was angry, and then I said, "No man cares for my soul, and I will away." Now I see that God was watching me, and he has cared about me, and though he did not interpose to help me just then, just when I was so bitterly oppressed, yet I know he has cared for me, for at last, when I was sitting on this well alone, he spoke to my soul. Sinner, I pray the Holy Ghost to make just this discovery to you, that, after all, God does care about you. He that made the heavens and the earth does think of you. Though you are little, and less than nothing as compared with the bulk of his vast creation, yet on you he sets his eyes, for you he has a care. "Well," said she in her soul, "seeing that he cares for me, he will interpose on my behalf." The angel, who make, spoke words of comfort to her heart — told her that there was a happier lot in future in store for her than she dreamed — sent her away with a comfortable word ringing in her ears. Oh! soul, I pray God to do that for thee to-night. Thou hast said, "God has forgotten me." He knows all about thee. It may be this is the truth — I hope it is — that thy name is written on the palms of Jesus' hands. What if it should turn out that thou, rebellious sinner that thou art, art one whom God loved before the foundation of the world? What if thou art one of his chosen, whom the Savior bought with blood? What if thou art one that shall surely sit in heaven, and wear the white robe, and sing the new song — what if thou art a favored one of the Most High? Oh! I think I hear you say, "If I had half a thought that that was true, I would not lie down in despair; I would up and bestir myself, and I would have done with my old companions; I would have done with my old sins, if that were true." Oh! soul, I cannot tell thee that it is true — I hope it is — but I can tell thee one thing that is true, namely, that if thou wilt now come and put thy trust in Jesus Christ, and repent of shine iniquities, then it is all true. I can only know shine election by thy calling; I can only tell thy calling by thy repentance and by thy faith, and if thou shouldest find peace to-night, and I pray thou mayest, then thou art God's beloved. He that made the heavens loves thee; he that made the earth bought thee with his blood, and heaven would not be complete without thee. What if thou hast been far off by wicked works, yet still thou art a child, and heaven shall yet ring with music on thy return. What if thou hast been lost in the filth of drunkenness and all manner of lasciviousness, yet still a piece of God's precious silver, the house shall be swept for thee, and the candle lit, and thou shalt be found and put into the Savior's treasury yet. Oh! what hope this ought to make well up in the poor hopeless sinner's heart! It is not because of your goodness, but because of

his infinite goodness that he comes to meet with you, unworthy as you are, for he sees you, sees you; with thoughts of love he sees you, and to-night he interposes as he calls you by your name.

Now when Hagar made that discovery she made another at the same time. She said, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" — as much as to say, and probably she had not known it before, that as God could come to her, so she could go to God. "God has looked after me, and now I can look after him." There is not a great gulf between the creature and the Creator. We can send messages to heaven, and receive blessings from heaven. She felt from that moment that God was real, and living, and appreciable, and that God would hear her prayers and answer her petitions, and had really and literally spoken to her. Oh! I do not know anything that puts such strength into a man, such encouragement, such joy, makes him so patient, as the belief that God has spoken to him — that God has spoken in words of love and promise to him. Why, from that day poor Hagar would say, "I will go back; I will go back. The God of Abraham has spoken to me. Abraham may be unkind, but I will bear it, for Abraham's God has spoken to me. Sarah may be more cross than ever — never mind, I do not know that I can tell her of it but oh! it will be such a joy in my soul — God has spoken to me, assured me of his favor, given me a blessing." Now that young man who thinks he has been so badly treated, if he gets his sins pardoned to-night, and the Lord speaks with him, he will go back and say, "I daresay I was as much to blame as anybody, but, whether or no, I am saved and I can put up with anything now." And that man that is so poor that he would hardly dare come even into this Tabernacle because his clothes were so shabby, and he was ready to say, "I will give up the battle of life; I will never try again" — oh! if he were able to say, "I know that God has spoken with me to-night, brought me to the Savior's feet, and blotted out my sin" — oh! dear brother, you will pick up the weapons again and go to the battle of life once more, and your poverty will seem to have lost its edge; the bitterness will have departed; the iron will not enter into your soul. Get a word from God, and know that you are his child, and you can say, "Now blow ye winds, rage ye waves, and all ye elements let forth your fury, the God that rules you all is now my friend; no hurt can you do to me." If you notice, it was just so with Hagar when she had heard the voice of the Lord, and perceived that God saw her and that she could speak to God — then at once she went back. Told to go back, back she went — submitted herself. You don't find her again personally —

though the old blood came up afterwards in her son — you don't find her quarrelling with her mistress, but she patiently bears her lot, in the recollection of the blessing that she had received. This is just the way with men, wilful, wayward, headstrong — when they get the grace of God, they bend their shoulders to Christ's yoke and they become tame and gentle. Because they are happy in God's love they are patient at the ills of this life. Remember the story of the poor raving maniac. They had often bound him with chains, but he snapped them asunder. He had left his family gone to dwell among the tombs. He made night hideous with his screams and howlings. Men dared not pass that way, for he was worse than a wild beast. He had cut himself and rent his flesh, torn himself with stones and briars — none could tame him. But after Jesus had said to the evil spirit, "I charge thee that thou come out of him," we find him clothed, which he had not been for many a day, in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus. Oh! if some wild spirit be here now, some spirit driven to it by suffering, by neglect, by injustice from others, and also by its own personal sin, if the Lord bring thee to trust in Jesus, his dear Son, and see thy sin all laid upon him, then thou wilt, even at this moment, be a different man. Thy wife will source know thee, nor thy children either; thou wilt become another thou thou hast ever been before. Thou wilt go back to thy business, back to thy burdens, back to thy sufferings, and bear it all for the sake of him that spake out of heaven and saved thy soul.

Now the most of this I daresay is not applicable to the most of you. You know I have been thinking, while preaching, that you might say I had not been preaching except to some one or two that were here. Well, I will tell you my excuse. "What man of you, if he hath an hundred sheep, if he lose one, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go after that which is gone astray?" After that gone-astray one I have gone, and my Master too. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

1 CORINTHIANS 13; EPHESIANS 1.

Verse 1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol.*

If there be no love to God, and no love to man, the vital element is wanting. Whatever sound we make if the Word of God is not in us, it is a sound that has no meaning, conveys no heavenly meaning. “I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” What if any of us who bear witness for Christ with our tongues should be found to be no better than this?

2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Judas had, no doubt, faith in God’s miracles, but yet he was not saved. Selfishness was his ruling motive; he had no love to God or man. How this clips the wings of those lofty ones who hover on high, boasting of their knowledge and of their gifts! There are many who have few gifts — obscure and unknown — who love God much, and these are the accepted ones. Before God the balances of the sanctuary are rather turned by the shekel of love, than by any weight of talent or position.

3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Love is a matter of the heart, and if the heart be not right with God, external acts, though they are very similar to the highest acts that flow from love, are of no service. God requires the heart to be right, and if that be not right, whatever cometh out of us is not acceptable in his sight.

4, 5. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.

Always try to put the best construction on other people’s actions and work. Let gentleness triumph.

6-11. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I become a man, I put away childish things.

Much of what we call knowledge, much of what we call eloquence, will all be put away. As our spiritual growth shall increase, we shall not want these childish things.

12, 13. *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;*

Three abiding graces. Some have said that faith and hope will not be found in heaven. Why not? Why not? It seems to me there will be plenty of room for them — plenty of space for them. Am I to be an unbeliever when I get to heaven then? Am I not to believe when my disembodied spirit goes to heaven? Am I not to believe in the resurrection of the dead? Am I not hopefully to expect it? Am I not in heaven to believe in the second advent of Christ? Am I not to be hoping for it? Am I not to believe in the complete conquest of Christ, and that he shall reign from the river, even to the ends of the earth? And am I not to hope for it? To miss faith and hope in heaven were to miss two things which the Apostle expressly tells us are the abiding things.

13. *But the greatest of these is charity.*

It is the highest, the pinnacle. It is not the foundation — that is faith. Just as a rose in full bloom is greater than the stem that bears it, so, whilst faith is most needful, and hope most cheering, love is the most beautiful and brightest of the three.

EPHESIANS I.

Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,*

He was not made an apostle by man, neither did he hake the office upon himself, but he was made an apostle by the will of God.

1. *To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

The saints in Ephesus, the saints where they cried, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” had to bear an earnest witness against idolatry. And, dear friends, to-day saints in London will not have a very easy time of it if they are faithful to their Lord, for there is much to protest against in this evil generation; but as there were holy ones in Ephesus, God grant-that there may be many such in London.

2. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul would have us peaceful, restful, quiet. That peace must be based upon grace, He does not pray that we may have peace apart from grace, but “Grace be to you, and peace.”

3, 4. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,

The high mystery of election is taught in the Word of God, but some are afraid to speak of it. Not so our Apostle. He brings it out very clearly and distinctly, and so should we, only taking care to keep it in the proportion of other doctrines.

4, 5. That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

You hear much about the free will of man. Hear a little about the free will of God, You would think, from the talk of some, that God was man’s debtor and must needs do according to the will of man. But it is not so. He is a sovereign, and gives his grace where he chooses, and he would have us know that it is according to the good pleasure of his will.

6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Are there four words in any language which contain choicer meaning than these, “Accepted in the Beloved”? Oh! if you can say that, if you can feel it to be true, you are among the happiest of men and women.

“Accepted in the Beloved.” You can never be accepted apart from Christ, the Father’s best Beloved. But there is merit enough in him to overflow and cover all our sins, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:

Notice how the Apostle keeps on insisting that we have everything in Christ. He says, times out of number, “in him,” “in Christ.” We have redemption. We are free. We are under bonds no longer. What is the price?

“Through his blood.” What is the result? “Forgiveness of sins.” What is the measure of our liberty? “According to the riches of his grace.”

8. *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

Not drowning us with floods of his grace, but handing it out to us as we are able to take it. The riches of his grace we have, but he uses wisdom and prudence, teaching us little by little as we are able to bear it, *and* raising us up by degrees from one stage of grace to another, according as our poor frames can endure the joy.

9, 10. *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

There are things in Christ in heaven: there the things in Christ on earth; but all the things in Christ shall be gathered together. All the redeemed shall come as one great host to bow before the throne of the infinite Majesty.

11. *In whom also*

Notice those words.

11. *We have obtained an inheritance,*

We have got the inheritance. Even now we have entered upon possession of the kingdom of grace.

11, 12. *Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

The first saints led the way in the front of the army, and they are to the praise of God’s glory to this day. We thank God for the apostles and martyrs who went before us. We will follow them as they followed Christ.

13. *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*

After faith, the Holy Spirit is given to dwell in the soul. That is the seal. It is not that the Holy Spirit brings a seal with him. He is the seal. Where he dwells, he is the seal of God’s love to that man.

14. *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

The Holy Ghost is first the seal, and next the earnest. We all know what an earnest is. It is different from a pledge. A pledge is given, and then it is taken back again when the stipulation is carried out, But an earnest is part of what is to be received ultimately. The man who receives an earnest of his wage gets a few shillings, say, on Thursday, instead of taking all on Saturday. He never returns that. It is a part of his wage. And so the Holy Ghost is a part of him. When we have got him, we have got Christ.

*“Thou art the earnest of his love,
The pledge of joys to come;
And thy soft wings, Celestial Dove,
Shall safe convey me home.”*

15, 16. *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

Is that the way that we pray? Do we make mention of people in our prayers? It is well to do so. It is a good plan to keep a list of persons for whom we ought to pray, and to put it before us when we draw near to God, and go over the names. I knew one man of God who has kept a debtor and creditor list with God for many years. He puts his requests down in the book, and when they are answered he puts float down, and if they are not answered he repeats them. It is a very wonderful book. I think that he bold me that there is a name down there of a Person for whom he has prayed, and that he is not converted yet, and that out of several for whom he began to pray, he is the only one who is not converted, and that he is the only one that is alive. The others were brought to Christ, and died in the faith, and he, not yet brought to Christ, still lives, and my friend prays on with as great a confidence of the conversion of that man as I have that Christmas will come in due time. I wish that we did business with God in some such fashion as that, but our prayers are shadowy, unreal. God leach us how to pray!

17, 18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,*

You see he gave thanks to God for their faith and for their love. But there are three divine sisters that must never be separated — faith, hope, and love, and so the Apostle prays, “that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.”

18-21. *And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to he working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

See how high Christ is raised! The same power that brought Christ from the dead, and set him on high, works in the salvation of every believer. Nothing less than omnipotence can save a soul; and omnipotence at its very best in the glorification of Christ is none too great for the salvation of a sinner.

22, 23. *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*

May God bless to us the reading of that chapter.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” — Matthew 26:29.

SUCH words could hardly have been spoken at such a time by our Lord Jesus Christ without some deep significance. Let us, then, reverently enquire into their meaning. What thoughts were those that stirred in his own breast? What lessons did he convey to his beloved disciples? And, first, does not our Lord here express:

I. HIS RENUNCIATION FROM THAT MOMENT OF ALL THE JOYS AND COMFORTS OF LIFE?

Putting aside the cup that was filled with the juice of the vine, he said, “I shall henceforth no more drink of this fruit of the vine.” Here he bids farewell to social cheer. Whatever little comforts he had enjoyed were now to be quitted. He had never been rich; full often he had not where to lay his head. His clothing had always been that of a simple peasant: “a garment without seam” had sufficed for him. Scanty the rest he had ever known; little luxury he had ever enjoyed; but now he cloth, as it were, solemnly relinquish every creature gratification, “I will henceforth no more drink of fruit of the vine.” Not as one who had been satiated with the comforts or surfeited with the pleasures of life did our Lord and Master speak. It is no uncommon thing for the pleasure seekers of the world to feel the strongest aversion to the indulgences for which they once had the keenest relish. The world’s joy cloy, its sweet honey sickens on the palate, its most fascinating entertainments, by constant repetition, pall the faculty of

enjoying them. Our Savior had encountered life in its sterner moods. His main aim was to discharge its duties, not to divert himself with its amenities. Nor did he put aside that cup out of any ostentation, as though he affected a stoical indifference. We all know that refreshment is needed to recruit the energies of the laborer or the sufferer. Nothing could be less in keeping with our Lord's disposition than a gloomy asceticism. Yet he willingly now, before his disciples, renounces all that there was of this world's good. Taking, then, this wine-cup as a symbol, and understanding it to represent earthly cheer, we observe how significantly he puts it aside; he will partake of it no more. We ask the reason why, in the presence of so strong a determination, so clear a prediction.

But before I attempt to answer the question, let me remind you that there are occasions in the Christian life when a man is bound to give up all his comforts for Christ's sake. It is by no means impossible or improbable that honest principle and sterling integrity may demand of you or me a total surrender of everything, which we have been accustomed to hold dear. A sincere Christian must maintain his conscience, even if he can scarcely maintain himself. He must come down from the broadcloth to the fustian, from the mansion to the cottage, from riding in his carriage to trudging on foot. Our fathers did it, and they did it on principle; they did it for Christ's sake. The martyrs did more; they laid down their lives upon the altar when Christ's cause demanded it. The like times may come back to us again. In the competition of the unscrupulous, the righteous must suffer. Business is rotten through and through nowadays. The whole style of conducting your merchandise is so doubly dyed in deceit, that I should not marvel if a Christian man often finds himself a loser by doing the right thing and maintaining a strict integrity. But we must sooner be losers in this way than lose our acceptance with God. We must be willing to sink in the world's esteem, and be counted fools, for Christ's sake rather than amass riches and rise to a position of commercial influence through any equivocal dealings or any sort of duplicity. We must keep our consciences from being soiled with the wiles and stratagems of those whose ingenuity is always directed to the promotion of bubble companies, or the practice of some disingenuous finesse, whereby they lie in wait to deceive the unwary. Refrain yourselves every false way. But do not vaunt your own purity or be ostentatious of your own virtue, as if you were better than others. Above all things, do not make a cross for yourselves, and then put it on your own back, and act the martyr. But when you must take up your cross for your

Master's sake, do it as he did, with fidelity, yet with meekness, and say, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine; I will no more seek the esteem of my fellows; I will no more cultivate the world's friendship; I will no more foster the affection of those who once loved me in my sins; I will give up anything; I will give up everything; I will give up life itself, if need be, that I may glorify God, as my Lord and Master did."

Now why did our Lord thus say, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine"? It was because now he had other work to do; he must, therefore, forego all that would stand in the way of his accomplishing it. He had to sweat the bloody sweat; he had to stand accused before Pilate and Herod; he had to bear his cross through Jerusalem's malicious crowds; he had to give his hands to the nails, and his feet to the cruel iron. These were no times for thinking of comforts. And the cause of the Master may some times make the like demands upon us. The man who will devote himself to the mission-field must be willing to dispense with much of that personal and social comfort and gratification which those who stay at home look upon as the best recompense of their daily toil. The minister of Christ, if he would serve his Master diligently, must deny himself the rest and ease to which he would have a right if he were engaged in secular pursuits. For your Master's work you must be prepared to forsake all, and yield yourself up to him unreservedly. You are not true to Christ, nor fit to put your hand to his plough, if you pull that hand back because it involves any sacrifice, however heavy. If Christ gave up the wine-cup, and renounced by that act everything like the comforts of life, you, too, if you have noble work to do for God, must follow his example, and in so doing you shall have your reward.

Our Savior did this, again, because his love to men constrained him. Giving up the fruit of the vine was not in itself a great act of self-negation, but as a symbol it was very significant. As I have already observe, it betokened his putting aside everything that is considered gratifying and joyous in life. Jesus Christ; out of love to us, gave up all. The heaven of heavens could not contain him. The adoration of angels fell short of his glory. He was "God over all, blessed for ever." Yet a manger held him, and a cross upheld him! What a stoop was that — from the highest throne in glory to be a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, and this out of love to those who hated him, and proved their hate by putting him to death! Most sweetly will this truth refresh us if we remember that it was out of love to us. We deserved nothing of him. Love to miserable sinners, nothing but

pure love, could have led him to resign his gracious breath. He loved me ere I had a thought of love to him. He loved you when you were struggling against his grace and defying all his law. Oh! think of his giving up everything out of ardent love! How this ought to nerve us for toil or suffering! How it ought to inflame us with love to him! How willing it should make us to give up anything out of love to him, and love to our fellow-men! Alas! that so few of us ever make sacrifices out. of love to souls! We can do a little ordinary service which involves but little fatigue and little inconvenience, but oh! to have the old spirit of chivalry burning in our breasts which would make us cask ourselves upon the very teeth of death out of zeal for the cause of Christ! Oh! that some young men here could be moved by the love of Jesus to give themselves up from this moment to live and die for him! Oh! that some holy women would renew their early consecration vows, and from this very hour be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of none beside! The Church wants some few conspicuous specimens of self-denying holiness, and mayhap those few, like standard-bearers lifting up the ensign, would attract many others, and the Church might lift herself up from the low level of our poor, weak, beggarly profession. We might then serve Jesus a little after the manner that he deserves to be served, and surrender ourselves to him more after the fashion of his surrendering himself for us.

I take it that this no more drinking of the fruit of the vine means more than my tongue could ever tell, though I spoke on for many an hour. So I leave the thought with you. It is Jesus renouncing all that makes life happy; giving up everything that cheers and gladdens; sanctifying himself for our sakes, because he is galled to a noble work by his Father and by his God. But now, secondly, I would have you think of our Lord: —

II. AS TAKING FAREWELL OF EARTH.

He took the cup, and, making that the symbol of everything below, he said, “I will no, more drink of this fruit of the vine.” He bade farewell to his disciples, and to the earth, upon which he had lived for three and thirty years, and this he did without any repining. He did not say, “Why am I taken away in the strength of my days? Why, when scarce forty years old, must my sun go down at noon? Why, ere I have attained the full age of man, must I be laid in the grave?” No, not a word of it, and when your turn and mine shall come to bid farewell to everything on earth, and to part with all below, may we cheerfully yield to the summons without one single

word of repining against God! Oh! Lord, thou hast called me home to rest; it was but morning, and my work was scarce begun, and I had fondly mapped it out in the hope of much service to thyself and thy Church, but if thou biddest me come home, I will thank thee that I have not to bear the heat and burden of the day. Or if it be in middle life, just when my work is about me, and I am busy in the vineyard, that my time of departure should come, may I still be content! There are the plants and flowers I have so, fondly nurtured; yonder is a tree that was about to bud, and here is what I hoped would be a fruit-bearing vine, but, Master, though I should like to have seen all these reach their maturity, and though my pride may say, "What will the Church do without me when I am gone?" yet, Lord, thou didst without me ere I was born, and so here in the strength of my days thou callest me to leave these things, and I come, I come. And if the call shall come to you at night, or towards evening — as it will do, I know, to some of you, dear brethren and sisters, who are getting grey and old in years — I hope you will feel, "Lord, it is well; our day's work is over; the shadows have lengthened; it is time to fall asleep; we do not stand so much in the earth as on it; we are waiting to be taken home, to be gathered into the garner." Yes, without regret, I say, without any repining against the will of God, may we heave the anchor and go into port; may we just quietly shut our eyes on earth, and open them in heaven to behold the beatific vision, without having made our last word on earth to be an act of rebellion by lamenting that the voice says, "Rise up, and Come away."

Our Lord did not withdraw from the world as an ascetic. He did not dash the cup to the ground, or denounce its contents. He did not put away life, saying, "It is sour; I will taste no more of it." I think I have heard some people talk about life with very much of that bitter spirit which cannot brook its toils and cares. They want to go home, they tell us, when in truth there is more infirmity than faith in the wish they express. They are idle. They are not willing to bear the cross. They are weary of suffering for their Master. Oh! shame on us if we are like lazy workmen, always looking for Saturday nights! Such fellows are never worth their pay. Shame upon us if we be courting the grave that we may rest from our labors while there are yet wanderers to be sought, outcasts to be restored, sinners to be saved! Are there not kinsfolk and neighbors of ours that can hear the gospel from our lips? Are there no children to be taught in our schools? Are there no little ones to be lifted out from the miry clay? Are there not fresh battles to be fought for Christ; new enterprises to be carried forward; regions beyond

to be explored? If you have a real interest in the Redeemer's kingdom, you may well ask a longer life if it be God's will that you may take a larger share in these labors of love, and have weightier crowns to present to that dear Savior who has gone before us to prepare mansions for our rest. Thus, without repining on the one hand, or even a tinge of aceticism on the other hand, he puts away the cup with as cheerful an air as he took it. He sets his face towards death. "I will no more drink."

And then notice how he stops, as it were on the way. His composure is unruffled, as though death were to him but the goal of his earthly career, or rather a station on his journey to heaven. He knows he is about to depart, and yet he deplores it not, for he perceives that it is expedient for his disciples and for himself that he should go away. Oh! that when our days below come to a close, when we hear the Master's call, and feel the symptoms of approaching death, we may not be dismayed or affrighted! God grant that we may take leave of this mortal life with peaceful confidence and holy calm! Should our exit be slow and painful, may we be steadfast in faith and full of patience! Or should it be otherwise, sudden and unexpected, may we be no less prepared and ready! Floods of wrath rose high at our Lord's death, but there shall be no such tumult about ours. The curse gathered around his dying head; a blessing shall make a halo around ours. There was no sort of pallet for him to die upon; the cross was his couch. The sweet comfort of looking up to God was wanting to him. "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,*" was his dying cry. But we have our Lord to meet us, and he has promised that he will make our bed in our sickness. Our third reflection shall be this: —

III. OUR LORD'S WORDS CONTAINED HIS DYING ANTICIPATION.

Saith he not, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom"? He knew he should die, but he knew that that was not the end; he expected happier and brighter days, fairer banquets, fresher wine, and purer joys. Now did Christ mean heaven? I think he did, though that was not all. Yet were it heaven which he just then anticipated? Follow out the prospect. Does he not picture heaven to us as a place of festive enjoyment? When he says, "I shall drink no more this fruit of the vine now with you," does he not imply that in heaven is the meeting-place of them that triumph, and the state-rooms of them that feast? All the enjoyments that can be imagined, and more, belong to the beatific state of the glorified. Whatever could conduce to make an

intellectual mind happy, whatever could tend to make a refined spirit full of bliss, shall be our portion. At God's right hand there are rivers of joy and pleasures for evermore.

We learn, too, that the joys of heaven are social, for Jesus says, "Until I drink it new with you." I wonder what those make of heaven who think we shall not recognize one another there! I rather admire the reply of a good minister to his wife, who, when she asked him whether he should know her in heaven, said, "Know you in heaven! Of course, I shall; I know you here, and I shall not be, a greater fool there than I am here." We are to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and they will not have golden masks or veils that shall cover their faces. Heaven is a place where they shall eat and drink, and rejoice together, and I take it that much of the joy of heaven will consist in seeing the bright spirits whom we shall recognize as being men and women in whom Christ's Spirit dwelt on earth, and in whom Christ's shall dwell above. Oh! I reckon on meeting David, whose Psalms have so often cheered my soul. I long to meet with Martin Luther and Calvin, and to have the power of seeing such men as Whitfield and Wesley, and walking and talking with them in the golden streets. Yes, heaven would scarcely be so full of charms in the prospect if there were not the full conviction in our minds that we should know the saints, and feast with them after a spiritual sort.

But still Our Lord's description of heaven represents himself as happy, and happy faith his people, "Until I drink it new with you." Alas! these earthly banquets are too often so vitiated with revelry and excess, that while using them as emblems of the feast above, I feel as if I half dishonored that feast. In many cases the festivities of earth have become so degraded and wicked that the Christian shrinks from mingling with them. But we shall drink it new — this wine of heaven. The wine of heaven shall be nought that can make us sin, or even think of evil. There shall be in it nothing impure or polluted.

*"Pure are the joys above the skies,
And all the region peace."*

And those joys will not be like those of earth — fickle and frothy, volatile and variable, by reason of which we are often lifted up, only to betray our weakness and presumption. The wine will be new; it will be holier joy, purer, sweeter. It will be a divine joy, in which Christ will have his share, and we, his people, shall each one take our portion.

I have been wondering what will be the exhilarating contents of the windup that we shall drink with Christ in heaven. I think it will be partly the joy of hearing that sinners repent on earth. We shall hear about it. The angels do. "There is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Oh! how glad we shall be when we hear that after we were dead and gone our dear boy was converted, and that in that place where we were once wont to assemble God's Spirit is still resting on the ministry. It will be a joy to hear the angels come and tell of tens of thousands of sinners brought to Jesus weeping, and finding pardon in his blood. There is a grand cup in store for you that love souls, when you shall hear these good tidings. It is Christ's cup, I know, but you, too, shall drink of it.

Another ingredient of the joy will be to see the saints holding on their way and increasing in their likeness to Christ — to see the boy growing up and resisting temptation, and all his spiritual faculties developing. It is the joy of Christ to see his saints below growing in grace and persevering under difficulties, and that is the cup of which we shall drink too. We shall be cheered by seeing our brethren who will be fighting the battle in this world when we have quitted it. Shall we see them? See them! Why not? What says the Apostle? "Seeing that we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Who are the "witnesses" but those bright and immaculate spirits who, from the battlements of heaven, look downward rejoice as they see us win the race? And we shall Soon take our place among the spectators, and look down and see the race of the righteous whom we have left behind, and rejoice as we see them win their crowns.

Another ingredient of that heavenly cup will be to see the saints come up to heaven. Oh! what bliss it is to Christ as, one by one, they come up to his bosom, the purchase of his agonies, each one exhibiting the power of his grace in the change of their nature. If I could get a place hard by the gate, how I should like to welcome one of the younger ones of this congregation who may not arrive till long rafter we have entered into rest! Yes, Christ is not losing his reward. He does see of his soul's travail, and how we, too, will clap our hands as we say to one another: —

*"They come, they come, thine exiled bands,
Where'er they rest or roam,
Have heard thy voice in distant lands,
And hasten to their home.*

*“Thus, though the universe shall burn,
And God his works destroy,
With songs thy ransomed shall return,
And everlasting joy”*

Above all, and perhaps best of all, the wine-cups of heaven are filled with the brimming, sparkling joy of delight in God’s glory. In the latter days the hymn that now breaks on Christian ears shall salute the ear of every savage and barbarian. They that go down to the sea in ships shall sing the name of Christ as they spread the sail. The ranger in Arabia’s deserts shall listen to the name of Jesus, the Savior of men. Far off the swarthy inhabitants of Africa’s sunny plains, and up yonder, where the sun scarcely shines on the natives of frosty Labrador, in every region of the earth, prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. God shall be glorified, the whole world shall become an altar for God’s praise; his saints shall worship him, and sin, death, and hell shall be overturned, and Christ, if he drinks of this cup new in his Father’s kingdom, will give us who share in his struggle to partake also in his victory.

But surely this is not all. I think when Christ said, “Until I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom,” he referred to his second, coming to the establishment of the kingdom of God; to the millennial splendor of the Redeemer’s reign, and to that which will close it, when he shall deliver up the kingdom, the mediatorial kingdom, to God, even the Father, and God shall be All in All. I am not going to prophesy. That is not my line. Those brethren who can prophesy succeed so admirably well in duping their followers, and also in contradicting one another, that I feel no inclination to enlist in their ranks; but if I can make anything out of God’s Word, it is clear that a day shall come when the cause of Christ; shall have supremacy, when the kingdom of God shall be among men, when here on earth the Jew shall own the Messiah, and the nations of the Gentiles shall come bending before his throne. There is to be a time when universal peace shall prevail; when the sword shall be beaten into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning-hook; and there is to be a day when Satan shall be bound and cast into his infernal den in prison; when death and hell also are to be cast into the lake of fire. I take that to mean that there will be a day when good will triumph over evil; when righteousness will vanquish iniquity; when God shall have put beneath his feet manifestly before the sons of men all those rebel bands of demons and men who stood out against him, and all the

consequences of their sin in diminishing the glory of God shall be for ever put away. Such a day shall come, when the great hallelujah shall be sung; when the marriage banqueting-table shall be spread; when every elect soul shall sit at it, with Christ at the head; when every soul redeemed by Jesus' blood from among men. every soul quickened by the Holy Ghost and kept by the power of God unto salvation, shall, with his body raised from the dead, being perfect according to the adoption and the promise, stand up, with Christ at the head, and: —

*“Sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb,
And sing hallelujah for ever, Amen.”*

Then shall this glorious wine-cup of the New Jerusalem's best wine be passed from lip to lip. Then shall God be worshipped by all his redeemed. Then shall tears be wiped away, and sin and grief shall cease for ever. Then shall be fulfilled the saying of the Master, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” Roll on, ye wheels of time, roll on and bring the glorious day, and may we be there! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

ROMANS 8:26-30; REVELATION 21:10-27; 22:1-5.

Verse 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

Groanings, then, are prayers, are, and prayers which the Spirit of God most certainly hears. And those desires which altogether exhaust language, or which cannot be put into language by reason of the exhaustion of our sorrow, these are nevertheless heard of God, for the Spirit of God is in them.

27. *And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

That is, when the mind lies still, and God the Holy Spirit writes his will upon it, and also writes God's will. Hence such prayers are sure to be effectual, for they are but the shadow of God's secret purpose falling upon

the soul as a kind of prelude to the coming fulfillment of that purpose. Saints' prayers are prophets of God's mercies. We are sure of it; we have no doubt whatever; we know it by experience, as well as by revelation.

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God*

Not yet "all mankind," but these who "love God."

28. *To them who are the called according to his purpose.*

For they would never have loved God if he had not called them to it, and had not purposed to call them.

29, 30. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he else glorified.*

One is tempted to linger over that golden chain, and examine every link. it will suffice, however, to observe that every link is well fastened to the next. Where there is the "foreknowledge," which is alias the "forelove," there is also "elect" — there must be "called" — there shall certainly be "justification," and where that is, there must be "glory."

REVELATION 21:10-27; 22:1-5.

Here we shall see a picture of what the Church of God is to be in the latter days; but inasmuch as this vision came out of heaven, it gives us an idea of what is in heaven already. Crowded as it is with almost impossible beauties, this description is given to us to let us think, and by faith conceive, of the glories of the future state.

Verses 10, 11. *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

But what the glory of God may be, what mortal mind can imagine. All the imagery which the Apostle uses must fall far short of that simple expression, "Having the glory of God." That glory is to be upon the

Church, and upon every individual member of it. The glory of every believer shall be nothing less than the glory of God.

12, 13. *And had a wall great and high. and had twelve gates, and at the gate twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

From every quarter of the world God's chosen shall come and find a gate straight before them, an entrance into heaven. Die at the Equator, or die at the Pole, there is an immediate entrance into the rest of God from any place where we may die. Blessed be the name of God for this.

14-16. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

This is an idea scarcely to be grasped, to see a city which is as high as it is broad. Such cities cannot exist on earth. They are meant for that glorious future state. They will exist under the new heavens and in the new earth, for which we look at the coming of our Lord.

17, 18. *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was of pure gold. like unto clear glass.*

All these joys are without sediment of sin. Gold on earth is a dull thing. You cannot look into it. But the joys of heaven, if compared to gold, must be diaphanous. "Pure gold like unto clear glass" — all the earth taken out of it, from all its earthly grossness quit. The joy of heaven is divine.

19, 20. *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

See how lovingly our Apostle counts the foundations. He might have run them tall into one, and said, “The foundations were of these twelve stones,” but it must be the first foundation, the second, the third, the fourth. He dwells on every one. The joys of heaven will bear dwelling upon; they will bear reflection. Here our joys, when they are over, leave but a handful of thorns — but a handful of ashes like thorns that crackle and blaze under the pot, and leave little behind them. But *the* joys eternal and spiritual will bear for us to go into detail, and each one shall be most precious.

21. *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.*

Whoever *heard* of such pearls? In what ocean but in the depth of God could such pearls be found? The twelve gates were twelve pearls.

21. *Every several gate was one of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

Streets are used for fellowship. There men meet each other, and the fellowship of heaven will be golden, bright, clear, perfect. Here, when we meet with one another, we soon display and discover our mutual faults, but there they shall delight each other with their common beauty, all the beauties being borrowed from the Lamb, who is the glory of the place.

22. *And I saw no temple therein.*

For it was all one temple.

22, 23. *For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

Let us be going that way soon, brothers. Ah! my brothers, may we all meet there. What must it be to be there!

24-27. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

REVELATION 22.

Verses 1, 2. *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Abounding joy, varied joy, ever changing, yet ever perfect; a tree which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yet fruits every month. Oh! when shall we get away to those golden orchards; when shall we sit under those vines, and press the clusters with our lips?

3. *And there shall be no more curse:*

Of labor, of sin, of sorrow, of death.

3. *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it:*

So that we shall all be in the throne-room, all beholding the King in his beauty, and ourselves made his courtiers.

3. *And his servants shall serve him:*

That is heaven to me, for here we sometimes are unable to serve him as we would. We are distracted, worried, carried away from holy service by multitudes of cares, but there his servants shall serve him.

4. *And they shall see his face:*

What a happy blending — service and communion — the hands busy, but the eyes ravished with the wondrous sight of the face of God! Thou shalt see his face. If any of us could see the face of God on earth, no doubt we should die. The vision would be too bright for us. When one heard this. one of the greatest saints, he said, “Then let me see it and die,” and I do not wonder that he said so, for the sight of God, even should we die here, must still be perpetual, and it would make us live again.

“They shall see his face.”

4. *And his name shall be in their foreheads,*

Their faces made like God’s face, then — his name, his character, reflected on their brows — is not this worth having?

5. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and*

They themselves shall be kings. They shall reign for ever and ever.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, 14TH APRIL, 1872.

“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” — Hosea 10:2.

THIS was originally spoken of the kingdom of Israel. For many years they had been under a king who commanded the worship of Baal, and persecuted the worshippers of Jehovah. God chastened the people very sorely for this, but he did not utterly destroy them. At last Hoshea, the king, came to the throne. He was the last king of Israel, and it is very remarkable that it is said of him that he was much better than those that went before him. He did not evil in the sight of the Lord after the manner of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He was not what could be wished, but still he was not like the rest; and it seems very odd to a person who reads it casually that God should spare the nation under worse kings, and then should carry it away into captivity, when they had for once in a while a far better king. But the matter is explained thus. Hoshea withdrew the curse of persecution from the people, and they were left free to follow Jehovah. While they were persecuted — compelled to worship Baal, God, as it were, had compassion upon them. He abhorred their idolatry, but still his anger did not burn against them to the same degree as it did afterwards when they were left to do as they pleased, and religious persecution was withdrawn and the pressure was taken off. Then, when there began to be an internal discussion and strife, and some went after the true God, and others still followed the old idol, then it was that God saw that the nation was incurable. They were altogether set upon evil, and he said, “Their heart

is divided; now shall they be found faulty,” or it might be read, “Now shall they be condemned.” From which I gather that a sin in a certain case may be overlooked for a while, and that the same sin under another circumstance may be speedily punished. God knows the circumstances of temptation in which a man may be placed, and though the forge of temptation is not an excuse for sin, it may serve as a mitigation of it. A person under a tyrannizing power who is driven to sin by fear may be far less guilty than another who is under no such constraint, but who wilfully of his own heart chooses the evil, and God may bear a long time with the same sin in one man under certain circumstances, which in another under different circumstances shall provoke him at once to anger, and he shall sweep off the man from the face of the earth. Beware, dear hearers, of deliberate sin. Beware of the sin which is of your own choosing. I may say, beware of all sin, for in a measure it is deliberate, and of your own choosing, but especially that sin which is not brought upon you by any pressure, but simply by your own wilful disobedience to God. This is a crying sin, and one which God will not long put up with.

And now I shall take the language of the text, and apply it in other ways. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.

I. THIS MAY BE TRUE OF ANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

It has long been my joy, beloved in the Lord, that our heart has not been divided. We have walked together these many years in holy fellowship, and, imperfect as we are, yet there have not been divisions among us. There has been no division about doctrine. We have agreed upon the great truths of God. There has been, I believe, no division about who shall be greatest. We have been content each one to occupy his place in the church, and to work on. It is not our goodness that has made it so; it is only the power of God’s Spirit which has kept us, who otherwise might readily have been sundered — kept us as the heart of one man in sacred unity. Oh! let it always be so — let it always be so! May these eyes be closed in the darkness of death long before I shall set you contending the one against the other. If it should ever happen that I should be unfit to go in and out among you to your edification, may I be laid aside, and some other found round whom you may rally as one man, that by any means and every means the church may be kept in its integrity one in heart — a threefold cord cannot be broken. Let each man endeavor to avoid giving offense to his brother. Let us all be members unto edification of the same one Lord, one

faith, one baptism. May the same Spirit abide in us, and work with us to God's glory, for we well know that a divided church is found faulty. It is faulty so far as anything like usefulness is concerned. The strength that is spent in division is so much taken away from service. When the children of God use their swords against one another, they are not using them against the adversaries of the Lord. May our strength never be spent in division. A house divided against itself must come to naught, but strong in the unity which God shall give us may we not be found faulty. I will not dwell upon that, however, but remark that the text: —

II. MAY BE USED AGAIN OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.

One-heartedness in a Christian is a great point. "Unite my heart to fear thy name" is a prayer which every Christian should pray always. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double-hearted Christian — what shall I say of him? He is like the eye which when it is single fills the body with light, but if it hath lost its singleness it causes the body to be darkness; and if the light that is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness! Though a Christian deep down in his soul cannot be divided in heart, but must love his God, yet there may be very much of division of pursuit, division of aim and object in Christian men. And, brethren and sisters, may I not suggest that it may be so with some of you, that your hearts may be divided, and therefore you are found faulty? Take the Christian man who desires to serve God, but still is equally desirous to amass wealth. Such a man — may God not put him into the scales and judge him, for I fear he will be found wanting; but if his desire for wealth be even subordinate to that of the glory of God only in a slight degree he will never attain to any great eminence in the divine life. He cannot. In proportion as his vital force is divided and drawn away from the main business of life, he will become spiritually lean, even if he become pecuniarily rich. He may be a millionaire in the world, but he will be a pauper in the church. He may be a "strong" man on the market, but he shall be a very dwarf in the house of God. There will sure to be a faultiness where the heart is so divided. The most charitable construction we can put upon it is that there are darker evils.

We have known Christians, too, whose object in life has been the large acquiring of knowledge, the pursuit of science, the gathering up of information. This, like the pursuit of wealth, is lawful enough in its subordinate place, but when it comes into rivalry with the seeking of the

glory of God, the man may become a scholar, but he will never become a beloved disciple that leans his head upon Jesu's bosom. He may be great in the classics, and he may be a master in the sciences, but he will never be a master in Israel. The division of his vital powers, the want of concentration, will be sure to keep him in the rear ranks of the Church of God — if he be kept there. Oh! what a blessed thing it is to see a whole-hearted Christian man, who, while he pursues his present business, still pursues it for God's glory; while he studies and stores his mind, is doing it for one object, namely, that he may be thereby more useful to the Church of God, and more helpful in the winning of souls. Give the man but one heart, one object, and he is a man. Someone has said that he dreaded the man of one book, and so the wicked world may dread the man of one object if that one object be the glory of God. They that have two targets to shoot at shall not strike either; they miss their aim; but he who lives only for God with all his might, is like a thunderbolt launched from Jehovah's hand and goes crash through every difficulty, and reaches the point God aims at, and that the man himself seeks. He shall live for something; he shall tell upon his age; he shall leave his mark. The man with undivided heart — he shall not be found faulty, but he that is this and that — a follower or Christ, but yet something over and above that, almost equally as much the other as he is a Christian — he shall be a poor, poor thing; he shall not enjoy the light of fellowship with God; he shall not walk in nearness to Christ. He shall be saved, but "so as by fire." No "abundant entrance" shall be administered to him into the kingdom of God our Father.

I believe, dear friends, and I will go a step further using the same words, that this case, if it should happen to be that of a minister with a divided heart, is more sad than it is in the case of the common Christian. Dear brethren, those of us who believe that we are called to be ministers for Christ are, above all the rest of the Church, bound to devote ourselves to one thing. "This one thing I do." If other men have two things to do, we by our call and office, if we be not liars in professing to be of God, and traitors to our office, are bound to do but one thing, and that is to free ourselves from the blood of all men, that we may stand before God as his honest servants. You may depend upon it that a minister with his heart at all divided will make a failure of his ministry. It must be so. I have watched the career of a good many young men, though not old myself, and I remember one with remarkable abilities, and in his preaching there was a good clear sound of the gospel. But I, who was as a father to him, noted

that he had an ambitious desire to be distinguished as a speaker. I saw that, even when he sought to win souls, it was with a view that persons might say how earnest he was. I could not help detecting in his conversation that there was an evident object to make himself somewhat, that he might be great in Israel. And I remember well how I walked with him and warned him that if God's servant did anything whatever for himself, God would not use him for his divine purposes, that if we sacrificed to our pride, God would not let us stand as priests at his altar; that if we would be honored, we must keep down, keep humble; that God would not long bless a man who was self-seeking, even in the ministry of Christ. The warnings he received very kindly, but they never sank into his heart; and I can see him now! He is not here, but were he here I think he would confess the truth of what I say. He lies a miserable wreck upon the shore, and he has fallen by his ambition! Else had it not been for that, I would have conceived for him a high and excellent career. And I would say to every minister, "I charge you fling away your ambition. Your only ambition must be to be nothing, to be hated, scouted, called a fool, a driveller, if by any means you may win souls for Christ; but to cultivate rhetoric, to be an orator, to study that you may be thought to be a profound thinker, to labor earnestly with this idea that you may be esteemed to be a first-class soul-winner — even that is bad. The only thing is to seek to do what God would have you do, and to glorify him, to lay every honor at his feet, and live for him, for any sort of division in the Christian minister's pursuit may make him faulty." I believe that the man who gives himself to be a preacher should divest himself of the cares of this life, as the soldier does in the army, that he may be able to give his whole soul and life to the one matter for which his Lord has called him. It will be good for him to do this, and then he had better leave politics alone. He had better leave everything alone but his one work. We have not mind enough for two things, and our work is such that if we had mind enough for twenty things it would be best to consecrate it all to that one thing. If I may snatch firebrands from the flame, who will may fill your Senate and may guide the policies of Cabinets; if I may load sinners to the cross of Christ, and tell them of life in his dear wounds, I should be content, though I should never influence anything besides except the hearts of men to the Savior. One thing, young man, if you are about to be a minister — one thing, my brother, however old thou mayest be, permit me to say to thee and myself to-night — one thing we must do if we would not be found faulty. But the stress of my text I intend to lay to-night upon one particular case, and that is: —

III. THE SEEKING SINNER.

There are some persons who are awakened and are seeking salvation, but they are not likely to find it because their heart is divided, and they will be found faulty. Very briefly, and very briefly indeed, I mean to speak upon this disease, upon the evil of it, and suggest a few thoughts by way of a cure for it.

Of this disease, let me say that it is a disease in the heart. Now a very small prick in the heart will kill. A great gash in the head may be healed, but a slight wound in the heart is deadly. A division of understanding or of judgment may be remedied, but a division of heart is a very terrible and often a very fatal disease. Let me show you how, and in what respects, some seeking souls are divided in heart.

And they are, first, divided as to a sense of their condition. At one time they think they are in great danger; to-morrow they don't know that there is anything very particular. When they have read a passage of Scripture, they believe their heart to be evil, but they forget the text, and they think their heart is, after all, not so bad as Scripture says it is. They hear that there is a wrath to come, and they are alarmed, but they get away to their friends and neighbors, and say, "Why was I so foolish as to be frightened by the preacher?" They are in danger; they dare not say they are not, but yet they almost hope it is not true. They know it is not all right with them, yet they try to cheat themselves with the idea that it is pretty nearly all right. They fare never likely to seek a Savior while they are in this condition, for until a man's mind is thoroughly made up that he must be saved by Christ or perish he will never go to Christ. A divided heart about our personal condition before God is a deadly sign.

These same seekers are often divided as to the objects of their choice. They want salvation to-night; they would give their eyes to have it. They will get to their chamber and pray, "O God, save me!" They will endorse the language of that hymn: —

*"Wealth and honor I disdain;
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain;
These can never satisfy:
Give me Christ, or else I die."*

To-morrow they will forget all about Christ, and they will be seeking after something else. To-night they would have heaven, but to-morrow they

would find a heaven on earth. To-night they would give up sin, but to-morrow they wish to have much of it. To-night they see the emptiness of earthly pleasure, but to-morrow they will suck it down as the ox drinks down water. Their heart is divided between this and that. They are not for the world quite nor for Christ quite; they halt between two opinions. Oh! that God would decide them that their heart, their divided heart, may not prove their ruin.

Some seekers are divided as to the object of their trust. They trust in Jesus Christ, but they also trust a little in themselves. They believe his blood has a great deal to do with it, but they think their prayers have something too, and so they stand with one foot on the land and the other on the sea, and therefore they fall. They are relying upon self in part and upon Christ in part, and so they will assuredly come to destruction, for Christ will never be part Savior. It must be all or nothing. He never entered into partnership with sinful worms to help save them; he is the sole foundation, and other foundation can no man lay. Alas! upon this matter, how many have their hearts divided! They are trusting to their baptism, or to their confirmation, or to their sacraments — all false foundations — and yet they are trying to trust in Christ at the same time. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.

And this division is found in their love. They think they love divine things now, but by and by some earthly thing comes in and gets uppermost in their souls. Oh! I do remember myself when, if I woke in the morning, I took care always to have a godly book under my pillow, and an arousing book too — Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," Alleine's "Alarm," Bunyan's books, and the like — and yet at another time I forgot all about that. I was hot to-day and cold to-morrow. I would have been ready to die in order to be saved at some times, would fain have escaped from the mercy of God, and permitted to "enjoy myself," as I said in the things of the world. Oh! it is a sad state to be in. A seeker will never get Christ until he must have Christ, and he will never get salvation until salvation is the first thing, the last thing the middle thing with him — until it comes to this, "By God's Spirit I must be saved. Nothing will content me. I must be saved, and until I am saved, I cannot give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyes lids." The Lord of his mercy give us an united heart about this, for a divided heart here is a faulty heart in the seeker. Now let me speak upon

IV. THE DANGER OF THIS DISEASE — the evil of it. The evil of it is, first, that seekers with divided hearts miss the blessing. Ye shall find him when ye seek him with your whole heart — not till then. Mercy's door opens to the knock of a whole-hearted knocker. A half-hearted seeker will have to wait many a day before that gate will ever give him entrance. No, soul, if thou dost not think enough of mercy to ask for it with all thy heart, thou wilt have to wait awhile. No, man, the choice mercies of God are too precious to be thrown away upon one who asks with a divided heart. Now look at heaven's gate, instead of here and there, instead of looking right and left. For thee one thing is needful, sinner — that one thing. Fifty things thou mayest leave to be sought by and by, but now for thee it is one thing, and if thou wilt not make it one thing, thou wilt miss it — miss it to thine eternal loss.

Again, remember that you who seek the Lord with a divided heart condemn yourselves. When you stand before the judgment seat you won't be able to say, as some will, "Lord, we did not know of this salvation. Lord, we never were impressed with its value," for the Lord would tell you, "Why, you trembled under a sermon; you knelt and prayed, and you cried to me, though you lied with your lips because your heart was not perfect before me. Yet you did know the value of these things, and you did feel them, too, in a measure, so that you are without excuse." He that follows the world with all his heart, and thinks that the best, is a reasonable man in following it; but he who thinks the world to come the best, and yet follows this present evil world — why, what a fool is he, and who shall plead for him? When he stands before God, his prayers will damn him, if nothing else will, for his prayers will be swift witnesses against him that he did know, did feel, and yet he would not act upon his knowledge, and he blotted out that which he perceived in his feeling. God save us from missing heaven and from condemning ourselves by seeking it with a divided heart.

Moreover, O man, I would press one fact upon thee very solemnly, and that is that a divided search after salvation is an insult to the Savior. Who is it, and what is it, O man, that thou dost set up in competition with Christ? All heaven and earth cannot produce his equal, and hast thou found something that can rival him? What is it? Darest thou say what it is? There have been men who have had good thoughts, but even a harlot's love has been chosen by them, instead of Christ. There are others that have loved the wages of unrighteousness, and Sabbath-breaking has made them forego

Christ. We have known others who, for fear of a little scandal from their worldly companions, have been ashamed to follow Christ, and they have given up Jesus Christ sooner than bear a fool's derision. O man, if thou hadst the choice made thee to-night of all the kingdoms of this world, and Christ, thou wouldst insult Christ if thou shouldst pause in the choice, for he is better than them all, and thy soul's salvation is better than them all. "For what shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" But I can weep for thee while I rebuke thee. What is it thou dost put in competition with Christ? What is it thou dost prefer to Christ? Man, art thou mad that thou shouldst insult thy Savior, who poured out his heart's blood for the salvation of such as thou art, and dost thou think that anything can be worth the having at so dreadful a price as the loss of thy soul, and the loss of the Savior's salvation? I beseech thee turn that over in thy mind. I cannot put it an forcibly as I would, but I pray thee let thy conscience help thee, and answer if it be right in thee to have a divided heart, and so to insult thy Savior.

Once more only on this point, and that is, dost thou not know that a divided heart is a continued disobedience to God? He saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength"; and now thou hast sinned thy soul out of his favor and in danger of eternal death, and yet with only half a heart dost thou turn to him. Thou putttest out one hand towards God, but with the other thou wouldst have thy sin. Thou wouldst fain go to heaven and take thy sins with thee. Thou wouldst be saved, but thou wantest to sit both at the table of the Lord and the table of Satan. Thou desirest to hold with the hare and run with the hounds — be the friend of the devil, and yet the friend of God. O man, the very thought is rebellion against thy Maker. Cast it away from thee, and ask the Lord this night to bind all thine affections into one bundle, and then draw them all to himself — that for thee the one thing may be to seek salvation through Christ, and reconciliation to the good Lord in heaven, through the precious blood of his dear Son. And now suffer the last few words which shall be meant to be: —

V. A CURE FOR THIS DISEASE of a divided heart. And the first word shall be this. Thou oughtest well to have done with a divided heart when the matter in hand is thy salvation or damnation. When a ship is floating gaily out at sea with favorable winds, men think but little of their safety. When she begins to rock and there is some danger, then their safety rises in importance, and they put it side by side with the safety of the gold they

carry with them; but when the winds break loose and the storm is up, and the ship is about to go by the board, and the man must leap into the lifeboat, he flings his gold away; he leaves his treasures loose upon the floor. As they sink into the abyss, he gives up anything if he may but save his life. In that dread hour when the vessel is going down, and a handful of men alone are clinging to a mast, all is gone from them except the thought of saving life. And surely it should be so with you. When you are saved you may begin to think of some other thing, but not to-night. For as the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there is but a step between some of you and death. Before another Sabbath day — I may speak positively, for out of so many as there are here some one of us will die this week, by all the probabilities of life and death — before another Sabbath day one of us will lie in the shell, prepared to be taken to the grave, and if that should happen to be an unconverted man, then before another Sabbath you will know of hell and of the lake of fire more than this book can tell or these lips can utter, except ye be converted and fly to Christ. Surely in such jeopardy your whole heart ought to be set upon the one matter — your own salvation — and I beseech you and I pray God the Spirit to make it so that you may now with your whole undivided faculties seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. By the awful peril of your soul, I do entreat you linger, and delay, and remain undecided no more, lest your heart, being divided, should prove faulty and be cast away for ever.

Remember, again, and the argument is equally forcible, though it is more pleasing, the mercy that you are seeking after is worth the concentration of all your thoughts to find it. To be delivered from all your past sin — is not this worth the seeking? To be made a child of God — is not this worth wrestling for? To be secure of heaven, to be delivered from hell — is not this worth an attempt to obtain? Oh! if it needed that you should go to your houses to-night, and neglect your to-morrow's business — it does not need it, but if it did — if you wells not to the market or to the Exchange by the week together, ay, and if your tables were deserted, and you snatched but a morsel that might sustain life, and if you took no walk, had no recreation, if you denied yourself anything and everything until you found Christ, I could not blame you. I am sure it would be well worth the while. Anything, everything should be neglected that you might become one of the people of God, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Did you know the joy that belongs to Christians, you would never be satisfied until you had it. The man that saw the pearl of great price save it in another

dealer's hands, and he thought, "I must have that; it is the finest pearl of all, so I must have that"; and he went his way, you know, and though he had many a dainty jewel, he sold all he had and turned it all to gold, and back he came to the trader, and he gave with joy all that he had that he might buy that one pearl, and he made a good bargain too. And you would make a blessed bargain if everything were given up that you might find a Savior, and be delivered from the wrath to come. Therefore, I do pray you to seek him with your whole heart.

Once more, do remember that the Savior gave his whole heart when he came to save men. There was no by-play about Christ. His zeal for souls did eat him up. He, loved, he lived, he died to save them. Will you have a divided heart about that which took the Savior's whole soul? Remember the devil is in earnest to destroy you. He will leave no stone unturned to keep you his victim that he may utterly destroy you. Shall hell be in earnest to ruin you, and will you not be in earnest to escape from it? Remember, good men are in earnest. I wish that I could speak to you with the tongue of an angel to-night. There is no faculty of my mind which I would not lay under a heavy mortgage if I might but bring your soul to Christ. I would willingly enough go to school again and sit at any master's feet if he could tell me how to deal with human hearts aright, and stir them and draw them to the Savior. Ah! 'tis poorly done, but it is with my whole soul I would plead with you to fly to Christ. And yet 'tis but little a concern of mine, compared with the way in which it is a concern of yours. If I have been faithful, I shall not be responsible for you; it is your soul that is at stake. Sirs, shall I be anxious about your souls, and will you not care about them? Do they seem precious to me, and trifles to you? Shall I urge you to escape, and will you feel, "It does not signify; it is but a trifle." Lord, deliver us from this insanity for insanity it is for a man to trifle with his soul, when others are in earnest for him. And God is in earnest. The great eternal God is in earnest. He says to-night to you, "Turn ye, turn ye! Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If salvation be child's-play to you, it is not to him. He gave his Son from his bosom to redeem men, and he sent his Spirit unto men to sanctify them. He puts out his omnipotence, lays his wisdom under tax to find a plan, and devise a way by which he might save mankind. Oh! trifle not where God is so in earnest, lest you find him terribly in earnest in the day when his incensed love shall turn to wrath. Jealousy — what is it but love set on a blaze? And if you so hate God that

you will prefer to live in hell sooner than be indebted to his mercy, then rest assured you shall feel how heavy his arm can be.

*“What chains of vengeance shall they feel
Who slight the cords of love?
How they deserve the deepest hell
That scorn the joys above!”*

May God of his infinite mercy prevent anybody here from daring the wrath of God by following after Christ with a divided heart — trifling with his Maker, trifling with his soul, trifling with heaven, trifling with hell. May we be in earnest, each one of us, and may we all meet at the right hand of God through sovereign grace. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HOSEA 10:1-6.

Verse 1. *Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself:*

Not to his God. It matters not how much fruit we bear — if it is for self, we are really fruitless. A thing which is good in itself may lose all its goodness because stained with a selfish motive. We are to live unto God; and we must always be watchful about this; otherwise we may be doing much, and doing nothing. “Israel is an empty vine. He bringeth forth fruit unto himself.”

1. *According to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.*

It is a very sad thing when, the more men received from God, the more they sin. But just in proportion as the land of Israel was fat and fertile, in that proportion did they set up altars unto false gods, and provoke the true God, who had given them these mercies. It is an ill thing when men grow rich, and offer sacrifice to their own vanity — when men gather learning, and only use it to debate with against the simple teachings of God — when just as God blesses, men cease to bless him!

2. *Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty:*

A half-heart is no heart at all; and when men seem to go after God, and at the same time to go after their idols, they are not going after God. Their

religion is vain. The good side is but a pretense; the evil side is the real thing.

2. He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images

Let us take heed then, dear friends, that we make nothing into an idol. The shortest way to lose the dearest object of your affections is to make an idol of him. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.” Sometimes this is done in great mercy to God’s people, for there is no greater evil than for a heart to be happy in idolatry. Sometimes it is done in judgment upon the ungodly. They will not have the true God, and the false god shall be false to them. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.”

2. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

Their king was slain, but if he had lived, what would be the good of him without God? What is the good of any temporal blessing if God be not in it? It is the husk with the kernel gone; and if we are able to enjoy the husk, it looks as if we were swine, and swine are being fattened for the slaughter. What is the use of anything that we possess to us if God be divorced from it? I put the question again. If you are a true child of God, all the corn and wine in the world cannot feed you. Your bread must come from heaven.

4. They have spoken words,

That which they spoke was not truth. We cannot speak without words, but it is an evil thing when our speech is nothing but words. Words, words, words! — no heart, no truth. “They have spoken words.”

4. Swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

God keep us from untruthfulness, and especially from a want of truth towards himself. Do not you think that oftentimes, both in prayer and praise, it might be said, “They have spoken words — nothing more”? There has been a falsehood in the most solemn transaction towards God. Woe unto you, dear friends, if that should turn out to be the case. Ye may cheat your fellow-men if ye have a heart for it, but you never will be abler to cheat your God. He is not mocked. “They have spoken words,” says he.

5. *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven:*

Why, those calves are their trust. They rely upon those images of false gods — those images which they set up in the place of the true God. Pretending thereby to worship him, they trusted in these; and now they shall become their fear. He who will have a confidence apart from God will find his confidence soured into a fear before long. Your greatest ground of distress will be that which was once the ground of your reliance apart from God.

5, 6. *For the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced in it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb:*

The spiteful king.

6. *Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.*

These golden calves excited the desires of the king of Assyria, and he took them away. These gods were baits, to their enemies, instead of basis for their confidence. They were carried away captive of the people with them — their god captive — their god melted down to make images, or to make money for the king of Assyria! Ah! what shame did God pour upon idolaters! And what shame he will pour upon us if we have any confidence except *the* unseen God, and if we rely anywhere but upon the eternal covenant of his immutable grace. Oh! brothers and sisters, let us try to flee *away* from that which is so tempting to sense — confidence in an arm of flesh, and let our sole and alone trust be in him that made the heavens and the earth, and in his Son, Jesus Christ.

A PROMISE AND A PROVIDENCE.

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*“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord.” —
Ezekiel 34:15.*

BEFORE this can be done there are certain preliminaries. A flock cannot be fed until it is in existence. It cannot be fed, as a flock, until all the scattered sheep shall have been brought together. Hence, in the context other promises supply this deficiency. We find, for example, the Lord declaring that he will search out his sheep, and seek them. They have gone far astray. Some of them seem to have so exhausted their patience in wandering that they have invented new forms of sin and new methods of transgression. Yet the Lord will seek them till his eyes of mercy shall rest upon them, and his hands of power shall grasp them. If the Lord hath an elect soul in the center of Africa, he will find him out. Or should there be one for whom Jesus died, who frequents the house that is infamous, and has plunged into sin the most detestable, yet the Lord will not lose him. Having set his heart upon him, he will seek him till he finds him, and follow him up till he reclaims him. You remember one of the Lord's sheep — a woman who had forsaken the paths of virtue. She had had five husbands, and was then living with one who was not her husband. Yet he must needs go through Samaria to meet with her. He must needs — such was the Divine necessity that this sheep, which had wandered as far as it well could, should be brought back.

Cheer up; be of good courage, preacher of the Word. Thou mayest not find the sheep, but thy Master will. Take heart, ye that wait Upon the Lord in

prayer; you may see some of your agencies fail, and success may not wait upon all your efforts, but God's purposes must stand; he will do all his pleasure, and at the last it shall be seen that not a single sheep was left for want of being sought out. Nor is it enough to seek the sheep, and to, find them; they must be delivered from the dangers into which they have fallen. There is a promise to this effect. They had been scattered in a cloudy and dark day. Some of them had slipped from the crag, and fallen into crevices, from which it seemed as if no hand could reach them; others, skipping from rock to rock, had reached some lofty pinnacle where it seemed certain that the next move would dash them down the dizzy depth to ruin. But the Lord hath said it, "I will bring them out from all places whither they have been scattered." High up there in pride, in blasphemy, in persecution, or low down there in shameful degradation and infamy, they shall be brought, every one of them, from all the perils of evil within and evil without, and be gathered safely into the fold. But when, one by one, they have been delivered, they are not a flock till they are gathered by the shepherd. They must, therefore, not only be brought out of the danger, but brought into the flock, safely housed, and collected into one fold. So the promise runs, "I will gather them altogether into one place." Beloved, this great work of gathering is going on to-day. By this man and by that, by this agency and by the other, the Lord is separating his chosen people from among the ruins of the fall, fetching his Israel out of Egypt, and his captives out of Babylon and Chaldea, that the whole company of the faithful may be a people separated unto the Lord. Let us entertain no fears as to the Lord having a Church in the world. With omnipotent power, directed by infallible wisdom, and moved by immutable love, those whom God has chosen to be his sheep shall be sought out, rescued from their danger, and numbered with the living people of the living God. Do I not now address a section of this great flock? Are there not many in this dense crowd who belong to that seed which the Lord hath blessed? Can there fail to be a rich vein of comfort to such in this promise, "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord"?

Our text has in it a double blessing. By way of division, we will emphasise each word, and endeavor to draw out the fullness of its meaning. To take the last word first, "My flock" is: —

I. A NOTE OF DESCRIPTION.

It describes God's people distinctively, separating them from all their people. They are not ravenous like lions; they are not crafty like foxes; they are not swift like the hare; they are not foul like the swine; they love not carrion like the raven. They are timid, trembling, weak, but they are clean, and they love clean feeding. They are gentle; they have no guile. When sovereign grace has renewed and changed them, you may easily distinguish the Lord's sheep from the world's goats. Naturally, these sheep of the Lord have the infirmities of sheep — prone to go astray; they are fearful, weak, and liable to disease. It is said that man, a horse, and a sheep are liable to more diseases than any other creatures. Certainly sheep have many contingencies. They are prone, to infect others with their ailments. As to going astray, they are so gregarious that if but one sheep leaps the wall, the whole flock must go after him. The Lord's people, in a state of nature, are very much like sheep as to their infirmities, and, when converted, they are like sheep for their meekness and gentleness. Then they can suffer without repining; they can follow the Shepherd, for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. This word is thus distinctive; it sets out a people who are no more to be mistaken for any other people than sheep are to be mistaken for wolves or lions. Question thyself, my hearer, whether thou art one' of the Lord's sheep. Hast thou given thyself up to his care? Dost thou follow at his bidding? Dost thou desire to be washed in his sheep-washing? Art thou desirous that he should make thee to feed and to lie down in his green pastures?

Nor is the word merely distinctive; it is likewise collective. It is not said, "I will feed my sheep one by one," but "I will feed my flock." The Lord has only one flock, and so in this world he has only one Church. "Well," says one "we see twenty denominations." Thank God for it. I am not one of those who would deplore the fact that different brethren are set for the defense of different parts of the truth. Can you doubt that when Christ prayed that his people might be one, he was heard? It were almost blasphemy to think that his petition was denied. Very well, then, they are one. If the intercession of Christ prevailed, then the Church is one to-day. I do not believe for a moment that the oneness which Christ intended was ever a oneness of opinion, or a oneness of form of worship, any more than a oneness of association, congregating them together in the same building. It was a mystical, secret, vital unity, which does exist in the Church of God at this very day. Brethren, all believers are really and truly one. When their

souls are in a glow with divine love, and their hearts speak out of the fullness of their emotion, the unity of the one flock becomes palpable. The little divisions in the Church of God that challenge your notice are like little cracks upon the surface of the earth; the rock is not cracked. The divisions that we have in the churches are only little skin-wounds; the body is not divided. "Not a bone of him shall be broken." The great body of Christ still remaineth indissolubly one. And here to-night, be we Independent, or Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Methodist, if we are one with Christ, we must be one with one another. After all, the Catholic is right in the expression, while he is wrong in the moaning he attaches to it, when he says there is no salvation out of the pale of the Church. Referred to any worldly policy, it is a lie; but in sober truth, outside of the one indivisible Church of Christ lightly defined, there can be no salvation. But, thanks be unto Christ, every soul that knows the voice of God, the Good Shepherd, and follows at his beck and call, belongs to the one flock, soon to be gathered into the one fold. Note, then, the distinctive and the aggregate description; they are sheep individually, and they are, collectively, a flock. But here is: —

II. A WORD OF DISCRIMINATION, as well as a word of description — "I will feed my flock" — "my flock." Oh! that sweet word "my"! "I will feed me flock," not the devil's flock; let those goats browse where they will: not the world's flock, let that wander on its own mountains of vanity: but, it will feed my flock." Beloved, if we be the Lord's people by faith, remember we are his by eternal election. He chose us or ever earth's foundations were laid. He took us unto himself to be the jewels of his crown, and the delight of his soul. Before the channels of the sea were digged, or the sockets of the mountains were formed; long before, the sun had scattered the thick darkness, our names were written upon the hands of Jesus. We are his, too, by purchase. Think of the price he paid for us! I am dwelling upon this to make you see how true it is that he will feed us. laid he choose us, did he buy us, and will he not feed us?

*"Count the purple drops and say,
Thus my sins were washed away."*

Thus I, a captive, was set free. Thus I, impounded by the law, saw the gate of the pound opened, and I, the sheep of Christ, came out to lie down in his pastures. You are his by ties of blood, as well as his by purchase, and you are also his by power. He won you, fought for you, and made you his

lawful captives. You held out as long as you could, but at last you cried, "I yield; Almighty Love, thou hast overcome me; now I bow myself to thy silver scepter, willingly thy subject." Oh! how hard it was for Christ to get some of us! Like wandering sheep, we strayed here, there, and everywhere, and when the Shepherd came and began to grasp us we struggled to get free, struggled for that awful liberty which would have been our ruin; but, glory be to God, he would have us; he took us upon his shoulders, he carried us home rejoicing, and at this day we own it was the victorious love of Christ which made us his. Ay, and we are his by our own free consent. Would you be another's if you could? Oh! if there could be a divorce-court held between your soul and Christ, would you sue for a division? Say, my soul, if the branch could be cut off from the Vine, wouldest thou wish to be severed from him now? For his sake canst thou suffer shame, and spitting, and rebuke, and poverty? Say, for his sake canst thou count the world's treasures to be as dross, and all its pomp and glory but as sounding brass and as a tinkling cymbal? I know thee; thou sayest, "Truly, by his grace, I can, for he is mine, and I cannot let him go; he holds me so fast, and he has proved unto me a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it." Thus you see, beloved, that that word of discrimination, "my," has a good and grateful tone about it. "I will feed my flock." Go, you who do not belong to God, and find such food as you can gather, but ye who are the Lord's own peculiar ones, take this for your consolation, "I will feed my flock." The next word, going backwards, is —

III. A WORD FULL OF CONSOLATION — "I will feed my flock." Yes, he will supply your temporal needs. You may run short, but you shall never want. When the garment has got to be threadbare, then he will find you another. I recollect one instance of Providence of which I was the almost passive agent. It was the case of a brother Christian and minister I was staying in a country town, and it was requisite to borrow an edifice for the preaching. One chapel could not be had, for the preacher was not high enough in doctrine; and another chapel could not be had for the whim of some of the deacons. But there was one little chapel which the minister very willingly lent; for he said "Oh! yes; to a fellow-servant of my Lord and Master, I will cheerfully open the doors." The preacher of that night noticed that the minister of that little chapel wore a threadbare coat, and he observed that in his house there were signs of poverty. Twelve shillings a week was the good man's income — all that his flock could raise him. After the preacher had done his sermon, he said, "Perhaps the minister here

will pardon me if I say that his clothes are getting much too shabby, and I think it would be a good thing for us all to contribute and buy him a new suit of livery." 'Twas done, and when I said to the minister, "I hope you will pardon me for such an impertinent remark?" "Pardon you!" he said; "why the Lord always finds me fresh clothes when my things wear out; but it is always some such manner as I never dreamed of." The good man is in heaven now. I believe that suit of livery just lasted him till he put on the white garment before the eternal throne. Depend upon it, that as it was with him, so, if you believe in your Master, it shall be with you. He will give you food and raiment; that is all he has promised you, and if you get that he will be as good as his bargain, and you must not murmur at your fare. "I will feed my flock." The sense, however, is mainly spiritual. It does not say the Shepherd shall feed them, but "I will feed them, saith the Lord", and he says that he will feed them with good pasture. Good doctrines, comfortable promises, sweet encouragements, tender words of exhortation, gentle notes of warning — these shall be their daily food. And, mark it, he says he will feed them on the high mountains. Some of his sheep do not like to go up such lofty heights. dear! how many faithful souls are frightened at the very mention of high doctrine. Election is one of those mountains where grass grows of the very sweetest kind; but there are some of the flock who do not like to go there to feed. But the best food is on these high mountains. If your feet shall know how to stand on the craggy heights of immutable and eternal love, if you shall know how to climb up yonder into the great decrees of God, if you can take hold of his covenant, if you can contemplate the divine purpose which is sure to all the seed, you will find those to be the very sweetest and most satisfying spiritual food that is to be found on this side the Jordan. "I will feed my flock." Ah! sometimes God's people are placed where they have a very unnutritious ministry, and then he feeds them in some other way. Their own private readings become a consolation to them. When, at times, some of the Lord's people are sick, laid on their beds, unable to go up to the house of prayer, this promise, "I will feed my flock," proves quite as true to them at home in their seclusion as it is here in our joyous gatherings. If you neglect the means of grace, in vain you expect a blessing; but if you are lawfully detained from them, plead the promise and expect its fulfillment — "I will feed my flock." Are you just going to New Zealand, or are you just about to take a voyage to Australia, my beloved sister, my dear brother? God will feed you there. I know not how. You may be up in the back settlements, or in the bush, and have but little opportunity of meeting with the people of

God, but still remember, "I will feed my flock." You are going a long sea voyage, are you, and there are but few on board to encourage you? Well, take the promise to your God, "I will feed my flock." Or are you moving away from this church, which has been like a hot-house to you, and going into some country village where there is no gospel preaching? Never mind, brother, if God sends you there, lay hold on him by faith with these words, "I will feed my flock"; and he will feed you, and you shall have enough and to spare. In the time of famine you shall be filled, and in the day of scarcity you shall be satisfied. "I will feed my flock." Again going backwards, let us take the next: —

V. A WORD WHICH IS FULL OF ASSURANCE.

"I will feed my flock." "I will; I will; I will." See hear positively he speaks. Not "I think I will"; not "I may"; but "I will." Beloved, these "shalls" and "wills" are the very marrow of the gospel. They make the strength of it. Take away the "shalls" and "wills" out of the Bible, and put in conditional "ifs," and "buts," and "peradventures" in their place, what a desolate appearance it would present! These "shalls" and "wills" stand, like Jachin and Boaz, the great pillars of the Temple, right at the entrance-gate, and we must see to it that we never give up these potent "shalls" and "wills," but hold fast and firmly to them. "I will feed my flock." "But," says one, "are not some of the flock lost?" Read the verse; he says, "I will seek them, and I will feed them." They may be but if they have backslidden I will bring them back. If, like Peter, they have denied me to my face, I will forgive them. If they have played the harlot, like Israel, of old, and gone astray from me, yet I will bring them back, for I will feed my flock." He cannot feed them unless he doer bring them back; but "I will feed my flock; I will bring back all the wanderers who have been bought with blood. I will." The adversary says they shall not be brought. "I will; I will," says the Lord. "Nay, but," says proud flesh, "I will not be brought." "I will," says the Lord, and God's "I will" is infinitely mightier than all the hosts of darkness and powers of corruption. But, Lord,. there are some of them who have been driven away; legal preachers have driven them from Christ; their doubts and fears, their sins and trespasses, have driven them away. "But I will feed my flock, every one of them, for I will bring them back again; they shall have all their old comforts back; their joys and hopes shall be restored to them; I will feed my flock." But, Lord, some of them are broken; some cruel blow has broken the leg, or some other limb, of some of thy sheep. "But I will feed my flock; I will bring them back, and heal

them.” You may be broken in heart, and your faith may be weak, and your graces spoiled, but this stands good, “I will, I will feed my flock.” But, Lord, they are infected with disease — so runs the passage “they are weak” — they have got some disease common to thy sheep. “I will heal them,” saith the Lord, “for I will feed my sheep.” My dear friends, it is not possible for an heir of heaven ever to get into such a state that God cannot save him; and should he be allowed in sovereign forbearance to wander to the utmost excess of sin, if he were even in the very jaws of the destroyer, yet our Savior, like another David, would pluck the lamb out of the jaw of the lion, and tear it away from the paw of the bear. As long as thou art out of hell, sinner, have hope; and, believer, if thou shouldest sink in deep waters and be swallowed up of the Devourer, still, like Jonah, shalt thou be able to say, “Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest me.” “I will feed my flock.” Oh! that you who are doubting and fearing would lay hold on this, “I will; I will; I will.” Your flesh and carnal reason will doubtless say, “Well, I hope and trust.” Away with your hoping and trusting; do not halt and hesitate, but believe it. If God says he will, who are you that you should entertain a suspicion? You shall be fed; God’s word cannot fail you. “I will feed my flock.” Moreover, this is: —

V. A WORD OF DIVINITY.

“I will feed my flocks” Who is this that says, “I will”? When a man says, “I will,” it is often braggart impudence; but when God says, “I will” and “you shall,” such words are expressive alike of sovereign determination and irresistible power. Christian, see who it is that makes the promise, and mark who it is that will fulfill it, I will feed my flock.” Do you complain that you cannot feed under such and such a minister, the Lord promises, “I will feed my flock.” Here you have divine infinity to be your supply; here you have divine immutability to be your guarantee; here you have divine omnipotence to be your aid, and divine wisdom to be the measure of the supply which shall be afforded to you. Trust in the Lord, and do good. When Jehovah says, “I will,” banish every doubt and fear, and now, for time and for eternity, cast thyself upon thy God. He says, “I will feed my flock”; let us reply, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

Passing on to the second clause of the verse, “And I will cause them to lie down, saith the lord,” you will please observe that this further blessing is intended to make amends for the harshness of the false shepherds. They would never let them lie down quietly. Their custom was always to drive,

drive, drive, or else to seize, and fleece, and slay. But the Lord says, "I will cause them to lie down," and so redress their wrongs. For fall the weariness they have suffered in the past, they shall have calm repose in the future. You know how apt the legal preacher is to whip his hearers with, "Do this," and "Do that." You know how certain Calvinists whip their hearers with, "If you have felt this," and "If you have experienced that," you may be saved. But the Lord himself always makes his people, when they come fully to confide in him, to lie down in a good fold, and to feed in a fat pasture.

When the Lord reveals to you that he has loved you with an everlasting love, is not that a good place to lie down in? When he tells you that having so loved you, he will never cast you away, is not that a good place to lie down in? When he tells you that your warfare is accomplished, and that your sin is pardoned, is not that a good place to lie down in? Or supposing the message to be that Christ has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and that you are accepted in the Beloved, is not that a place to lie down in? Let him say to you, "You are my sons and my daughters, and I will be a Father unto you" — is not that a place to lie down in? Well, he does say all this to every one of you who has been brought to trust under the shadow of the wings of the Lord God Almighty. Your faith in Jesus is the evidence that he loved you before the world was, and he will love you when the world shall cease to be; his righteousness is imputed to you, and you are saved, completely saved, and heaven is as surely yours as though you now wore the crown of gold. Is not this a place to lie down in? Still more, he not only gives you a place to lie down in, but he also causes you to lie down. You know, dear friends, it is one thing to have a promise, and quite another thing to live on it. Why, I am such a fool sometimes that though I know the sweetness of the covenant, I cannot partake of it; though I understand the sense and the preciousness of the promises, yet I cannot get a grip upon them. I remember when once talking to a captain on board his vessel, and telling him of the promises, he said to me, "Ah! sir, the promise of God are very much like those posts by the riverside, strong posts driven in by the corporation of a country town; you see, if I could once get my cable right round them, it would hold my ship; but then that is the job to get the cable round them." So it is; but then the promise supplies this want, "I will cause them to lie down; I will shed abroad the love of Christ in their hearts; I will make their peace like a river; I will come to them with such fullness of mercy, such overflowing of my communion, that their souls

shall not dare to be afraid; they shall be sweetly hushed as a child is dandled to sleep upon its mother's knee. I will not suffer a fear to vex them, I will send them such balmy breath from my own loving lips that their fears shall all fly away. I will cause them to lie down."

Ah! and thanks be to God, some of us know what this means, for we have had to lie down. My soul has fed for a whole year on one promise. I know not why it was given to me, but I had it, "His soul shall dwell at ease," and my soul did dwell at ease. What had I else but to be at ease? My sins forgiven; my heaven secure; Christ mine; God mine; this world mine; worlds to come mine why should not I dwell at ease? And, beloved, many of you too, some of you at least, know what it is to enjoy the same peace. You can walk up and down the world, and look into the grave, and not be afraid of it. You can stand by a sick-bed, and long for evening to undress, that you may rest with God.

You have such pure calm that business does not fret you; you can leave it with your Lord, casting all your care on him, for he careth for you. Nay, you have such joy unspeakable that sometimes you could even shout for joy, for the love, the, sweet love, the precious love the unspeakable love, the everlasting love, which Jesus has manifested to you.

But there is another flock. Hear it and tremble. There is another flock. They never get fed at all, or, if they do, it is only on empty husks. It is the devil's flock. Sinner, you are of his flock, and he only feeds you upon mere shams, presences, delusions, lies. He never causes you to lie down; you know you never can lie down. Your sins never give you any quiet. Who hath woes? Who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. Who hath uneasiness? Who hath pangs of heart? The midnight sinner. Who is he that quivers at the fall of a leaf? Who is he whose cheek turns pale in a storm? Who is he that quivers when but a little sickness gets hold upon him, and flies to the physician? Who is he that dares not think on death? Who, is he that goes to the theater or to the ballroom to quiet his terror, and to keep his conscience from being heard? Who is he whose end is destruction, whose god is his belly, who glories in his shame? He is here; he is here listening to my voice. Oh! sinner, it is time that thou shouldest change thy master! I remember an old salt, after listening to a certain sermon, coming with tears in his eyes into the vestry and saying, "Sir, I have served under the black flag for sixty years, and I think it is time I ran it down, and had a new one." I think it is time you did the same, sinner.

The wages of sin is death. Fly from this tyrant master. Immanuel, the bright Prince of Glory, is willing to enlist you into his army. Though they are no conditions, I will tell you the terms. The terms are these, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To believe is simply to trust, to believe him to be true. Trust your soul on him; when you can do that you are a saved man. Whatever your sins may leave been, or now are, the moment you believe in Jesus you are a partaker of this precious promise, "I will feed my flock, I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord." God grant it to every one of you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

DEUTERONOMY 33.

Verse 1. *And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

A very beautiful thought, that he should conclude his life with a blessing. Though they had greatly grieved and provoked his spirit, he was always meek and tender, but he had very much to bear from them, and this is the end of it all, that he will dismiss them with his blessing.

2, 3. *And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet: everyone shall receive of thy words.*

"Yea, he loved the people." God's appearance on Sinai was a token of his love to them, even though it amazed them and distressed many of them. Yet still it was a great thing that God should come so near to these people, and should reveal his will to them. Dear friends, if God should come to you with his fiery law; if he should humble you, and make you "exceeding fear and quake," it would be a token of love. The ungodly are left to go in their sin, but as for you, if you are one whom he loves, he will rebuke you, and he will bring his law to do its work upon your heart and conscience. It seems strange to you, but so it is. "From his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people." Oh! it is so, because he loves them he reveals to them his fiery law. "All his saints are in thy hand." A place of safety, a place of privilege, where they learn how precious they are to him,

for he holds them so dear that he keeps them always in his hand. “All his saints are in thy hand, and they sat down at thy feet.” Another place for saints; they are always learning; they are disciples; they sit with meek humility at their Master’s feet, and drink in his words, “Everyone shall receive of thy words.” Those who know not God’s love, trifle with God’s words and reject them; those whom he loves receive his words and feed upon them.

4-6. *Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Let Reuben live, and not die: and let not his men be few.*

Here is his blessing, “Let Reuben live.” Reuben’s great sin had lost him his birthright, yet Moses gives him as much of his blessing as he can. If we are not allowed to draw the largest blessing, let us go as far as we can.

7-9. *And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies. And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.*

Judah was the royal tribe — had to do much with warfare. Lord give him power in prayer! This is the peculiar benediction of those who have to lead the way in the battles of God.

In the service of God, Levi was impartial; he did not wink at sin in his dearest relatives. You remember how they took the sword, and went through the camp, and slew their own brothers when they found them guilty of idolatry, and because of this faithfulness we read, “They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law.” Above all things, a teacher of the truth of God must be fearless and impartial in the delivery of God’s Word; then God will bless him, and it shall be said of such, “They shall teach Jacob,” etc.

10. *They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.*

True hearts alone can be God's priests; he will not accept sacrifices from those who will dally with his truth, and trifle with his Word.

11, 12. *Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again. And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.*

They that have God near them are safe indeed. There is no protection in such a world as this like constant communion with God. We have to go out into a world full of all manner of evil. Go not out into the world without thy God. Let him dwell with thee and cover thee all the day long, and so shalt thou be safe.

13. *And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven,*

Oh! in a spiritual sense, what a rich blessing this is! and remember it came upon that tribe whose father was the most afflicted of all Jacob's sons. If thou art, an afflicted Joseph rejoice, for one of these days thou shall have the capacity for receiving great blessings.

13. *For the dew,*

The Lord send us that dew to-night to rest upon our branch.

13. *And for the deep that coucheth beneath.*

These deep eternal springs out of which we drink the divine water springs.

14. *And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon.*

They shall have blessings both ways, in the day and in the night. Those whom God blesses, the sun doth not smite by day, nor the moon by night, but, on the contrary, they are blessed both in the one and in the other.

15, 16. *And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills. And for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:*

Oh! that we may enjoy ever the good will of God, who wills good to us, who in all his dealings with us has a good will towards us. Oh! that we may have the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!

16-18. *Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents.*

You that go much abroad in the world, God give you to rejoice in your opportunities of doing good. You that never go abroad, but live at home in the kitchen and the parlor, learn to rejoice in your tents, for there, too, you have a sphere of holy service.

19-22. *They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas and of treasures hid in the sand. And of God he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD and his judgments with Israel. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.*

“And of Gad, he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad.” God knows how to enlarge his people, give them more grace, more gifts, more opportunities of usefulness.

Which he did. His tribes enlarged their boundaries by a sudden leap. God gives his people sometimes their leaping times; they leap from Bashan: some great purpose is accomplished, some great feat is done.

23. *And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.*

What a condition of heart to be in! “Satisfied with favor; full of the blessing of the Lord.” Beloved, may you enjoy that to-night!

24. *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.*

Then will he leave a mark wherever he goes of holy unction. He possesses it himself, and he will impart it to others.

25. *Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*

Will not some believer grip that promise to-night and find it true?

26-28. *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.*

“Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” There is no place for God’s people like a separated place; they must get without the camp; they must not be numbered among the people.

Notice, there is none like unto the God of Israel, and there is none like to Israel.

29. *Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*

As God is by himself, so all his people are favored beyond all others.

MORE ROOM FOR MORE PEOPLE

NO. 3529

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.” — Luke 14:22.

How delightful it is to observe that the wrath of man becomes tributary to the glory of God! See an illustration in the parable of the marriage supper. Those persons who were first bidden would not come. In order to do the good man of the house a despute, they declined his invitation, they refused to grace his board. Instead of causing his honor to be tarnished, they were, against their own will, the means of increasing his reputation. had they come, it would only have been said that he made a great feast for his good friends. As they did not avail themselves of his hospitality, he brought in the beggars from the streets, and swept the hedges and the byways to find out the poorest of the poor, to all of whom he gave a hearty welcome. So it became the common talk all over the land, and tens of thousands extolled the generosity of the host who had given such a sumptuous banquet to such strange guests. Let not the haughty, the arrogant, or the scornful of the children of men imagine that their paltry conceit can thwart God’s covenant purpose, or bring discredit on the riches of his mercy. Oh! sinner, if you reject a Savior, it shall be your own loss, not his. If you live and die without faith in Christ, upon your own head the fearful recompense will fall. When the self-righteous reject him, it only causes Jesus to say, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” When the rich men and the rulers refuse the gospel, then “the poor have the gospel preached to them.” When the wise and prudent put it aside, then it is graciously revealed unto babes. Thus God is glorified, though the temper of men be never so turbulent. Let us, my brethren; always be patient of heart when we

see the rage of men aroused against the gospel of Christ. They can do it no hurt. His purpose shall stand; he will do all his pleasure. The bit is in their mouths; the hook is in their nostrils. Let them roar as they may, they cannot resist the force by which they are driven as chaff before the wind. He will surely perform his work, and his name shall be glorious.

Not less delightful is it to observe how the anger of God, instead of venting itself in rashness, vindicates his goodness. In reading the parable to you just now I noticed to you that because the man who made the feast was angry, he said, "Go out quickly into the highways and hedges, and bring in the blind, and the halt, and the lame to the supper." So kindly disposed was he that his very anger impelled him to an extraordinary deed of grace. The Lord was angry with the Jews, and his apostles turned to the Gentiles. The natural branches of the olive were put away in his wrath; but what then? Why, he took us who were of the wild olive, and grafted us in who were heretofore wild and alien, so that even his anger towards Israel hath turned to the benefit of the Gentiles, and we get reconciliation out of their rejection. May we not regard this as a rule of his government? When a congregation hears the Word and tramples it under foot, what marvel if God takes the candlestick out of the place in his anger? But does he break the candlestick? Nay, he moves it to another place. Others get the benefit of the light which those despised who had it aforetime. Great God of wonders, we bless thee that even when thine anger burns, thy mercy brightly shines. Amidst the thunder and the storm, soft showers are rained in silver drops to make glad the earth.

Our text tells us that the servant said, "It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."

I think I see here a satisfactory announcement, "It is done as thou hast commanded", a remarkable statement, "yet there is room"; and an implied consummation, that the room will eventually be, filled. First, then: —

I. A DESIRABLE ANNOUNCEMENT.

He said, "It is done as thou hast commanded." Those that serve God best have generally the least to say about it. When I hear people boast of their religious attainments, I am apt seriously to suspect their deficiencies. A boastful Christian I knew something of, when talking to an earnest man, met with very curt replies. "And pray" said the one, "have not you any grace?" "Yes," said the other, "but I never had any to boast of." Disciples

who are fullest of grace will be slowest to vaunt. Humility befits a servant. "It is done," sounds better than "I have done as thou hast commanded." In like manner the man who gained five pounds in one of the parables did not come and say, "Lord, I have gained five pounds"; but he staid, "Thy pound hath gained five pounds" That was the more delicate way to put it; not as an affectation of speech, but with a becoming modesty. So, too, with the Church of God, when she has done as Christ commands her, she will always feel desirous to wait upon him as a humble servant, accounting this no more than her duty. Besides, the declaration appears to have been made in a waiting attitude, with an expectancy of having something more to do. "It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room," so that the servant seems to stand ready to do something more to fill the vacant places, at the feast. And thus we ought always to stand as Christians when we have done our best — waiting for fresh directions, never saying, "I have done enough, and now I can retire from, service." Rather let God be thanked for what we have been enabled to do; but, strengthened and encouraged by success, let us resolve to do more, and entreat him to show us what still remains to be done, and what more we can have the pleasure of doing. "Oh! my Lord, I have grown grey in thy service; fulfill to me thy promise, 'Thou shalt bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright.' do not put me away from thy loved employ. Honour me with some other task. Delight my willing soul with some fresh command. Bid me do or, suffer thy will, but pass me not by, leave me not to be a laggard, unhonoured and uninterested in fulfilling my Lord's requests." So, let the Church of God always feel that she has never come to the place where she can say, "Rest and be thankful." "Higher, higher, higher, higher," must still be her motto. If her missions have conquered one continent, they must invade another. If half the world had been converted, there would be no rest to us till the other half were converted likewise. "It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room — room for more work, because there is room for more guests at thy feast."

Did I not say that this was a desirable announcement? I am afraid these servants said what we should, some of us, hesitate to affirm. "It is done as thou hast commanded." Alas! how few churches could say this! And where the church might collectively affirm it, many members of the church must shrink from professing individually to have done as the host commanded. For what was that thy Lord enjoined? "Go out quickly." How little there has been of going out after sinners. We have been content to preach to

those that came to hear us Of course, if the people will come to hear us in such numbers, and throng this Tabernacle so constantly, we have no reason to go away from them. But, alas! there are places of worship which I could indicate without difficulty that are not filled, that never were filled, that never will be filled, where there are, probably, as many spiders as there are persons under ordinary circumstance where there are certainly more pews than sitters; and yet it does not seem to have ever occurred to the preacher that he should go out after the people. Small congregations will continue to worship in places not one-fourth occupied, when they might go across to the theater or the music-hall, or to some other large building into which the people might come, and where they might be met with. It would be a strange thing for the supply of fish, if our fishermen only sat at the window and caught what came beneath it, but never went forth to sea after the fish. There would be little game, I warrant you, upon his lordship's table if he sat at the drawing-room window to shoot only that which came there to be shot. For it does not come that way. The moors must be trodden, and the covers must be beaten. So if we are to have many sinners saved, we must go out of our own quiet haunts, and go forth into frequented places. We must preach in the street, or at the market-place, or on the village green. We must take the Word to the people, if they will not come to the Word. "Go out, go out," says the Savior. This is a word that should ring loudly in the ears of many Christians. You have heard almost sermons enough; go out and teach yourself. While you have been eating the fat and drinking the sweet, multitudes are perishing for lack of the heavenly bread. Go out and break it to them. Oh! that there might come a holy impulse upon many here present to begin some good work for Christ! Break up some soil hitherto uncultivated; make an irruption and an invasion into Satan's territory. There is no land that yields so well as that which is newly broken up. The virgin soil that has long been given up to the forest, the brier and the thorn — let but the plough go through this, and there shall be sevenfold harvests. No preaching is half so successful as that which carries the gospel to the dissolute classes — those that never have been hardened by hearing and rejecting the tidings of mercy — those who, albeit they may have their faces stained with immorality, certainly have not any affectation in their mien. To these it comes like a new thing; it strikes them as sweet music; and, hearing the joyful sound, they full often turn to God and live. To this day is it true, as our Savior said in his day, that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees. This is a sphere of labor that

remunerates the laborer. The lowest of the low, when hearing the Word, often accept what the so-called respectable despise. Go out, therefore.

Know this, likewise, that the matter is urgent, for the Master said “do out quickly.” Here, again, I am afraid we cannot say we have done this. “Go out quickly”; go out in haste; go out with the utmost speed; go out as one that runs on an errand, anxious to fulfill his mission; go out, not listlessly, as if you had to wait for an opportunity, but eagerly, knowing that this is the opportune time. Hurry yourself to have it done at once. Go out quickly. The world goes by steam nowadays, while the Church jogs on by the broad-wheeled wagon still. I know some churches that crawl like a snail upon a small leaf, making much ado to accomplish nothing. If half a dozen converts are added in twelve months, they think it is rather too many to be safe, and they are half afraid that they cannot be all genuine Christians. They would fain “summer them and winter them,” as they say, and try them in half a dozen modes. In fact., it seems to them as if God never sent a new-born convert into their church except for them to worry it not for them to accept it as a benison from heaven, and to train it, and nurse it — but to worry it. This will never do. We are to look after something more rapid than the progress which these churches will ever make. Go out quickly. Men are dying. There is no time for us to be quibbling among ourselves. It behooves us to show our zeal rather than waste our energies. Men are perishing. We must preach the gospel to them. now; tell them that it is “now or never” with some of them; make known to them a present. Savior, and cry to them, “If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him. How long halt ye between two opinions For the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice.” There wants to be promptness, quickness, speed, avidity, eagerness after souls, in the preachers of the gospel. “Go out quickly.”

And have we not failed again in another point? “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the blind, and the halt, and the maimed, and compel them, to come in.” There are certain missions now established for which we have reason greatly to bless God. There are works going on in London which are the glory of Christendom. God speed them all! Such beloved friends as Miss Macpherson, Dr. Bernardo, our brother Orsman, and many others, deserve our love and esteem, for they have given themselves up to work among the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low, bearing a great deal which some of us might shrink from, rejoicing to show their diligence among a people much neglected,

and reaping a good harvest of comfort to themselves in the salvation of souls. But, dear friends, where there is one of such works there ought to be fifty; and with this population of London, verging now upon four millions, when we have added all these works of faith and labors of love together, we might well say of them, “What are they among so many?” May God touch many of your hearts, my brethren and sisters, and make you feel the soft touch of sympathy for the perishing, while you hear the Master’s words spoken to you! “Go out yourselves quickly, and lay hold on the blind, and the halt, and the maimed, and bring them in to the supper” Ay, bring them to Jesus. You cannot do it of yourself, but his Spirit dwells in you. Do not forget that. You are not an ordinary man; you are not an ordinary woman. “Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?” God dwelleth in you, and with a God in you, what can you not do? Have but faith in the indwelling Deity, and attempt difficulties; nay, attempt what some think impossibilities, and you shall find that with God all things are possible. Weak as you are, yet, through his strength, you all things shall perform. I pray God for this church, that she may not be found guilty at the coming of Christ of not having gone out after the poor. Do encourage them to come to this house at all times, whenever you can. I do not know where we are to put any more; but there is Thursday evening, and there is Monday evening, and there is room then. Oh! bring in whomsoever you can, for perhaps when the gospel is preached God may bless it to them. Let us not be deficient in this. In the next place we proposed to draw your attention to: —

II. A REMARKABLE STATEMENT.

They had fished up all the poor people in the city, and they had brought in the four characters — the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind — and after that it was alleged “yet there is room.”

Well, well, that is a very encouraging piece of information for ungodly people here. For those that have not come to Jesus this is welcome information, “Yet there is room.” Now we know there is room for sinners still, from several considerations.

We may infer it, to begin with, from the doctrine of election. God has chosen unto himself a people. We are told that their number is a number that no man can number. Well now, those who are saved are not so very many yet. They are a great many more than some bigots would like to believe, but they are a great many fewer than some enthusiasts would

imagine. I am sure God has not saved enough yet to accomplish the number that he has proposed to save, by a very long way. It is my own belief, as it is my earnest hope, that in all things Christ will have the pre-eminence. As in other things, so also in this, he will have more souls than Satan, that he may have the pre-eminence over the old serpent. It does not look to me likely that there should be at the last more lost than saved. We cannot answer the question to a certainty, but surely the Lord's mercy will triumph over human sin, and God will get to himself the victory. A good divine used to say that he hoped and thought that, at the last, there would be no more persons lost, in proportion, than there might be found of persons in prison, in any well-ordered State, in proportion to the number of those who were citizens at large. I only trust it may be so. But the lines of God's election do not encompass a mere handful. There is a great and vast number chosen by him, and there is no such great and vast number gathered in yet. Therefore, we are persuaded that yet there is room.

Next, the efficacy of the atonement leads us to believe this. The atonement that Christ offered on the cross was no small matter. It was the sacrifice of himself as an infinite being — as God and as man; and I dare set no limit to it in its efficacy, itself considered. The death of so august a Personage, in circumstances of such dishonor, amid agonies so inconceivable, must have about it an amount of virtue utterly beyond all reckoning. Jesus Christ is to see of the travail of his soul and to be satisfied; and the travail of his soul does not mean the few Christian people that are now in the world or have been, and his satisfaction will not be consummated by the few millions that have hitherto been saved. Why, it does not satisfy us; yet our hearts are narrow compared with his. He will not be satisfied unless myriads are his. The jewels of his crown must be countless as the stars of heaven by night, and as the sands upon the sea-shore by day. By that bottomless, fathomless, summitless atonement, I do believe that yet there is, and must be, room.

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

The end has not been reached. The virtue of the blood has not been stayed. The ransomed Church has not been all gathered in. So yet there is room.

Again, when I consider the greatness of the adorable Persons who entered into covenant to devise the wondrous plan and accomplish the mighty work of salvation, I feel persuaded that yet there is room. Who is it that saves me? It is God that made heaven and earth. He devised the magnificent purpose according to the good counsel of his will. Think you that the Architect of yonder heavens has designed a little Church for the display of his glory? Think you that he who spread the stars abroad in all their countless hosts to adorn his universe has limited the number, with causeless thrift, of brilliant diadems who shall celebrate the everlasting song of his praise? We think not so. It was Jesus who wrought salvation; and thinkest thou that such a Savior, of such unrivalled dignity, came to effect a petty salvation for a petty few whom you might count upon your fingers? Incredible! Impossible! God forbid! And what shall I say of the Holy Spirit, whose majesty awes us, whose mystery baffles us, whose mercy enlivens us — the Spirit of God who works in us that salvation which the Christ of God has worked, for us — think ye that he has come to dwell on earth with any small or insignificant intent? What small sect will contribute to his satisfaction? Nay, glory be to his name, he brought three thousand in on the Pentecostal day, and he will cause nations to be born in a day yet, and the Church shall cry, “Who hath begotten me these? These — whence came they? “If I go to Gethsemane and see the bloody sweat, I expect a wondrous harvest from that matchless sowing. If I stand on Calvary and mark the flowing wounds, I expect a marvellous reward for those tremendous griefs. If we are not to be pitifully disappointed, there must be something greater yet in reserve than the world has ever seen. The history of Christendom is far more grand than any chapter that has yet been written. There is room; there must be room at the feast of mercy — much room still to be occupied. It is not half filled yet. Scant at present is the array of guests, compared with the complement of those who must needs be brought in.

“Yet there is room.” With a mysterious spiritual consciousness, with an eager, sympathetic anxiety, the Church feels and knows that there is room. The individual yearnings of our Lord’s disciples attest it. Do I not myself daily feel as if there were room; places that want peopling, as well as people that wanted placing at the feast. Brethren, our churches prove that the fresh converts introduced into their fellowship are like fresh blood poured into their veins. A church cannot long be happy and healthy without recruiting, renewing, reviving, and we are always wanting fresh workers

with the dew of the morning upon their souls. We are wanting preachers powerfully impressed with their own call to proclaim the gospel. Many pulpits want them! We need evangelists; men who have just welcomed the news, the good news, the heavenly tidings, and hasten to tell it at the corners of the streets, to the passengers along our thoroughfares. Lovers of souls; seekers of souls; oh! how much we require them! Many a Sunday School wants teachers. Many a ragged school wants self-denying assistants. Everywhere there is a want — a real want — for more helpers in the church, for more laborers in the harvest. So there must be room to store the fruits they want to reap. As the benches of the feast seem to groan for guests, so does the Church long after fresh access signs to her community. Were you here sometimes at the Monday night prayer-meeting, you would feel there was room. Some of our brethren pray as if they had room in their hearts for hundreds and thousands that must be reclaimed. When the Church gets into the spirit of prayer? her cries and groans give proof of secret tears and private wrestlings. Her earnest members, by the instant entreaties made to God, prove that the Church feels that the guest chamber is not yet full. Her tent is not filled with children; she is crying out, like Rachel of old. “Give me children, or I die.” She wants to see her converts multiplied, she longs to stretch forth the curtains of her habitations. There, is, there must be room. Judging by my own experience, I should say that the minister can generally feel when God is saving the souls of his hearers. The efforts and anxieties of his labor are accompanied with such pangs and throes within his own soul that he, is well content with the pain and travail for the joy he has in prospect. When last week I had some conversation with the candidates for church fellowship my heart, rejoiced, as I found out how many of you had lately found the Savior. After being half-dubious whether a blessing had attended the sermons I recently preached, as I listened to the stories of conversion that so many told me, it made my heart to leap for joy. The fact was no tidings had come to me of the expectations I had fostered. There is an interval between the sowing time and the reaping time. But I am encouraged. No doubt there are more of you coming. All but decided now, you will be altogether decided soon. God is at work with you; he means to bring you in, that his grace may have honor. Well, those desires and prayers, those longings and hopings, those wishes and expectations of the Church all show that she does not feel thorough satisfaction with present results, and certainly she feels no misgiving as to the accommodation ready for all comers. “Yet there is room.” Yes, God be praised, there is. That

mother says, "Ah! that my child were brought in!" Blessed be God, there is room for him. And the father says, "Oh! that my sons were saved!" Well, there is room for them. There have been thousands who have gone to heaven of late, but yet there is room. There are thousands that have come to Christ of late, but yet there is room. Prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, saints, have gone into glory, but yet there is room. In this church hundreds have pressed in to know the Lord, but yet there is room. There is room; there is room yet; and there is room for you. Blessed be God for that! Oh! that you may occupy that room! My third point is this, that there is implied in the text: —

III. A MOST BLESSED CONSUMMATION, that the room will be filled.

It is an old saying of the natural philosopher that nature abhors a vacuum. It is true, I doubt not. But here is another axiom: Grace abhors a vacuum. The good man of the house could not bear to see a vacant seat at his table. All things were ready, but there were empty places, and he did not like it. The glory of the feast is to be found not merely in the provisions, but in the guests; so he must have the chairs occupied, as well as the table covered. With reverence be it said, the glory of Christ lies not only in his sacrifice, but in the sinners that that sacrifice saves. A king is no king who has not any subjects. A head is no head if it has not any body. And so Jesus Christ would be a King without subjects if there were none saved. He would be a Head without members, and that is a ghastly thought. He must have a people, and, what is more, he must have all his people. In our natural bodies, if but a little finger be missing, the body is not perfect. So also in Christ, if all his members are not saved, there would not be a perfect Christ. The Apostle tells us that the Church is the fullness of Christ. Hence if a part of the Church were lost, a part of Christ's fullness would be lost. Therefore, he must cause all to come in the unity of the faith unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, for grace abhors a vacuum. When at last the end shall come, and the dispensation of grace shall be wound up, it will be seen that at the table of mercy here below there was not a seat left empty. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son; and whom he did predestinate them he also called." So it shall be. Satan shall not be able to point to a single empty place and say, "There should a certain soul have been seated; God appointed it; I frustrated his purpose." That cannot, shall not be. The wedding must and shall be furnished with guests.

In like manner the table of glory. Like the table of grace, while the board is richly spread, the seats shall be amply filled. There at that table, blessed be God, there is a place for me, and none of you can occupy it. It will be only occupied by him for whom it was designed. If thou believest in Christ, dear friend, there is a place for thee, a freehold, a vested right of which thou canst not be deprived. There is a crown that will fit no other head than yours. There is a harp that will yield music to no other hands than thine. There is a mansion among the many, many mansions in our Father's house for your residence. There will be no mansions in heaven at last untenanted. In some streets of London, "To let" is written on half the houses. Cheerless is the look-out. But when at last the King shall bring his children home, there will not be one prepared mansion that has lost its prepared tenant. The reserved inheritance shall revert to the reserved people; the purchased inheritance shall inherit the purchased possession. This gives me hope in preaching. It convinces me that I do not preach in vain. There must and there shall be some saved. God has declared it. God has made ready for it on earth, and he has made ready in heaven for it. Therefore, they shall be brought in. His preparation shall not, be in vain. His wedding shall be furnished with guests. This certainty fortifies me against an apparent contingency. It inspires me with hope about some of you, my dear hearers, who look hesitant, that you ere long will be resolute. If you come to God, there are preparations made to receive, to welcome you, to lodge you, to feed you, to supply all your needs. Do you desire to come, you shall not be cast away. Why should not you wear one of these crowns? Why should not you tenant one of those mansions? "Yet there is room."

But who will help to fill that room? Who out of this dense throng of people will help to, fill the vacant places at the gospel supper? I cannot call you one by one, as I would, but I do call to you with all my heart. Come to Jesus. Should you say, "How shall I come?" well, it is not a motion of the body; it is a motion of the mind. "What sort of motion of the mind?" do you task. It is trust — trust — simple conviction and unquestioning faith. If you commit your case to him, he will be concerned for you. Follow Christ; you shall have fellowship with him. Your resolution will be evidence of your redemption. Your plea will procure a sense of his pardon. By your acquiescence you will learn that you are "accepted in the Beloved." May God dispose, you, by the mighty operation of his Spirit, to come to Jesus. So shall my prayers be answered. So shall your souls be blessed for ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

LUKE 8:41-56.

Verses 41, 42. *And, 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. But as he went the people thronged him.*

Notice the word “behold,” for this was a wonder that a man so high in position to come to Christ at all, especially one who was in an ecclesiastical position, for he “was a ruler of the synagogue.” Usually those who had to do with the synagogue were great despisers of our Lord Jesus; God works great wonders, however, and sometimes the camel does go through the eye of the needle. This man’s name was Jair, a common Jewish name, and you will find it was the name of one of the judges recorded in the book of Judges. Note this man’s humility, “He fell down at Jesus’ feet.” The greatest of men must humble themselves before they can obtain mercy. Jesus Christ is always ready to receive, to accept, and bless all those who fall down at his feet, but those who lift up themselves shall find him to be their sure and swift, enemy, and the day shall come when he shall abase them to the dust. “He 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.” She seems to have been not only the darling of the house, but of all the neighbors too for we find that all the neighbors came together to weep and to lament her. You find Matthew says that this daughter was already dead. It seems that some delay arose, so that the child died, but the father, with triumphant faith, still besought him to come and raise her, even from the very jaws of death.

43, 44. *And a woman hating an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchd.*

This disease laughs at the physicians, and whenever a cure has been effected it has always been a slow one. Hence the supernatural character of this cure, “Immediately her issue of blood stanchd.” This is the glory of our blessed religion, that it heals sin-sick souls at once and upon the spot.

The moment a man believes in Jesus, his nature is changed; he becomes a new creature: in that moment all his sins are gone: in that same hour he becomes heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. “Immediately.”

45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Pete? and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

What impudence on their part! Doubtless there are many things we say of our Lord, and even to him in prayer, that are very far from such words as he should have from his disciples. There were many who touched him out of curiosity, and doubtless some out of want of respect to his person came too close to him, but there was only one who touched him with the finger of faith, which was the only true touch.

46-48. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Faith crowns Christ, and, therefore, Christ takes the crown off his own head and puts it upon the head of faith. “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Christ’s virtue would not have saved her without her faith, and certainly her faith could not have saved her without Christ’s virtue. We ought to note how vital faith is to true salvation, and what a high degree of importance is attached to it. Let us, therefore, if we have some degree of faith, pray for more, “Lord, increase our faith, for if a little of it may heal, what may not a great faith do?”

49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogues, house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

Be resigned, and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,” and expect not the blessing back again. Do as David did, who, while the child was yet alive, fasted and played, saying, “Peradventure, God will spare him, but when he was dead, fasted no more. Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.” Ah! but this man knew that he who can stay the soul at the gates of death can also Bring it back from the gates of death if he wills. He that can get it from the paw of the lion can get it from the jaw of the

bear. He can deliver his people at all times and at all seasons, and even Death is a conquered foe.

50. *But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*

“Believe only.” What a depth lies in those two words! Believe only! Ah! Lord, it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to believe thee, for thou art so truthful; thou keepest every promise to us, and yet sometimes when we are in the dark, and when circumstances go contrary to us, it is hard to believe; but is not the hardness in our own hearts? Believe only! Christian, what is your trouble this morning, what is your trial? Believe only, and let your humble faith cast your burdens upon your God. “Believe only, and she shall be made whole.”

51, 52. *And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.*

They were so sure she was dead that they had actually hired the minstrels for her funeral — so Mark tells us — and the pipers, and the women that made those strange, Oriental lamentations were there, ready to inter her.

53, 54. *And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them out, and took her by the hand, and called saying, Maid, arise.*

But Christ put them all out. They laughed him to scorn, and, therefore, he would not work the miracle in their presence. It is not meet to east pearls before swine.

55. *And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.*

Do note here the word “straightway.” Just now we had the word immediately, and now we have straightway. It is one of the distinguishing features of the gospel, both of Mark and of Luke, that both evangelists use the word “eutheos,” “straightway.” Christ’s miracles do not take a long time to do; they are done straightway. If there is a distressed soul here now, your salvation need not take months and years; it may be done to-day, and in a moment thou mayest be able to rejoice that thy sins are forgiven, and that thou art a child of God. “She arose straightway, and he

commanded to give her meat.” There are no unnecessary miracles. It wanted a miracle to give her life, but meat could sustain it, and, therefore, there is no further miracle performed.

56. *And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.*

But we know from another evangelist that the game thereof went abroad everywhere, and, indeed, the healing of a soul is not a thing to be kept secret, but when any are raised from the dead the world must know it.

A SAD CONFESSION

NO. 3530

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“We hid, as it were, our faces from him.” — Isaiah 53:8:

You will find in the margin of some of your Bibles that this passage is rendered, “He hid, as it were, his face from us.” The literal translation of the Hebrew would be, “He was as a hiding of faces from him,” or “from us.” Some critical readers think these words were intended to describe our Lord as having so humbled himself, and brought himself to such a deep degradation, that he was comparable to the leper who covered his face and cried, “Unclean, unclean!” hiding himself from the gaze of men. Abhorred and despised of men, he was like one put aside because of his disease, and shunned by all mankind. Others suppose the meaning to be that, on account of our Lord’s terrible and protracted sorrow, his face wore an expression so painful and grievous that men could scarcely bear to look upon him. They hid, as it were, their faces from him; amazed at that brow all carved with lines of anxious thought, those cheeks all ploughed with furrows of deep care, those eyes all sunk in shades of sadness, that soul bowed down, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It may be so; we cannot tell. So let it pass. I have a plain, practical purpose to pursue. Here is an indictment to which we must all plead guilty. Let us make the reflection our own, as we humbly bow at the dear pierced feet of our Lord, and remember how cruelly we slighted our kindest friend, when “We hid, as it were, our faces from him.”

At sundry times and in divers manners we may have done this. Where shall I begin? Alas! I fear me that contempt and contumely alone will interpret some men’s sayings and doings. Their conversation is so profane that their crime becomes palpable. Sometimes men hide their faces from Jesus: —

I. IN COOL CONTEMPT OF HIM.

How astounding! how revolting! He, the Lord of glory, the Creator of heaven and earth, out of compassion to the children of men, condescended to take upon himself our nature should we, therefore, slight him? Being found in fashion as a man, he was subjected to all the pains and miseries of this mortal life, and encountered the horrors of death itself — should we, therefore, revile, or should we not revere him? He ought surely to be esteemed by all mankind. I have sometimes felt that had he not redeemed my soul, I must reverence him for redeeming others. Had I never tasted of his love at all myself, yet the story of his love to his enemies is such that methinks I could fall down and worship him. His character claims our admiration and appeals to the tenderest feelings of our heart. So disinterested was the love of Christ; so self-denying; so unwavering in its constancy; he surpassed every instance on record, and excelled any ideal that the most gifted imagination could paint. Greater love hath no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends. There, creature generosity exhausts itself; mere human love has reached its limit. But God commends his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And this blessed man, Christ Jesus, personally shows and makes evident this love to his enemies, his persecutors his murderers. Still there are those who can revile his name while they scan his history. We can scarcely speak of him but forthwith the vials of their wrath begin to distil. Strange is it that a fame so lively, and a name so altogether lovely should so commonly set a man against his fellows, and become the innocent cause of strife and persecution in the world. That name of Jesus — a name of highest heavenly glory, a name of peace profound, a name of universal good will, a name to knit all mankind in one common brotherhood — has become, by the perversity of human nature, a by-word and a reproach. Their Savior in every age they have not known; their day of visitation they have not heeded. Hence his name has excited wrath and opposition among the sons of men, where it should have excited reverence and love. Some show their opposition by attempting to ignore or to tarnish the dignity of his person. These blatant infidels, I trust, are getting fewer and fewer. The rough, bullying speech of Tom Paine we sincerely hope will never be heard on earth again. There are thinkers (as they would have us account them) abroad in these days more courteous in their address, and far more cautious in their language, than the disbelievers of former times; but too often they are as full of malignity and deadly venoms against the Christ of

God as were the coarsest scoffers who uttered their blasphemy before we were born, so persistently is the person of Christ held in contempt alike by Greek and barbarian. And are there not others who affect great admiration for Jesus of Nazareth as an example of virtue and benevolence, who nevertheless reject his mediatorial work as our Redeemer? As a substitutionary sacrifice they do not and cannot esteem him. Isaiah, in the chapter before us, was holding up Christ as the Lamb led to the slaughter, the victim of our transgressions, bearing our chastisement. How the anger of some men kindles at this representation of the gospel! They sneer that the doctrine of substitution, vicarious sacrifice, atonement; at the simple fact, indeed, that "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." That he was a true philanthropist, an admirable teacher, and an inspired prophet, they will readily allow; but that our iniquities were laid on him, that he was punished in our stead, that he died the just for the unjust, they set aside as though it were an idle tale, a baseless fiction. This noblest of all doctrines, the grandest of all conceptions is here brought down to the humblest capacity of the most simple understanding. The learned can find no flaw in the logic. But learning and logic have little enough, to do with it. The heart that believes it, can tell its worth "He loved me and gave himself for me." Angels have but to hear of it, and they sing of it. Marvel of marvels that there should be men on earth so wise that they hoot at it and count it worthy of nothing but their scorn! They hide, as it were, their faces from the crucified Savior. And then they will pour contempt upon other doctrines of his gospel. Not satisfied with opposing the main and cardinal truth, they will hold up other parts of revelation to ridicule. If a man likes to laugh, and wishes to scoff, he can find folly in infinite wisdom. Nay, he can, if he has eyes that are full enough of falsehood, discover faults even in the immaculate God himself. Given but the desire to deride and parody, the occasions and opportunities will, always be plentiful. And with what pitiful disdain the Lord's people are slighted! The followers of Christ are, as it is commonly said, poor people, illiterate and uninstructed; and but few of the great ones of the earth, or the learned men, will give in their names as adherents of the Savior! Well, so it ever has been. And yet the day shall come when the Lord shall vindicate his own election, and prove how infinitely superior it is to man's reputation. What though he choose the base things of the world and the things that are not, yet by these will he be exalted when his enemies are rolled in the dust. Do I address anybody who has despised the Lord Jesus Christ? Ah! my friend, little do you consider what you have done. Your wantonness can offer no excuse but your

ignorance. And as for your ignorance, it is without excuse. You are unacquainted with our Lord, or you would not decry him. Bethink yourselves, I pray you. Have you really studied his character? Have you looked into the proofs of his being the Messiah? Have you weighed the evidence of his divinity? If you have not, surely you should be ashamed of your temerity. Can it be that out of mere prejudice you have condemned unheard One who to us is all our hope, One who has lifted some of us out of despair and given us peace of mind — One who is now so dear to us that we feel we could cheerfully die for him. Do not affront him. Do not disparage his claim upon our tender regard. Do not speak ill of his blessed name. He is a friend to some of us, the like of whom we never elsewhere found. Were it not wiser and fitter every way that ye should listen to our testimony and go to him, and see whether he cannot and whether he will not save you, and make you partakers of our joy? If he reject you, or if you find him false to his promises, then speak against him; but we beseech you, do not begin to rail before you have any reason. He that builds upon this stone builds securely, but alas! for the man that falls foul of this done! it will assuredly grind him to powder. As surely as Christ is God, those that oppose him will one day wonder and perish. The peril is looming as the day is coming. The glorious apocalypse for which saints look will bring about a total eclipse of everyone that is proud and lofty, everything that is high and lifted up. I will not finger on so dreadful a look-out, but I earnestly admonish you to lay it to heart.

A second and far more common way in which men hide their faces from Christ is: —

II. BY THEIR HEEDLESSNESS, THEIR INDIFFERENCE, THEIR NEGLECT.

Alas! all of us are guilty, or have been guilty, in this respect. Allow me to ask you, my beloved friends in Christ, to look back a little while to the period before your conversion. Was not Jesus as worthy of your love then as he is now, as glorious, as admirable? And yet for how long a time had you hid your face from him! Surely you must remember the days gone by, when you did not care even to hear about him. Any kind of amusement was more fascinating for you than discourse or converse concerning your Savior and your King. There is music in his name now; it was dull enough to you once. You heard sermons without hiding them. Perhaps some of you were constrained by forgo of circumstance to attend the sanctuary, though no part of the service was attuned to your taste. You mixed with

the multitude, but you did not see or draw near the Master. They were dreary hours; you were glad when they were spent, and you were liberated. You listened, but what came in at one ear went out at the other. Scarcely that; for you did not allow it to go far enough into your brain for that. Listlessly you listened, with no desire to learn anything about that Christ who is your only true Savior, your only rightful Sovereign. If you had been in the market, and had been describing the prices of goods, telling you of the probabilities of a rise or fall, you would have been all attention, and you would have no difficulty in carrying home the bulk of what you had heard, especially that part which was about your own business. But oh! in those days Christ was nothing to you. The preacher might lift him up with all his might, and tell you with tears that if you rejected him, you must perish. You took no heed. You did not care whether you perished or not. You did not give Christ your thought. He was put before you, but you hid, as it were, your faces from him. Although the Bible was in your house, bearing witness to Jesus Christ, you never searched it. You may have taken the book down sometimes and read a chapter here, or picked out a verse there, and congratulated yourself not a little upon your good deed; but as to searching the Scriptures through, and comparing passage with passage, spiritual things with spiritual, that you might know Jesus Christ, who is hidden there like a pearl in the field — oh! no, you did not care to give all diligence in this matter. Why, some of you young men were studying hard years ago. You rose up early and sat up late over books professional and profound, and truly if you were to be proficient in your secular calling, you had need to do so; but all that while you never sat up an hour later than usual to make search concerning your soul and the Lord who bought it with his blood; neither did you ever rise from your soft couch at daylight on purpose that you might bow the knee and seek your Lord and worship him. No, everything was sought except the Savior, every duty you would scrupulously fulfill except that which you owed your Lord; all the world was fair except the altogether lovely. And, mayhaps, at that very time there were pursuits that gratified you utterly unworthy of your preference. You had loves which have proved bitterness to you; things that fascinated your heart that did but degrade you. He was your best friend; he who, only meant your good; he who elevates the man that does but look to him; he whose very name fills the soul with refreshment; he, the love of whose person is heaven begun — he was all this while cast into the background. I am not speaking of you, my friends, as if you had a monopoly of reproach; I do speak of myself with many deep regrets of heart. I hid, as it were my

face from him, and I let the years run round not without twitches of conscience, not without rebukes, when I knew how much I did need a Savior, not without the warnings which came from others whom I saw happy and rejoicing in Christ, while I had no share in his salvation. Still I put it off, as perhaps some of you are doing, from day to day, and month to month, and thought that Christ might come in some odd hour, and when I had nothing else to do I might think of him, whose blood could cleanse me. O my soul, I could fain smite thee now! I have heard of a minister who preached for several years before he was converted, and when converted he became a very earnest preacher of the gospel; hut one day as he rode along the street he was observed to stop and cane a dog which was lying in front of a door. When they said to him, “Mr. McPhayle, why did you beat the dog?” he said, “He was so exactly like myself, lying in the sun sleeping — a dumb dog that didn’t bark — that I could not but give him a touch of the rod, though I meant it all the while for myself.” Truly I could lay this rod about my own heart to think that weeks and weeks should have rolled over my head, and I should have hid, as it were, my face from Christ in wilful neglect of my dear Lord, whose heart has bled for me. Does not this come home to anybody here? Are there not some who might justly chastise themselves?

But we pass on to a third form of this same folly. We hid, as it were, our faces from him, many of us: —

III. BY PREFERRING ANY OTHER MODE OF SALVATION TO SALVATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

The great gospel fact is that whoever looks to Christ is saved. The moment faith, with her intelligent eye, beholds Christ on the cross, and depends on him, the man that exercises that faith is forgiven, rescued, saved. Now when we were aroused to something like anxiety about our souls, we were told this. Some of us were told it very plainly, others perhaps not quite so clearly; hut we did not like this way of being saved, simply by believing. Did not we try to merit salvation by our own good works? Oh! we would do this, and that, and the other; we would correct ourselves in this department, and we would push on and make progress in the other; and we tried to do so. Oh! I could pour scorn upon myself to think of some of the good resolutions I made,! I blew them up like children with their pipes and their soap. Fine bubbles they were, reflecting all the colors of the rainbow. But a touch, and they dissolved. They were good for nothing — poor stuff

to build eternal hopes upon. Oh! that working of ours! What slavery it was, but what small results it produced! We came to grief whenever we began to get a little comfortable with ourselves. Just when we said, "Now my tower will stand," there came an earthquake and; it all went to a heap of ruins. Then, if we remember well, we tried our feelings; we said, "It cannot be that if I believe in Jesus just as I am I shall be saved; I must feel something." How we resorted to sharp books, terrible sketches of death, and judgment, and perdition — I know I did. Baxter's; Call to the Unconverted cut me to the quick, and harrowed up my gloomiest apprehensions. We expected to feel something indescribable, and when we began to feel a little alarm and distress of mind we found it was not the thing that brought satisfaction to the mind, or peace to the heart; for the more we did feel, the less we thought we felt; and the more we felt, the less we considered our feelings to be of the right kind. So, after tossing, and toiling, and rowing with feelings, we found we had got no farther than we did with works. And all this while there stood the Savior with this simple counsel, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Still we wrapped ourselves in our mantle and hid, as it were, our faces from him. We kept looking at ourselves and enquiring in the biographies of good men after this feeling and after the other, while we hid, as it were, our faces from him. And when we were beaten off from that false refuge we took to a fresh conceit. Thinking we could pray ourselves into heaven, we, began to pray. This would have been quite right had not we put the exercise of prayer before the commandment to believe. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" — that is the gospel. We were so reluctant to surrender ourselves to an implicit confidence in our Lord. We resolved to pray. Prayer seemed to us a proper performance; a religious duty acceptable to God and much to be commended. We did not understand that we, must need be quickened into life before we could breathe freely. Looking upon daily prayer as a kind of ecclesiastical exercise, albeit there was no real heart in it, we thought some good would come of making it a habit. But no good did come. Our prayers became a form, and we disquieted ourselves in vain. We found we could not pray. Oh! what fools we were! What fools all of us are to look anywhere for salvation but to Jesus Christ! God the Father has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin. If God had done, that, cannot I be, contented? If the Lord has accepted: Christ instead of me, and promised that if I believe in Jesus I shall be saved, why need I go about to find some other way of peace, pardon, and full salvation? Is not God's way good enough for me? If God

accepts it, why should not I rejoice in it? Oh! dear friends, if we have been covering our faces, let us uncover them now, and if they are black as soot with sin, let us just look up to the cross with a black face, and say, "Savior of sinners, I, the very chief among them, put my sole trust in thee! hiding my eyes no more from the light, I will look to thee and trust thee with all my heart."

In yet another way we hid our faces from him. After we were quite sure that we could not be saved other than by the one Mediator, do you remember how we continued to hide our face from Jesus: —

IV. BY PERSISTENT UNBELIEF IN HIM?

I know it for myself. I held up the handkerchief before my eyes, saturated with my own tears. This sympathy for our sorrows I could not credit. It is the sullen sulk of sad souls. Their distress of mind has come between them and the Redeemer. Strange to tell, some men will reason against themselves. No doubt if there were a gift to be bestowed upon all the poor people in the parish, everybody who wanted anything would try to prove himself to be in the parish. If there was a man who lived with half his house in one parish and half in another, I'll be bound to say he would try to prove he lived in the parish where the gifts were to be had; but somehow or other awakened sinners try to prove that they are not the sort of people Christ died for. They used to have in Rome when they were canonizing saints an *Advocatus Diaboli*, or advocate of the devil, who used to plead against the person being canonized, and offer all the objections he could. It seems strange that so many people should turn *Advocati Diaboli* against themselves. I can tell you how they argue, for I have talked with them by the hour, and this has been the fashion of their counterpleading, "But, sir, I don't feel my need of it." We reply, "If you cannot go to Christ with a broken heart, go to Christ for a broken heart." "Oh! but, sir, I don't feel that I am fit to go." "Your unfitness is the only evidence he wants." "But I don't think I have repented enough." "Granted; and you never will, repent enough, could your tears for ever flow. You cannot be saved by the merit of your repentance. Jesus Christ will forgive your impenitence as well as your other sins. Certainly if you want more repentance, you must go to him for it." "Well, but, sir, do you know I cannot help fearing that perhaps I am not one of the elect?" We have replied, "Perhaps you are; and anyhow you had better go to Christ, because he has given an invitation to every creature, he says, 'Whosoever will, let him come and take, of the water of

life freely.” “Ah! sir, but you don’t know — I am so indifferent.” “Well but never will you be otherwise than indifferent as long as you stay away from the Savior. If you go to him and put your trust in him, he will remove your indifference. He alone can roll away this stone from the door of your heart.” One moment they will say they do not feel, and almost in the same breath they will turn round and say they feel the horrors of despair. When they tell you of the dreadful blasphemies that come into their mind, you may answer that it is written, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, and whosoever believeth in him is not condemned,” feel or not feel as he may. Well, I have pursued that business till I have been pretty nearly tired of it, when all of a sudden the person I have been trying to comfort has begun again where he commenced, as if he had never said those things before; he has gone over the same round of objections, and I have no doubt would have continued to repeat himself, had I continued to answer him, fifty times over; so did he encourage the morbid apprehension that he should not himself be saved. You see a man put into the condemned cell at Newgate, and you go in and tell him that Her Majesty presents him with a free pardon. I warrant you he will not put his hand to his brow, and say, “Well, but I think there is this or that objection to my accepting it.” “No,” thinks he, “if there is any objection, let those find it out that like; it is no business of mine.” And so with the soul that is bidden to come to Christ, I say, let it come, objections or no objections, and if there be objections, let somebody else find them out, but as for thee, poor sinner, don’t cover thy face from Jesus, but come as thou art, just as thou art, and say, “Here I am, my Savior; if thou canst save — and I believe thou canst save me. At any rate, if I perish, I will perish trusting in thee.” Rather, sinner, shall heaven and earth pass away than even a soul perish that acts on this firm resolve. Hide not your eyes from the Savior; it is a dreadful temptation of Satan, this mistaken notion of humility. People think, or affect to think, that it would be arrogant or presumptuous on their part to believe in Jesus. I tell you solemnly that unbelief is not humility; it is a foul conceit. Humility trusts the Savior. Base indeed the ingratitude which casts a slur upon his truthfulness, and refrains from venturing to accept his promises. Oh! brethren, we once hid, as it were, our faces from him; let us pray for others who are hiding their faces, and beseech the Lord to incline them to turn their faces right round to his dear class, and then let us gently take off the mantle that obscures their vision, and say to them, “Look, look through your tears! Look even now; for there is life in a look at the Crucified One.”

But not to tarry, I am afraid there are some of us who must plead guilty to another charge; we have hidden, as it were, our faces from him since he has saved us, and since we have known his love: —

V. BY OUR SILLY SHAME AND OUR BASE COWARDICE.

Perhaps I speak to some Christians here, who, though they love the Lord, have never professed his name. Dear brother, dear Sister, do you think this is right — is it loyal? Had he kept his love to you a secret, and never openly espoused your cause, and given up himself for your salvation, where would you now have been? Howbeit he boldly declared he was not ashamed to call us brethren,” and, true to his word, he acted a brother’s part, and carried through the work of our redemption. Since Jesus Christ was not ashamed of us, surely we need never be ashamed at him. “But I think I may go to heaven by myself,” said one, “for I am afraid I shall compromise other people if I dishonor Christ.” And do you not think, my dear brother, that you are dishonoring him by such a suggestion? “Oh! but suppose I were to fall into sin? “Nay; do not you think that even now you are living in sin while you are refusing what he demands, that you should confess him before men. His promise is that he that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh the good confession, shall be saved. Or, as it is put in another form, we read, “He that believeth and is baptized” (which is the open confession of him) “shall be saved.” Do not, I entreat you, play the coward. “Suppose I should fall,” say you, “after I have made a profession?” Which do you think the safer place, where your Lord bids you, or where you choose to be yourself? Come forward if you are his followers, and put on his regimentals. I wonder what our Government would say if Her Majesty’s soldiers were to take off their red coats and protest, “We should be just as good soldiers, and as true, without this uniform as with it.” They would be suspected of treason; they would be taken up as deserters. And are there no deserters here? I should like to send the officer round and find you out.

*“Are you the soldiers of the cross;
The followers of the Lamb;
How can you blush to own his cause,
Or fear to speak his Name?”*

Come out brethren, come out. If you want your Master’s blessing, come and join your Master’s servants. Aye, but some of us who have made a

profession of our faith may, nevertheless, have sometimes hid our faces from Christ: —

VI. BY COWARDICE.

Have you never been in company where religion was jested and and felt, “Well, I had better hold my tongue here”? There are seasons when that is prudent, and even proper — when you are so weak a champion that you might damage the cause. At the same time, even the weakest champion had better have his lance broken than be altogether a coward. How often might we have spoken for Jesus, when nothing has kept us back except cowardice! It was not prudence; it was cowardice, downright cowardice. We thought they would give us an ill-name, and so we dishonored Christ lest we should encounter a rude joke or a coarse jest from a person whose opinion was never worthy of a moment’s thought. I wish there were more boldness for Christ everywhere. In the higher circles he that confesses Christ may have to run the gauntlet for it, but let him do so boldly. And amongst working men in the shop or factory there is a deal of “chaffing” goes on, often of cruel kind, against the Christian, but he who is such a feather-bed soldier that he cannot bear the reproach is not worthy of such a Lord. Our sires were not so tame that they could be intimidated with a taunt. Their cheek never blenched at the stake, or in the fire. They were ready to die for the Lord Jesus. How think ye, then? Should we play the craven; shall a little maid make us afraid, or shall some silly fools, who scoff at all that is holy, drive us to disown our Savior? Oh! brethren, do not surrender your souls so cheaply. Never mind their sneers. Never hide your face from him. Come out and have no fellowship with the profane, the profligate, or the persecutors. Is Christ in the pillory? Put me in with him, and then throw what you like at me. Is Christ’s name rolled in the mire, and made a by-word and a proverb? Link my name with his, and make a by-word and a proverb of it. Twist the two together, and let us be the object of your slanders. I will glory in it. The reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Hide not then your faces from him, beloved, nor shrink from espousing his cause.

I feel sure that many, if not all of us, who are believers will penitently confess that we have sometimes hidden our faces from Christ: —

VII. BY NOT WALKING IN CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM.

I once asked a brother how long it was since he had enjoyed fellowship with; Jesus. His reply was remarkable. "I feel sorry," said he, "you have asked me that question, and yet I must thank you. Had you asked me, whether I continued in prayer, I would have said 'Yes,' for, with more or less fervor, I do constantly pray. Had you inquired whether I endeavored to walk honestly and uprightly before my fellow-creatures, I should have said, 'Yes, thank God I hope I have not slipped with my feet'; but when you say, 'How long is it since you really have had fellowship with Jesus?'" blush to own that many a day has passed since I have known this high privilege." Is that so with you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ? If so, it is very, very sad. Our heart, if we are Christians, is married to Christ. Say, then, would it not be strange if a wife should live with her husband and hide her face from him by the week and month together; should there be scarcely a comfortable word between them; should there only be just the decent civilities of a daily routine, without much concern or any confiding? Yet perhaps some of you pray a little every morning and every night because you think it is proper. At special times you do your reverence to Christ; and anon you go out into the world, and there, in a measure, you estrange yourselves from him, and then you return home, far from being eager and anxious for communion with your Lord; so, not seeking his face for yourselves, you do in effect hide your face from him. There is no face to face fellowship. Remember, I entreat you, that his love to you is constant, although your love to Christ may grow cold. If you can dispense with his company, he delights in your company. There it stands in the Canticles, "Let me see thy face; let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Now had you said that to Christ, it might be easily understood, but when he says that to you, it is most admirable. His love makes him desire to hold fellowship with you — will you refuse it; will you deny him? Surely you will say, "Dost thou think so much of me? I ought to have said to thee what thou hast said to me; thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one look of thine eyes, and one chain of thy neck: Nay, but these are the words of him from whom I have often hid my face. And is this precious Christ so enamoured of me? Has he, the Prince of Life, so fixed his affections on my spirit? Does he love to hear me speak with him; does he delight in my communing with him? Oh! then I cannot forbear; I must cry, 'Come to me, my Lord, and I will tell thee my griefs, and my joys, and thou shalt tell me all thy heart, and we will thus confer and confide with secrets of which the world wots not.'" The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. Let us, therefore, tell our

heart's love to Christ. We hid, as it were, our faces from him. Say, when and how did you begin thus to act? You used to revel in the light of his countenance once; why did you hide your face? Did you get worldly? Did you dote too much upon some earthly object? Did you neglect prayer? Did you give way to temptation? Beloved, whatever may have been the cause, remember Jesus Christ has not divorced you. He hath said, "Return, ye backsliding children; I am married unto you, saith the Lord." Come back then; come back now, as we meet around the Lord's table, you that love your Lord, but have lost fellowship with him,; pray — pray that this may lie the beginning of a happier era. Oh! that we might keep looking on to Jesus, and Jesus looking to us! Oh! that we might maintain that dear fellowship, and never have it broken till it shall melt into the yet nearer and more glorious communion on the other side of the river, where nothing can disturb the profound enjoyment! Get ye up, get ye up, believers, from your sorrows, from your cares, from your anxieties and distractions; get ye up to the Master's feet, and sit there with Mary, and look up into his dear loving face, and listen to his gracious words of promise, hide not your face from him, he will not hide his face from you. Say, like the spouse in the Canticles, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine," and he will answer your prayer, and make your heart burn within you with the holy ecstasy of fervent love. May it be so ever with us! Amen.

“THAT DAY” AND IT’S DISCLOSURES

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*“The Lord grant unto him that He may find mercy of the Lord in that day.” —
2 Timothy 1:18.*

GRATITUDE is never failing in Christians. When they have received a benefit, they are sure to acknowledge it. When Paul was at Rome, Onesiphorus found him out very diligently, and was not ashamed of his chains, but ministered to his necessities; and, therefore, Paul felt bound to him and to his family in perpetual thankfulness. Let none of us ever be accused of ingratitude? it is one of the worst of sins. Paul, no doubt, would have done all he could for Onesiphorus in other ways, but he added to all other ways of showing his gratitude that of praying for him — praying the prayer which we have here put on record in the Book of Inspiration. Learn hence that if we can do nothing else for our benefactors? we can bless them by our prayers. Let us be abundant in pouring out supplications before for all those who in any way have done us a service. We learn also from the text that the best of men have need to be prayed for. I cannot doubt but that Onesiphorus was saved. He seems to have been a most decided follower of Christ for when others did not know Paul because he was a prisoner, Onesiphorus knew him; he sought him out; he sought him out diligently; event into the poorest quarters of that great city or Rome, and hunted him out, though probably the population at that time? was not less, but perhaps far more than four millions of people. He found out the

Apostle, and he ministered unto his need. He was a good many and yet Paul prayed for him — prayed for him a prayer which would be appropriate for a bad man too, “The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day!” The best of us needs to be prayed for. Let us be thankful if we have anybody to pray for us. Let us count the prayers of the faithful to be our true riches. He is the happiest man who shall have the most of God’s people lift up their hearts in prayer for him.

I call your attention, however, to-night to none of these surrounding particulars; I want to fix your minds upon one thing. I desire, anxiously desire, that we may all be led to look forward to that day of which the Apostle here speaks. And our first point shall be that day. Then our second point shall be the mercy of that day. First, then: —

I. “THAT DAY.”

Paul speaks of the day of judgment here. He does not specify it, because it was so commonly believed in and expected among Christians, that it was quite sufficient for him to say “that day.” From the earliest times, wherever there has been divine light, that day has been expected: Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord, and his prophecy, though, very early, was so clear that the Jew, who almost closes the Book of Inspiration, quotes it — feeling, I suppose, that he could not use words more expressive than those which came from that ancient prophet. All along the pages of Scriptural history you read of men raised up to tell of that day. Asaph, in the Psalm we read just now, gave a most accurate description of that day when the Lord shall judge his people. And Daniel, when he saw the throne set and the Ancient of Days come, perceived that day for which we also are now looking. Nothing, perhaps, is more often spoken of in Scripture than that day. The New Testament teems with allusions to that Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall be revealed with flaming fire. I say it was so commonly understood, that Paul had no need to say anything except “that day.” Questions will be asked to-night by some, “When will that day come?” to which I would answer, it were better for us to be prepared for it come when it may, than to be anxious to fix its date. We can give you no information, because “of that day and of that hour knoweth no man — no, not the angels of heaven.” After trying to discover what I can of the future, I arrive at this conclusion from Scripture, that the Lord would have us be in a state of perpetual vigilance and expectancy, and hence he has studded the Scriptures with

phrases to the effect that he comes quickly. Truly his “quickly” will not be the same as ours; but methinks the noontide of the world may have passed, and these are the latter days, and we might to be looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of Man. He may come to-morrow; he may come to-night. He may delay his coming, but he shall come such an hour as the mass of men think not, and at an hour when they are not aware. That day shall overtake them as a thief in the night, and come upon them as pain upon a woman in travail. Some may curiously ask whether the Day of Judgment will be a natural day or not. Will it be a day of twenty-four hours? To which we again reply, we have no information; but we know that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It will be a definite period. Whatever its length or brevity, it will suffice for an accurate judgment, and a judgment of all mankind. Whether it shall occupy a thousand years or a single day, the work will be done — done thoroughly, done effectually, done for ever, for all the race of Adam. Let us rest assured of that. It is far more important for us to know these things about that day; first, that it will be ushered in as no other day has been. The day began in Eden with the rising sun; and when the sun’s first beams had lit up the sky, the birds began to sing right joyously amongst the trees; but that day shall be ushered in, not by the rising sun, but by the Sun of Righteousness himself. He shall arise with all the glory of his Father, and the holy angels shall come with him. There will be sights and sounds on that tremendous morning such as never were seen or heard by mortal men before. Even Sinai’s tremendous pomp, which made Moses fear and quake, shall be outdone in that dread day when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and with the voice of God. It will be a day of days. Its dreadful surroundings are spoken of in Scripture, but, after all, words can but feebly describe them. It will be a day especially notable for the revelation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As yet he is hidden among the sons of men. He was as one concealed in incognito. He traveled through this world, and they counted him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He has gone into his glory but he is concealed at the right hand of God from the gaze of men below. They see him not; they know him not; but in that day he shall sit upon the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and they also which crucified him. Then shall they say that he is Divine, and no longer shall they dare, to dispute it. Then shall the Jew see that he is the Messiah that was for to come, and then shall the Gentile perceive that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The flashings of his glory shall convince all mankind, and the

wicked shall stand speechless before his judgment-bar. Pilate then shall not ask him, “What is truth?” for he, alas! too hath, shall perceive it. They shall bring no accusation against him then, for to their confusion they shall see that he was no traitor, but a King. Judas shall not sell him then, for he, shall perceive then that he who sold him was the son of perdition, to perish for ever. Oh! what a day shall that be when, coming out of his chamber rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, the Bridegroom of the Church shall appear, and all his saints shall appear with him. It will be a day remarkable for its wonderful convictions. There will be a general assembly held on that day such as never has been held before. For, first, the Son of God shall be the center of all eyes, and around him shall be his Father’s angels. Heaven shall send her pomp to swell his train. He shall come, and his saints also shall come with him. The glorified shall come to sit with him, and then, as in a moment, the dead shall arise. I shall go into no minute questions or particulars now, but certainly at that moment there shall stand upon the earth all the dead, both small and great, they that were on the earth buried in it, and they that were in the sea shall all arise, and as the trumpet rings out clear and loud the whole multitude of men that lived and died shall start up from their tombs to see their God upon his throne, and those that are alive at that time — all shall come and live again, and the raised bodies of men and the spirits of the just. There shall come up from the infernal pit lost spirits too, and the chief foe of God and man, long scarred by Jehovah’s lightnings — he shall come and lift his brazen front once more, and the saints shall judge the fallen angel who long had persecuted them. He shall receive his final sentence. and begin the utmost hell which God had reserved for the devil and his angels, so that there on this poor planet little compared with greater stars, and yet in God’s sight most glorious of them all, there shall be a convocation of the three worlds. Heaven, earth and hell shall meet together, and Christ, in the midst of them all, shall judge the world in righteousness and the people with equity. Oh! what a day will that day be! And it will be a day, in addition to the general convocation, of universal excitement. Next week the day of thanksgiving will move London from end to end, but there will be tens of thousands to whom it will be or day of thanksgiving, but perhaps of bitter sorrow. There will be nothing that could make them thankful in the pageantry of that day. So of all the days that have ever happened to the sons of men, there have been some unmoved thereby. Let us speak as though our soul were in every word — some of our hearers will slumber, or their minds will wander. But on that day there will be no indifferent spectators of that

tremendous pomp. The wicked shall wake up; their indifference shall have gone, and They shall be filled with dismay and despair. They shall long for annihilation, they shall ask the rocks to cover them, and the mountains to conceal them. The righteous shall not be listless either, for theirs shall be boldness in the day of judgment, and joy, and triumph, and acclamations of welcome, with which they shall hail the King of Kings sitting upon his throne. There will be a general excitement. Hell will howl its loudest howlings, and heaven will resound with its loftiest songs on that closing day of the drama of time, that day of which the Apostle speaks. And that will be a day of wondrous revelations. On that day we shall detect the hypocrite. See him yonder. The mask has fallen. See the leprosy on his brow. Then shall we see the men who were misrepresented, who were counted the offscouring of all things, though of them the world was not worthy. The filth with which men pelted them in the pillory of scorn shall fall off, and their garments shall be whiter than any fuller can make them in the glory of the righteousness which Christ shall put upon them. There will be a resurrection of reputations in that day. And at the same time there will be the judgment of mere profession. Perhaps in that hour we shall understand the providence of God infinitely better than we do now. Then we shall see the evil of men's hearts as we never saw it, for every idle word that man hath spoken shall be published there, and transgressions of midnight that were covered up with curtains of lies shall suddenly stand revealed as in the noon-day sun — and the men who scorned the righteous and were themselves guilty of abominable sin. Oh! what a revealing day! The housetops then shall ring with secrets that have been hidden in the closet, and men shall read the writing, as it were, upon the sky, the dark sayings and the hidden things which were of old. And then when the revealing shall have come, it will be a day of final judgment. From almost any court on earth there is an appeal. Even after the judge puts on the black cap and condemns the criminal, he yet appeals to public opinion and to the mercy of the nation, and perhaps an unworthy life may yet be spared. But from that judgment-seat there shall be no appeal. For ever and for ever fixed is the fate of men whom Christ hath judged. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still." No change can take place, and no appeal can ever be made. 'Tis done, 'tis sealed, 'tis inevitable. 'Tis over for ever and for ever — for ever saved, or for ever lost. That day, then, ought to be a matter of personal interest to every one of my hearers, yea, and to every one beneath the sun. It will be the last day of time. Then there will be no more counting of rising and

setting suns, no reckoning by waxing and waning moons. Then there will be no revolutions of the year to mark the period of time, nor will men count by centuries. It shall be eternity, one ocean of eternity without landmarks by which to say, "Thus far have we gone, and thus far have we yet to go." Oh! wondrous day! oh! marvellous day! last day of time, day for ever to be remembered; remembered by the wicked in hell, to whom it shall be said, "Son, remember," and remembered, methinks, by the righteous in heaven for ever, for they shall look back to that day when Christ appeared and they were declared to be the blessed of the Father to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world. Oh! how I blame my tongue and chide myself that I cannot speak upon this theme as I would, but nevertheless may the solemn facts make up for my want of speech, and may they tell upon your souls. Now I must turn to the second point, and speak upon:

II. THE MERCY OF THAT DAY.

The mercy which is prayed for in this verse, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." Will that prayer be heard? Will that prayer be heard for me, for you, each one of you in this area, in these galleries? Will God have mercy on you in that day? I will tell you.

First, he will have no mercy in that day upon those who had no mercy upon others. If you cannot forgive, neither shall you be forgiven. If you cannot kneel down and sincerely pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted to us," then the gates of heaven are fast barred against you. If you take your brother by the throat and say, "Pay me what thou lowest," the great Master of us all will commit you to the tormentors, because your great debt has not been paid. Relentless, malicious, revengeful men, take heed of that. Lay it on your pillow to-night, and let it pierce your heart — if ye forgive not every man his brother, your heavenly Father will not forgive you.

Next, God will have no mercy in that day upon those who lived and died in wickedness. Here is the proof of it, "The wicked shall be turned into hell," and hell means not mercy, but misery. The men that have lied in the breaking of God's law from day to day, from childhood to manhood, perhaps from manhood to old age, and have died still sinning — for them there shall be no mercy whatsoever.

There shall be no mercy for those who neglect salvation. Again I give you God's words for it, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" These people had not done any particular mischief to anybody else; they had not persecuted Christ; they had not reviled his gospel; they had not been heretics; they simply neglected the matter. "How shall ye escape if ye neglect. so great salvation?" Ye shall not escape at all. If ye neglect his mercy here, mercy will neglect you for ever.

Then, again, they shall have no mercy who said they needed none. Are there not some here who fancy that they want no mercy from God? They do their best; they are excellent in character; they are well deserving, and they expect to enter into felicity through their good deeds. You seek no mercy, you shall have none. You proudly reject it. You trust to your own righteousness; you seek to have what you merit; you shall have what you merit, but that will be to be driven for ever from the presence of God. There cannot be mercy to those who will not confess that they need mercy. There shall be no mercy in that day for those who sought no mercy here. Prayerless souls? you are graceless souls, and mercy shall be denied you then. You will pray loudly enough then. Oh! how they pray in hell! What tears and groans send they up to heaven! They would fain have mercy there, but Mercy's day is over; Justice hath turned the key and hurled that key into the abyss where it never can be found. They are prisoners for ever beneath the wrath of God. They that will not ask it deserve not to have it. When mercy is to be had for the asking, if man turns upon his heel and does refuse to ask, what shall God do but say, "Because I called and ye refused — I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will mock at your calamity. I will laugh when your fear cometh"? There shall be no mercy for those who ask no mercy.

Further, there shall in that day be no mercy for those that scoffed at Christ, denied his dignity, railed at his people, broke his Sabbath, and altogether abhorred his gospel. Oh! sirs, ye fight a desperate battle against him who made the heavens and the earth, and who is the darling Son of God! In fighting against Christ, ye, dash yourselves upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler; ye cast yourselves upon the point of his spear. Be wise and stay your rebellion. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little." How shall the wax contend with the fire, or the tow wage war with the flames? Yet you are doing this, O you that rebel against Christ! You shall either break or bow. Bow, I pray you, for if not he shall break you with a rod of iron; he shall break you in pieces

like a potter's vessel. Beware, ye that despise him, lest in the day of his coming he despise your image, and ye utterly perish.

There shall in that day be no mercy for those who refuse the gospel; and I am sorry to say there are some here of that sort. Those cannot be said to refuse the gospel who do not know it, but most of you do know it. I was thinking this afternoon, as I prayed God to let this subject get into my own soul. About some of you who do not want for light and instruction, who do not need to know more about the way of salvation, or about the penalty of neglecting it. What you want is a new heart and a right spirit; you want the will subdued; you want decision of character; you want to be made thoughtful; you want to be made prayerful. I cannot do this for you, but I can warn you over and over and over again that they who go to hell from under the shadow of the pulpit wherein there is an earnest ministry go there with an emphasis. They that fall from the heights of privilege fall, indeed, into the lake of fire. God grant that not a solitary one of the many hearers who gather here may know what it is to have it said, "It shall be, more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. They would have repented had they heard the gospel, but you heard it, and repented not."

I must add to all this that there shall be no mercy in that day for those who have sold their Lord. "Where are they?" say you. "Does there live on this earth a miscreant who has sold his Lord?" God have mercy on the man — he not only lives on earth, but he is here. He was once a professor, but he found it more profitable to cease from religion, and he has done so. He once came to the communion table, but he fell into lustful habits, and he is no member of Christ. He has defiled the temple of God, and him shall God destroy. He could sometimes pray in public — at the prayer — meeting' but he dares not pray now; he has enough conscience left to let him cede from such hypocrisy. He sold his Lord for pleasure; he sold his Lord for pelf; he sold his Lord for the fear Of man. "Verily I say unto you, him that is ashamed of me and my Word, of him will I be ashamed when I shall come in the glory of my Father and all my holy angels with me." You know who spoke those words. They were spoken by him whose hands were pierced. He has said it, and oh! note, ye apostates, note it well, "He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven. Verily I say unto you, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Oh! where is this unhappy man? May God have

mercy on him to-night, for he will have no mercy upon him in that day if he dies as he now his.

And I shall close that list by saying in that day God will have no mercy for false professors. He will have no mercy upon preachers who could talk glibly, but whose lives were not consistent with their own teaching. What a condemnation shall await me, if I be not found in Christ after having preached so continuously to so many thousands! Oh! whatever a man shall be in hell, may God grant he may never be an unfaithful minister of Christ, condemned out of his own mouth. But what shall I say of unfaithful deacons and elders, and church members? Their condemnation will be as just as it is terrific. Why needed they to add to their other sins the sin of a false profession? If they loved not Christ they need not have been traitors. There was no necessity for them to come forward and be baptized into the Triune name. There was no demand upon them to come to the table in remembrance of Christ's death if they were not his. They voluntarily thrust themselves into a profession which was a lie, and into the midst of a church with which they were not akin. Surely if he begins first at the house of God, his judgments will be most terrible upon false professors. For this chaff there shall be the fire unquenchable, for it was once upon the Lord's threshing floor; for this dross there shall be consuming flames, for it was once in alliance with the precious gold which the King calls his own. I feel inclined to stop preaching, and to pray for myself. The Lord have mercy upon me in that day! and then to take you all by name, if I could know you all one by one, and kneel here and say, "The Lord have mercy upon this man — this woman — this child — in that day." But I beg you pray it for yourselves; now, in the silence of your souls, let this prayer go up vehemently to heaven, "O God, have mercy upon me. Have mercy upon me in that day, and to that end have mercy upon me now."

I close, but I never like to close a sermon when it looks like Jeremiah's roll — written within and without with lamentations. Let us have a sweet word or two to finish with. We spoke of that day; for a moment let me speak of this day — of this day. You have not come to that day yet. To-day it is not judgment, but love that rules the hour. Now the great white throne is not yet set, neither is it a trumpet that rings in your ear, but it is an affectionate voice, which speaks to you and says, "Mercy is to be had yet, mercy is to be had by false professors, mercy is to be had by apostates, mercy is to be had by the very chief of sinners." This is a night, this very night, in which prayer will be answered. God has said, "Seek and ye shall find." This is a

night in which Christ waits to be gracious. He is exalted on high on purpose to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. This is a night in which sin may be forgiven. You are on praying ground; you are on pleading terms yet. The sentence is not passed. The wax is still melted, and it is not stamped and cold. There is hope for you better than that, there are kind invitations for you; there are loving exhortations. How long these may stand good I cannot tell. As far as any one of us may be concerned, the judgment day may come tomorrow. It may come to all mankind; but as far as the practical fact is concerned, it may come in death to any one of us to-night. I look round me, now, and I recollect a month ago certain seats in this place that were occupied by those that are now gone — gone to their account. If it were right, I think I could point my finger to some of you that are sitting in the places of dead men. They were their seats. They used to sit there, some of them, and they rejoiced in every word they heard. Is a sinner filling a saint's place? There are some, again, that are gone out of this company who gave us no evidence of grace. Alas! is there no sinner sitting in the place where one sat before him who forgot God? You are all passing away — I am passing with you. Shadows we are all. We fly like an arrow through the air. We are a wind that passeth, and it is not. Oh! make sure of eternal things, brethren and sisters. Whatever you lose, lose not Christ; whatever you miss, miss not salvation. May God impress you with this thought. May he impress you, moreover, with this thought — that “to-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation”; and may some of you be unable to sleep to-night until you have found the Savior;

*“For should swift death this night o’ertake you,
And your couch become your tomb,”*

then to-morrow, if unregenerate and unforgiven, you would be shut up where hope can never come to you. Oh! seek his face to-night! Dare not permit yourselves to feel the image of death upon you in sleep unless you have felt the scepter of Christ, touched by faith, communicate life and pardon to you. Seek ye him. Oh! seek ye him. Seek ye him while he, may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. The Lord bless you, every one of you, and may we meet in heaven without exception, for Christ's sake! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18.

Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.*

Paul takes high ground. He is not an apostle by the will of the Church, but an apostle by the will of God. God's will is the great motive power in the Church of God. Some talk a great deal about man's will. What think you of God's will, the will of the Almighty? Surely that shall stand. Paul felt that he had that at the back of him. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Hence he always speaks very boldly. He never asks leave of anybody. If he is an apostle by the will of God, he exercises his office without fear.

2. *To Timothy, my dearly beloved son:*

Son in the faith. When all the ties of natural descent shall be forgotten. sonship in Christ will continue. I do not doubt that in heaven Timothy is. still Paul's son; Paul is still father to Timothy, for the relation is of the Spirit.

2. *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I think I have called upon you to notice that when Paul writes to a church, it is "Grace and peace." Whenever he writes to a minister, it is "Grace, mercy, and peace." I have sometimes wondered whether we ministers need mercy more than other people, and I suppose that we do, or else the Apostle would not have said, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Oh! if a minister gets to heaven, it will be a wonder. His responsibilities are so great. "Who is sufficient for these things?" It will be a marvelous display of mercy if any of us shall be able to say at last, "I am clear of the blood of all men"; for we have not only our own blood, but the blood of others to look to in this matter.

3. *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;*

For this Paul thanks God. He never forgot to pray for Timothy, and it is a matter of thankfulness. When we feel moved to pray, though it be for another, the spirit of prayer is essentially the same, whatever its object; and we ought to be thankful when we feel continually able to pray for a friend. "I thank God," says he, and he says that he had served God with a pure conscience all his days. So he had, but it was a blind conscience. At first, when he was a Pharisee, he still served God, though he then persecuted ignorantly the people of God. Oh! but it is a good thing sincerely to follow after God. May we be helped to do so. "I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

4. Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

What were those tears? Tears of holy men and women are as precious as diamonds. Paul had noticed the tear twinkling in brother Timothy's eye — the tear of repentance, the tear of gratitude, the tear of fervent desire. He had noticed that, and, being mindful of all this, He wished to see that dear face again. Christianity does not make us unsociable. It gives us new ties of love, fresh brothers, fresh sons.

5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Happy son who has grandmother and mother before him in the faith. Unhappy young man who has quitted the faith of his fathers, and has turned altogether aside. If such be here, we would remember them in our prayers, but we cannot say that we can remember them with joy.

6. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Stir up your gifts like a fire. It will not burn without poking sometimes. Stir it up. And every now and then it is a good thing to have ear heart stirred up, aroused, quickened, brought to a higher diligence. We must try to do this Perhaps there are some dear friends here who have a Large measure of latent, gift, dormant faculty. Stir up the gift that is in thee.

7. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Neither Paul, nor Timothy had a craven spirit. They were none of them afraid. God had taught them the truth, and they knew it, and they held it, defying all opposition.

8. *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner:*

What! were people ashamed of Paul? Oh! yes, dear friends. The great Apostle, because he was persecuted, found himself despised by some of the very people who owed their souls to him. It is the lot of those who are faithful to Christ to find even good men sometimes turning against them. But what of that? They are responsible to their Master, not to their fellow-servants. Yet it is a hard thing when any come to be ashamed of you — ashamed of you, though you know that you have done right. I do not wonder that he puts it even to Timothy, “Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony, of our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.” Some of us know what it is to have trained and brought up these about us, who were to us what Timothy was to Paul, who have been ashamed of us, and of the testimony of our Lord.

8. *But be thou partaker Of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God:*

You will want the -power of God to do it, and mind you do it. Take your full share in whatever affliction the gospel brings upon Christians. “According to the power of God.”

9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

How plain it is that he earnestly believed in the eternal election of believers — in their being in Christ, and in their possession of grace in Christ. “Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” God’s love to his people is not a thing of yesterday. He loved them before the world was made, and he will love them when the world has ceased to be. “It was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

10-12. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ; who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer*

these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for 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.

Paul knew that grace could keep his soul, but I think that he here means that he could keep his own gospel. Paul had kept it, kept the faith, but he committed it now into the hand of the greater One, who would keep it when every apostle was dead, and every faithful witness had passed away. "He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

13. *Hold fast the form of sound words,*

Many say they have no creeds, and there is hardly an Epistle in which there is not a distinct mention of a creed.

13. *Which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

Hold fast the truth. Hold fast the very form and shape of it. If you are to keep the life that is in an egg, you must not even break the shell. Take care of it all, and take care of it all the more when with specious reasoning they say, "We will hold the same truth, only in a different form." Why a different form at all, if they do not wish to hold a different doctrine altogether? Nay, my brethren, especially you that are like young Timothy, take this passage to heart. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

14. *That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*

This is what we want. If the Holy Ghost be in us, we shall never trifle with the truth. He is the lover and revealer of truth, and we shall press the doctrines of the Word of God and the Word of God itself nearer and nearer to our hearts in portion as the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

15. *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me;* What! turned away from Paul? Some people think it is an awful thing because certain people turn away from a minister of Christ. It is not an awful thing at all, except for them. Paul stands fast; even he, the bravest of the brave, and they all turn aside from him. What of that? Does Paul flinch?

Nay, not he. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me."

15. *Of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

Two men who ought to have known better. Paul evidently fixed his eye upon them — more bitter than others, more perverse, more cruel, more willfully guilty in turning aside from him.

16, 17. *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.*

You could not tell in Rome where a prisoner was. The registers were not open to investigation. You had to go from prison to prison, and fee the guards to get admission, or to be told who might be there, and Onesiphorus was determined to find out Paul. I suppose that he went to the Mamertine, a dungeon in which some of us have been — one dungeon under the bottom of another. The first one has no light, except through a round hole at the top, and the second has a round, hole through which you drop into the lower one. We think that Paul was there. It is a triton that he was. And then there is the Palatine prison, which was at the guard-house of the Praetorian guards, near the palace on the Palatine Hill. There Paul certainly was, and Onesiphorus went from one jail to another.

"Have you seen a little Jew with weak eye?" I daresay that was his description of him. "He is a friend of mine. I want to speak with him." "What! that Paul? — the man that is chained to one or another of us every morning? We have twelve hours of it, and he preaches to us most of the time, and we know it by the tree Shag we are let go again." "Oh! that is the man," said Onesiphorus. "That is the man. Does he talk about Jesus Christ?" "Oh! nothing else but that. He will not let any soldier go from being bound to him without hearing about Jesus Christ." "That is my man," said Onesiphorus. He sought him out very diligently, and he found him.

18. *The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.*

CHRIST'S GREAT MISSION.

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“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” — Matthew 20:28.

THE mission of Christ to our world was distinct and definite. The ministry of the gospel should be alike clear and transparent. It was but the other day I read a letter from the deacon of a church in which, speaking of his minister, he said, “We ought to understand geology thoroughly, for we usually hear something of it, at least, once every Sunday; there is one thing, however, we shall never be likely to understand under our present friend’s ministry; the doctrine of the atonement he seems utterly to ignore; I have not heard him allude to it for the past three months; nor do I know, for certain, whether he believes it or not. Though he sometimes alludes to Jesus Christ as an example, I have neither heard of Christ dying, nor Christ buried, of Christ risen, or Christ pleading in heaven at all. In fact, it seems to me I might as well attend a Socinian chapel.” Well, God forbid that such a reflection should ever be cast on me. Is it not my constant endeavor to bring you back, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the same old, old story of the Cross, and of the redemption by blood which was there and then wrought? This bell has but one note. It may be repeated, I sometimes fear, with too much monotony. Still, the tone is clear. I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is salvation in none other name under heaven. The propitiation which God has set forth for human sin is alone efficacious. There is no remission without blood. Full salvation is to be procured only through the wounds of Jesus slain. There is no salvation in heaven or earth beside. We are coming to that self-same story again. It never wearies the believer’s ear, nor does it ever fail to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. I want this evening my text

to speak. Let me, then, begin by expounding it word by word; and after that let me explain the doctrine to which it gives most distinct prominence.

I. THE PLAIN DECLARATION.

“The Son of man!” So doth our Lord Jesus Christ speak of himself. In relation to our fallen humanity, it sounds humble; hut in the light of prophecy, it is full of dignity. “The Son of man.” This is none other than the true Messiah — the Son of God, infinite, eternal, co-equal with the Father, and yet he chooses to call himself full often “the Son of man,” perhaps because as it was man that committed sin, it is man who must make an atonement for sin to the injured law of God. Man was the offender, man must suffer the penalty. As in one man the whole family died, in another man they must be made alive, if made alive at all. Jesus tells us that, he is a man; thoroughly a man; one like to ourselves. The Son of man, a man among men, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; not wearing a fictitious manhood, but a real humanity like our own. This we must always bear in mind; for without it there could be no atonement at all. Jesus is not merely a Son of man, but he is preeminently the Son of man foretold in the prophecy of Daniel, and predicted on the threshold of Paradise in the language of the first promise, “The seed of the women shall bruise the serpent’s head.” He is the Man, the second Adam in whom men are made alive. Being thus found in fashion as a man, and having taken upon himself the federal headship of man, he was qualified to become man’s substitute and to make an atonement for human guilt. Dwell on this blessed truth, my dear hearers; dwell upon it. those of you who are not saved; look wistfully at it for the encouragement it offers you. The Person in whom you are admonished to trust is not only God — or his unclouded glory might strike you with awe, and his terrors might justly make you afraid — but he is also man, and this ought to attract you to him, for he is akin to yourselves in nature and sympathy. Sin excepted, he is in no wise different from you. Oh! may you not well draw near to him without appalling dread, and with inspiring confidence, since he calls himself the Son of man, and bids the sons of men come and put their trust under the shadow of his wings?

He “came”; that is the next word in our text. “The Son of man came.” Strange the errand, and unique as the blessed Person who undertook it. Thus to come he stooped from the highest throne in glory down to the manger of Bethlehem; and on his part it was voluntary. We are, as it were,

thrust upon the stage of action; it is not of our will that we have come to live on this earth. Jesus had no need to have been born of the virgin. It was his own consent, his choice, his strong desire, that made him take upon himself our nature, of the seed of Abraham. He came voluntarily on an errand of mercy to the sons of men. Dwell upon this thought for a moment, let it sink into your mind; he who was King of kings and Lord of lords, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, voluntarily, cheerfully descended that he might dwell among the sons of men, share their sorrows, and bear their sins, and yield himself up a sacrifice for them, the innocent victim of their intolerable guilt. If the angels burst out in song on that first Christmas night, if they made heaven and earth ring with their sweet harmonies, much more may we who have a share in the redemptive work of the incarnate God burst out into song as the news greets us that heaven descends to earth, that God comes down to man, that the Infinite becomes an infant, that the Eternal, who hath life in himself, deigns to dwell amongst the dying sons of men. Surely a way from earth to heaven will now be opened up, since there is a way from heaven to earth, so sacred, yet so simple. The same golden ladder that brings the blessed Visitant down to our humanity will take us up also to the divinity of God, to see him as our reconciled Father. "The Son of man came."

The next words are startling, for they reveal a singular intention, far different from the usual aim and end of messages and errands. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Let me give you the exact translation, "Not to be served, but to serve." That is the nearest approach to a literal rendering I can supply. He came not to be served, but to serve. He had not a selfish thought in his soul. Though he had set his heart upon being the incarnate God, he had nothing whatever to gain by it. Gain! What could the Infinite God gain? Splendor? Behold the stars; far away they glitter beyond all mortal count. Servants! does he want servants? Behold angels in their squadrons; twenty thousand, even thousands of angels are the chariots of the Almighty. Honour? Nay; the trump of fame for ever proclaims him King of kings and Lord of lords. Who can add to the splendor of that diadem that makes sun and moon grow pale by comparison? Who can add to the riches or the wealth of him who hath all things at his disposal? He comes, then, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. And you see him in the workshop serving his reputed parent. You see him in his home honoring his blessed mother with all filial obedience. You see him at the noontide of his wonderful career in the

midst of his disciples, much more their servant than their Master; though he always maintained precedence by his own sovereign counsel, and by their weak apprehensions. As he takes the bason, and the ewer, and the towel, and washes his disciples' feet, you can see the meekness of his disposition. And soon after this you see him giving up himself, his body, his soul, and his Spirit, in order that he might serve us. And what if I say that, even at this very moment, as the Son of man in heaven, he continues a kind of service of his people! For Zion's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake he doth not rest, but continues still to intercede for those whose names he bears upon his heart. Hear it, then, all ye people, and let every one that heareth hail the gracious fact. Be ye saints or sinners, be ye saved already, or athirst for the knowledge of salvation, the thought that Christ's errand was not to aggrandise himself, but to benefit us, must be welcome. He does not come to be served, but to serve. Does not this suit you, poor sinner — you who never did serve him, you who could not, as you are, minister to him? Well, he did not come to get your service; he came to give you his services; not that you might first do him honor, but that he might show you mercy. Ok! you need him so very much. And since he has come not to look for treasures, but to bestow unsearchable riches, not to find specimens of health, but instances of sickness upon which the healing art of his grace may operate, surely there is hope for you. Methinks were I just now seeking Christ, and sorely cast down in spirit, it would make my heart beat for joy to think that Jesus came to serve, and not to be served. Peradventure I would say, he knows my case, and he has come to serve me, poor me. Do I not want washing? Why should he not wash me? The dying thief rejoiced to see in his day the fountain which Jesus had opened; why should not I see it too, and have a washing from that precious One who comes to serve the vilest and the meanest of the sons of men? Behold! Behold and wonder! Behold and love! Behold and trust! Jesus comes from the right hand Of God to the manger, to the cross, to the sepulcher, not to be served, but that he might serve the sons of men.

Pass on to the next words, "And to give his life," or, more correctly, "and to give his soul." We have no lives to give. Our lives are forfeited; they are due to divine justice. Christ had a life of his own, which was by no means due to God on account of any obligations. He had not sinned, but he gave his life. The death of Christ was perfectly voluntary. As he was free to come, or not, so he was not under any constraint to give his life, but he did so, and that of his own accord. The grand object of his coming to this earth

was to give his life. Read the text again. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world merely to be an example, or merely to reveal the Godhead to the sons of men. He came to make a substitutionary sacrifice. He came to give his soul as a ransom. If you do not believe this doctrine, you do not believe Christianity. The very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of the mission of Jesus Christ is his coming to give his life that he might stand in the place of those for whom he died. He came on purpose to give his life. Now to give the soul is something more than to give the life. He died, 'tis true; yet he did more than die; he died by an outpouring of all his life-floods, by the endurance of an anguish such as no ordinary mortal could ever have borne. Of old 'twas the blood that made atonement. The animal was presented in sacrifice, but the animal was no sacrifice till it was slain, and then when the purple stream smoked down the altar's side, and the bowels of it were cast upon the altar, then it was that the sacrifice was truly presented. Jesus Christ gave up the very essence of his humanity to be a substitutionary sacrifice for us. His spirit was tortured with pangs that are past conception, much more past description. He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He was like a splendid cluster put into the wine-press, and the feet of eternal vengeance trod upon him till the sacred wine of his atoning blood streamed forth to save the sons of men. He gave his very self, his entire self, his soul, his life, his essential being, to be a ransom for the sons of Adam. Oh! that I could turn your eyes to that great sight! Behold how he gave his life! Would to God that for a moment your thoughts were fixed on those five streaming wounds, those sacred fountains of life, and health, Of pardon and peace, to dying souls! Oh! that your eyes could but gaze within the wounds, into that heart boiling like a cauldron with the wrath of God, tossed to and fro, heaving within itself, oppressed, burdened, tormented, and filled with very anguish. Oh! that you could see it; oh! that you could understand that he came from heaven to suffer all this, to give himself up thus, that he might be, instead of us, the victim of a vengeance we deserved; that his griefs might avert our ruin, that his pangs might rescue us from destruction. He drank the cup of condemnation dry; not a dreg was left; and, in so doing, he poured out his soul unto death.

Moreover, his death is our ransom. So it is written, he came to give his life "a ransom." No one here, I suppose, needs to have explained to him what a ransom means. It may be fairly illustrated by the old Jewish ceremony of

the redemption money Every male person among the Jews belonged to God, and he must be redeemed. There was a settled price. The rich were not to give more; the poor should not give less. The same amount was fixed for all. The tithe drachma was paid by every Jew. Then he was enrolled as one of the Lord's redeemed, of whom you so often read. Failing that, he would have been cut off from the congregation of Israel. That piece of money stood instead of the man — it was his ransom. He was not to die — he was to live as a redeemed person. That is just what Jesus has done for his people. He has put himself, his soul, his life devoted, his death accomplished, before God in, the stead of our soul, of our death, of us; and every man who has Christ to be his substitute is a redeemed man; he is one of the Lord's ransomed people, and shall go to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon his head. But every man who has not accepted Christ remains an unredeemed man, under the curse, and subject to the divine wrath, under the slavery of Satan, and awaiting the sentence of an utter destruction. Jesus Christ came to give his life a ransom. As a slave is redeemed by the payment of a price, so Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law under which we were by nature, having himself come under the law. He redeems us from the death which was due to us by himself enduring a death which was a full equivalent in the estimation of God. He gave his life a ransom.

Our text says "for many." We might with greater forge and stricter accuracy translate it, "He gave his life a ransom in the room of many." The word "for" there has a substitutionary meaning, "He gave his life instead of many." Indeed, this is the point of the sentence — One stood for many. Jesus suffered for many; he put himself into the place of many. Mark the word "many." With this we finish the exposition. It does not say "all." There are passages which speak of all. They have their meaning. None of them, however, refer to the substitutionary work of Christ. Jesus Christ did not give his life a ransom in the stead of all mankind, but a ransom in the stead of many men. Who are those many men? Bless God, they are many; for they are not a few. but who are they? God knows. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." You may ascertain as much as you need to know by answering a plain question. Dost thou trust Jesus Christ with shine eternal destinies? Dost thou come, all guilty as thou art, and rely upon his blood to take that guilt away? Dost thou confide in Jesus, and in him alone? If so, he died for thee, and in thy stead; and thou shalt never die. This is thy comfort, that thou canst not die. How canst thou perish if Jesus was put

into thy place? If thy debt was paid of old by Christ can it ever be demanded of thee again? Once paid, it is fully discharged; the receipt we leave gladly accepted; and now we can cry, with the Apostle, “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 hath risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. who also maketh intercession for us.” See here the mainstay of every believer’s confidence. He knows that Christ died for him because he hath put his trust in his blessed mediation. If Jesus died for me, then I cannot be condemned for the sins which he expiated. God cannot punish twice for the one offense. He cannot demand two payments for one debt. The believer, therefore, finds sweet solace in the song which Toplady composed: —

*“Turn, then, my soul unto thy rest,
The merits of thy great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty;
Trust in his efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God
Since Jesus died for thee.”*

Thus did the Son of man give his life a ransom in the stead of many. And such do I believe to be a fair and honest exposition of the words.

II. SOME POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS.

The main drift of the text is the doctrine of a vicarious or substitutionary atonement whereby Christ’s ransom sufficeth in the stead of many. On this let me give to each thought but a sentence or two. It would seem that man is not delivered from the bondage of his sins without a price. No one goes free by the naked mercy of God. Every captive exposed to God’s vengeance must be redeemed before he is delivered, otherwise he must continue a captive. Broad as the statement may appear, I venture to assert by divine warrant that there never was beneath the cope of heaven a sin forgiven without satisfaction being rendered. No sin against God is pardoned with out a propitiation. It is only forgiven through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It never can be remitted without the penalty having been exacted. The divine law knows of no exception or exemption. The statute is absolute, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Every soul that ever sinned, or ever shall sin, must die, die eternally, too, either in itself or in its substitute. The justice of the law must be vindicated. God waives none of the rights of justice in order to give liberty to mercy. Oh! my

hearers, if you are trusting in the unconditional mercy of God, you are trusting in a myth. Has someone buoyed you up with the thought of the infinite goodness of God, I would remind you of his infinite holiness. Hath he not declared that he will by no means spare the guilty? No debt due to God is remitted unless it be paid. It must either be paid by the transgressor in the infinite, miseries of hell, or else it must be paid for him by a substitute. There must be a price for the ransom, and evidently, according to the text, that price must be a soul, a life. Christ did not give his body merely, nor his stainless character, nor merely his labors and sufferings, but he gave his soul, his life, a ransom. Oh! sinner, Almighty God will never be satisfied with anything less than thy soul. Canst thou bear the piercing thought that thy soul shall be cast from his presence for ever? Wouldst thou escape the dire penalty, thou must find another soul to stand In thy soul's stead. Thy life is forfeited. The sentence is passed. Thou shalt die. Death is thy doom. Die thou must, for ever die unless thou canst find another life for a sacrifice in lieu of thy life. But know that this is just what Christ has found. He has put a soul, a life, into the place of our souls, our lives. How memorable that text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Why? Because "the blood is the life thereof." Until the blood flows. the soul is not divided from the body. The shedding of the blood indicated that the soul — the essence of the being — had been offered. Oh! blessed, for ever blessed be the crowned head of him who once did bear the cross! He hath offered for his people a soul, a life, a matchless soul, a life unparalleled. No more can justice require; vengeance is satisfied; the price is paid; the redeemed of the Lord are completely free!

The question has been asked, "If we be redeemed by the blood of Christ, who receives the ransom?" Some; have talked as if Christ paid a price to the devil. A more absurd imagination could never have crossed human mind. We never belonged to the devil. Satan has no rights in us. Christ never acknowledged that he had any, and would never pay him anything. What then? Surely the ransom price was paid to the Great Judge of all. This is, of course, but a mystical way of speaking. A metaphor is employed to bring out the meaning. The fact is that God had sworn, and would not repent, that sin must be punished. In the very essence of things it was right that transgression should meet with its just recompense There could be no moral government kept up, there could be no unimpeachable governor, unless conviction followed crime and retribution was exacted of the guilty. It was not right, nor could it have been righteous, on any ground, for sin to

have been passed over without its having been punished, or for iniquity to have escaped without any infliction. But when Jesus Christ comes and puts his own sufferings into the place of our sufferings, the law is fully vindicated, while mercy is fitly displayed. A man dies; a soul is given; a life is offered — the Just for the unjust. What if I say that, instead of justice being less satisfied with the death of Christ than with the deaths of the ten thousand thousands of sinners for whom he died, it is more satisfied and it is most highly honored! Had all the sinners that ever lived in the world been consigned to hell, they could not have discharged the claims of justice. They must still continue to endure the scourge of crime they could never expiate. But the Son of God, blending the infinite majesty of his Deity with the perfect capacity to suffer as a man, offered an atonement of such inestimable value that he has absolutely paid the entire debt for his people. Well may justice be content since it has received more from the Surety than it could have ever exacted from the assured. Thus the debt was paid to the Eternal Father.

Once more. What is the result of this? The result is that the man is redeemed. He is no longer a slave. Some preachers and professors affect to believe in a redemption which I must candidly confess I do not understand; it is so indistinct and indefinite — a redemption which does not redeem anybody in particular, though it is alleged to redeem everybody in general; a redemption insufficient to exempt thousands of unhappy souls from hell after they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus; a redemption, indeed, which does not actually save anybody, because it is dependent for its efficacy upon the will of the creature; a redemption that lacks intrinsic virtue and inherent power to redeem anybody, but is entirely dependent upon an extraneous contingency to render it effectual. With such fickle theories I have no fellowship. That every soul for whom Christ shed his blood as a Substitute, he will claim as his own, and have as his right, I firmly hold. I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious truth. Not all the powers of earth or hell; not the obstinacy of the, human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind, can ever prevent Christ seeing of the travail of his soul and being satisfied. To the last jot and tittle of his reward shall he receive it at the Father's hand. A redemption that does redeem, a redemption that redeems many, seems to me infinitely better than a redemption that does not actually redeem anybody, but is supposed to have some imaginary influence upon all the sons of men.

Our last question I must leave with yourselves to answer. Did Jesus Christ redeem you? Ah! dear hearer, this is a serious matter. Art thou a redeemed soul or not? It is not possible for thee to turn over the books of destiny and read between the folded leaves. Neither needest thou wish to do so. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ which is to be preached to every creature under heaven, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; therefore, everyone that believeth and is baptized, being saved, must have been redeemed, for he could not have been saved otherwise. If thou believest and art baptized, thou art redeemed, thou art saved. Now for thine answer to the question — Dost thou believe? "I believe," says one, and he begins to repeat what they call the "Apostle's Creed." Hold your tongue, sir! That matters not; the devil believes that, perhaps more intelligently than you do; he believes and trembles. That kind of believing saves no man. You may believe the most orthodox creed in Christendom, and perish. Dost thou trust — if or that is the cream of the word "believe" — dost thou trust in Jesus? Dost thou lean thy whole weight on him? Hast thou that faith which the Puritans used to call "recumbency" or "leaning"? That is the faith that saves — faith that falls back into the arms of Jesus, a faith that drops from its own hanging-place into those mighty arms, and rests upon the tender breast of the Lord Jesus the Crucified. Oh! my soul, make sure that thou couldst trust him, for thou hast made sure of everything else when thou hast made sure of that. Has God the Holy Spirit taught you, my dear hearer, that you cannot safely rely on your own good works? Has he weaned you from resting upon mere ceremonies? Has he brought you to look to the cross — to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ alone? If so, Christ redeemed you; you can never be a slave again. Has he redeemed you. the liberty of the believer is yours now, and after death the glory of Christ shall be your portion too Remember the words of the dying monk when putting aside the extreme unction and all the paraphernalia of his Church, he lifted up his eyes and said, "*Tua vulnara, Jesu! tua vulnara Jesu!*" "Thy wounds, oh, Jesu! thy wounds, oh, Jesu!" This must be you. refuge, poor broken-winged dove. Fly thither into the clefts of the rock, into the spear — thrust in the Savior's heart. Fly there. Rest on him; rest on him; rest with all your weight of sin, with all your blackness and your foulness, with all your doubts and your despairs, rest on him Jesus wants to receive you; fly to him — fly away to him now: —

*“Come, guilty souls, and fly away,
And look to Jesu’s wounds;
This is the accepted gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds.*

*God loved his Church and gave his Son
To drink the cup of wrath;
And Jesus says he’ll cast out none
Who come to him in faith.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

MATTHEW 20:1-28.

Verses 1, 2. *For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

It was a fair wage. It was for fair and healthful work which they were to do in the vineyard. They were happy men to be hired so early in the morning. Never do those that serve Christ reject him; and though in this parable some are represented as finding fault with their wages, yet Christ’s true servants do not so. Their only request is, “Dismiss me not thy service, Lord.” They feel it to be reward enough to be permitted to go on working. Indeed, this is one way in which we get our wages during the day. If we keep one precept, God gives us grace to keep another. If we perform one duty, God gives us the privilege to perform another. So we are paid well. We work in the work. We say not “for the work,” for we are unprofitable servants. Yet is there the penny a day.

3. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,*

It was bad for them to be standing there. No good is learnt by idlers in idle company. Idle men together kindle a fire that burns like the flames of hell.

4, 5. *And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.*

Much more out of charity than out of any good that he could get from them. Especially was this manifest, when it got towards the latter end of the day. So late, so very late, it was but little they could do. Yet for their good he bade them come in.

6. And about the eleventh hour

Why, then, surely the day was over. They were ready to put away their tools and go home. But

6. He went out, and find others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

“Why?” Can you give a reason for it? Why stand ye here in the market-place, where men come together on purpose to be hired? Why stand ye here, ye able-bodied ones that still might work? Why stand ye here all the day? That ye should be idle a little while is bad enough. Why stand ye here all the day, and why stand ye here all the day idle, when there is so much work to be done, and such a wage to receive for it?

7. They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard; and, whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

And so the great householder was glad when he had emptied the marketplace of the idlers, and brought in from early morning, even till set of sun, so many that should be at work — happily at work there. I wonder whether there are any here early in the morning of life who have not yet come into the vineyard. If so, the Master calls you. Are you in middle life? Have you reached the sixth hour, and are you not enlisted in his service? Again the Master calls you. And if you have reached the eleventh hour, where are you? Decrepit — leaning on your staff — leaning downward to your grave; yet if you are not called now, now he calleth you and bids you, even at this late hour, come into the vineyard.

8, 9. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

And when souls come to Christ, however late it is, they have the same joy, the same matchless, perfect peace, the same salvation even, as those who

have come while yet they are young. True, they have lost many days, many hours of happy service. They have permitted the sun to decline, and have wasted much time; but yet the Master gives them the same life within them, the same adoption into the family of God, the same blessing.

10. *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.*

Why, there are some of us that have now been in Christ's vineyard ever since we were boys, but we must not think that we shall receive, or can have, more than those who have just come in. I have heard people say, "Why, here are these people just lately converted, and they are singing and rejoicing; and there some of the old people that have been following the Lord for years, and do not seem to have half the joy. No, no; that is true. It is the old story of the elder brother and the prodigal, over again. But do not — do not let us repeat that for ever and ever. Do not let us get off of the lines of free, rich, sovereign grace, and begin to think that there is some desert in us, some merit in us. Oh! my brothers, I will be glad enough to sit at the feet of the meanest child of God, if I am but to be humored in the family — glad enough to have the same salvation which the dying thief obtained, though at the last moment only he looked to Christ. Yet there is this spirit that will grow up — that some who have been longer in the work ought certainly to have more joy, more of everything, than those that have just come in. See the answer to it.

11-16. *And when they had received it, they murmured against the good-man of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour. and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them. and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil. because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

The great principle of election in divine sovereignty will crop up, not in one place, but in many. God will have us know that he is Master, and that in the kingdom of grace he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and in the distribution of that grace he will give according to his own good pleasure; and the moment we begin to murmur or set up claims he answers us at once with, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?"

Yet that unevangelical spirit, that ungospel spirit of fancying that we have some Sort of claim or right will crone in, and it must be sternly repressed. It is of grace — of grace alone — of grace to begin with, of grace to go on with, of grace to close with: and human merit must not be allowed to put a single finger anywhere. “Where is boasting, then?” says the Apostle. “It is excluded.” It is shut out — the door shut in its face. It must not come in. If you and I serve God throughout a long life, we shall certainly have much greater happiness in life than those can have who come to Christ only at the last. But, as far as the gospel blessing is concerned, which Christ gives, it is the same salvation which the newly-born Christian enjoys as that which the most advanced believer is now enjoying. It is to every man the penny, hearing the King’s own impress.

17-20. *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in, the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. Theft came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

Then, in the most inopportune time in all the world, when Jesus was talking of being mocked and crucified, and put to death, here comes Mistress Zebedee with an ambitious request about her sons

21. *And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

He is thinking of a cross, and they are dreaming of a crown. He is speaking of being mocked and put to death, and they have ideas of royalty, that they want to have the chief place in the coming kingdom. Oh! how like ourselves. Our Master thinks of how he can condescend, and we are thinking of how people ought to respect us, and treat us better than they do. Oh! the selfishness that there is in us. May our Master’s example help to stay it.

22-24. *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he said unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the*

baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give. but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren

Thus showing that they were exactly like them, “For,” said they, “look at these two — these James and John — they want to have the preference over us. We will not have it.” It was exactly the same spirit in each one — ambition in them all for priority of honor. Ah! dear friends, it often happens that when we are so intense in our condemnation of others, it is only because we fall into the same sin. Some, I have no doubt whatever, hate the Pope because they *have* the essence of popery in themselves. Two of a trade will never agree; and one man is very angry with another because he is so angry; and one is quite indignant that another should be so proud. He is not proud. He is proud to say he is humble — he is; therein proving how proud he is. Oh! that those beams in our eyes could be got out. Then the motes in our brothers’ eyes would probably no more be seen.

25-28. *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

RECRUITS FOR THE KING.

NO. 3533

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“David, therefore, departed thence, and escaped to the Cave Adullam; and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.” —

1 Samuel 22:1,2.

DAVID in the caverns of Adullam is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ despised and rejected among the sons of men. Christ is the Lord’s anointed, but men perceive not the anointing. He is persecuted by his great enemy, the world, as David was persecuted by Saul, and he now rather dwelleth in the Cave of Adullam than sitteth upon his throne. Just as when David was in his dishonor, it was the time for his true friends to rally around him, so at this hour, when the name of Christ is associated with much of dishonor and rebuke, now is the time for the true followers of the Savior to rally around his banner and to espouse his cause. To come to David after he had been crowned king was poor work; the sons of Belial could do that; but to ally themselves to David when he was obliged to hide himself in mountain fastnesses from his cruel enemies, this proved men to be David’s true friends and loyal subjects. Blessed are they to whom it shall be given to enlist under the banner of Christ at this present time, who shall not be ashamed to confess him before the sons of men, or to take up his cross boldly, and to suffer such loss and persecution as it may please his Providence to ordain for them to bear. As it is not concerning David, but concerning David’s greater Son I propose to address you this evening, let me say a few words at the outset to: —

I. THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY ENLISTED IN HIS BLESSED BAND.

Foremost among those of David's troop were his brethren and the men of his father's house. So, too, beloved in Christ, we who have been called by divine grace are regarded by him as his brethren and the men of his Father's house. Looking round upon his disciples when he was here below, our blessed Master said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Such his condescension that he is not ashamed to call us brethren. As many of us as have given our hearts to him, rely upon him, and love him, are really and truly his brethren and of his Father's house; his Father is our Father, his joy is our joy, and his heaven shall be our heaven ere long. Now, what shall I say to you, my brethren in Jesus Christ, but this: Let us take care that we boldly avow our kinship with David our Lord; let us never blush to defend the cause of Christ. There are different ways of playing the coward; let us seek to avoid them all. The minister who is bold enough when he preaches before the multitude may feel his lip quiver when he has to speak face to face with one individual. O God! save thy servants from this form of cowardice! Or some of you may be able to speak to one or two persons, but if, perchance, you are thrown into a little promiscuous company, where you ought to avow your allegiance to your Lord, you hold your tongue, and lose the opportunity for lack of courage. God deliver his servants from this form, of cowardice also. In all companies, on all occasions, and under all circumstances, be faithful to your Master; deny him not, but openly avow him before the sons of men. How he deserves to be owned of us since he has taken knowledge of us and recognized us, when we were infinitely beneath his notice. Oh! ten thousand blushes should cover our faces, to think that we could ever at any time think it hard to own that he is our Lord and Master. Pray for courage, my brethren; I am sure it is wanted. It seems to come to Christians naturally in persecuting times, but in these soft, silken days of piping peace you mingle in society, so called, with such deference to fashion, and you go in and out of your drawing-rooms with such dainty conceits, you converse so complacently with your friends, you are such well-bred ladies and gentlemen in your own estimation, that you often forget that you are Christians, in honor bound to keep the faith and bear the testimony to Christ. It is, perhaps, easier for the poor to be bold in confessing the Redeemer's name than it is for those in more affluent circumstances. Alas, alas! if good fortune imperils your faithfulness. This is wicked indeed. It is

a sorry rebuke to utter from a Christian pulpit. It ought to be the very reverse. Your pecuniary independence ought not to enslave you. God deliver you who love Christ from anything like shamefacedness in connection with the kingdom of your exalted head!

Let me urge you also, as you boldly confess him, to leave the world in order to join him. His brethren and his father's house, we are told concerning David, left Saul's territory, and went away to Adullam to be with the hunted ones. Let us do the same. Ah! there is too much worldly conformity about every one among us, I will not attempt to point any finger at any of my brethren, or expose their faults, but a man must be blind not to perceive that many Christians do their utmost to be as worldly as they can be consistently with their idea of getting to heaven at last. Are there not many who in their dress, in the fitting up of their houses, in the conduct of their business, conform so closely to the times and the fashions, that if they were not known to be Christians by some other evidences, they would not be classed by any observers with those who are on the Lord's side? I do not think it possible for us to be too thoroughly nonconformist in respect to the maxims, the usages, and vanities of this present evil world. What means this text? "Come ye out from among them." Is not that enough? No. "Be ye separate." Is not that enough? No. "Touch not the unclean thing." So thorough is to be the separation that there must be a coming out, a snapping of every link that maintains a connection with evil, and the renewal of that intercourse by even so much as a touch is to be avoided by us. Take David's part, ye that love David. Renounce everything for David, oh! ye Christian men. If ye love Jesus, ye must know he is worth ten thousand worlds. He is to be esteemed before all the pomp and gaiety of this poor world, were its charms and allurements multiplied a million times. He is infinitely to be preferred rather than to court the smiles of the great, or to enjoy the love of your friends, or to be flattered by the good opinions of your relatives. Therefore, I pray you leave all to follow him, and forsake all other to cleave to him, and him alone.

But am I not speaking to many who have confessed him, who are confessing him, and who do, more or less every day of their lives, practice a self-denying nonconformity to the world? Oh! men and brethren, I long that our sense of duty should kindle to an ardent enthusiasm. Can we not do something heroic, or dare something perilous, in token of our loyalty to Christ? Oftentimes my heart grows big with a strong desire that I might see a church in this place, pre-eminent for consecration to the Captain of our

Salvation. I prayed for this just now; nor was it for the first time I offered that prayer. If we did but give of our ample property, or of our scanty pittance, at the rate which all of us should give — or if we did but work for Christ at the rate which he deserves of us, or anything at all like it — if we did but live for Jesus in any measure as gratitude might prompt, what a front we should present — what a power we should exert!

As a great church, how we might tell upon this great city; what a mark we might leave upon our age! But why am I talking about the whole community, I have, not yet attained unto this pure devotion myself. Still, God knows I am wishing to press onward. I aim to forget that which is behind, while reaching forward and pressing onward. Brethren, you remember the story of those three strong men who, when David sighed for a draught of the well of Bethlehem, ventured their lives to procure it for him. Are there no strong men here — men of faith, men of valor — who will dare exploits for my Master? He cries out for the conversion of souls; will none of you consecrate yourselves to that work? Will none of you break through the conventionalities of society in quest of seekers? He says, “Give me to drink”; just as he said to the woman at Samaria’s well; and his thirst is satiated when he sees his Father’s will accomplished. Are there not men here strong, brave, and chivalrous, who can preach Christ where he has never been preached before? There were others among David’s followers who did exploits like these; one of them; slew a lion in a pit, in winter time; while off another we are told that he slew the Philistines, and the Lord wrought a great victory. And can we not do something that shall exceed and excel the ordinary service of modern Christianity? I blush for modern Christianity. Its gold has become dim; its most fine gold is changed; its glory has departed. The early Christians were full of an enthusiasm which could not have brooked the languid indifference of these times. They were so devoted, so intense, so passionate, so full of divine furor for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom, that they made their influence felt wherever they dwelt, or even sojourned for a short-season. God send us some of this sacred zeal now! We want more of the enthusiasm which burned in the hearts of Wesley and of Whitfield. Where now shall we look for the glowing ardor and the untiring labors of the Apostle Paul? Where are the disciples now that emulate the zeal of the blessed Master, whose meat and whose drink it was to do the will of him who sent him? May this be given to us all! God send it to us — send it to

us now, send it to us here, send it to me, send it to you, my brethren, and send it to you henceforth throughout your lives.

I do not think I need say more, unless it be to entreat you to keep up your courage when you know that you are engaged in the cause of Christ. There is a great struggle going on around us. This entire nation is from time to time convulsed with serious questions in which the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ is greatly concerned. Let all those that love him stand forth with unflinching integrity. Expediency is the mean word that describes the lax morals of the age; but righteousness is the undeviating, the eternal principle by which the universe is governed. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. Be it ours to help the oppressed, to succor the weak, and to give liberty of conscience to all men. May God defend the right; Defend the right he will. If our names be cast out as evil, if we be misunderstood and misinterpreted, belied and slandered, let it be so; we are neither surprised nor dismayed. The right has always to be maintained in the teeth of slander and abuse. But, in God's name, let us not be cravens or cowards. Let us ever do our duty manfully and lawfully. Let us hold fast our profession cheerfully. Let us adhere with confidence and steadfastness to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The star of David is in the ascendant; the house of Saul is waxing weaker and weaker. Having thus addressed the soldiers, I am now coming for a few minutes to: —

II. ACT AS A RECRUITING SERGEANT.

Besides his own relatives, there were others who joined with David. Now, why did they join him? For much the same reason, I may answer, that has influenced many of us. It was because they had need of him. They ought to have gone to David, because his character was so good, and his conduct so upright. They ought to have helped him because his disposition was so kind and sympathising. They might well have rallied to his standard because he was the Lord's anointed. They might, as wise men, have cast in their lot with him, because there was prophecy and promise of his triumph and his reign over the nation. But they were really swayed by other motives. They went to him for three reasons — because they were distressed, because they were in debt, and because they were discontented. Through dire dismay they sought shelter and succor.

Now perhaps it were well should I tell you of the sweet character of the Lord Jesus, but if I did so, you would not come to him. It were well did I tell you of the prowess of my Master, and how he conquered Goliath, and

slew the foemen who tyrannised over us. It might be well were I to tell you that he is God's appointed Savior, that he is destined to reign as King, and that they who confess him now shall be exalted with him when he cometh in his kingdom. Attractive as all this might be to some minds, the master attraction always is, that he becomes suitable to you in your present necessities; in those dilemmas which just now press heavily on your souls. So I propose to address the three sorts of people who are most likely to come to Jesus, hoping that they will seize this propitious hour, and enlist under his banner at once, without hesitation or delay.

The first sort who came to David were distressed. They were "hard up," as we say. They had spent their substance; they were bankrupts; their means and their hopes alike exhausted; therefore, they went to David. They seemed to say, "Our case is so bad that it cannot be worse; it may be better if we go to David." Their case was like yours, so well described in our hymn: —

*"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die."*

I know there are some distressed ones here. I have come to enlist them in my Master's ragged regiment. 'Tis thus despair will vanish; and thus will hope revive; for being enlisted under him, their courage may rally while they fight his battles, and receive his blessing.

You are distressed because you feel you have no merit of your own. That feeling is very right, for you have none; you never had, and you never will have any. At one time you thought you were as good as other people, or perhaps you even thought you were better. That vain thought has gone now. Your good works, your merits, your best endeavors, your choicest prayers, all dissolve; nor dare you glory in any one of them. Come then to Christ. He has merits for those who have none. His cause is good, though yours is bad. You are the very sort of people whom he came to rescue, for whom he died. He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Inasmuch as you are evidently sinners, come; come to the sinner's Savior; put your trust in him, and live. Others are distressed because they feel they have not any power. You cannot believe, you say; you cannot repent; in fact, you cannot do anything as you would. The more you try, the more powerless you find yourselves to be. You would pray,

but you cannot; you feel so dead, so cold. If you attempt to move, it seems all to end in disappointment. Well, my dear hearers, Jesus Christ died for them who have no strength, for thus is it written, "In due time, when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." Oh! you that have no power, take heart, because Christ is the power of God. There is ability enough in him to make up for all your impotency. Come, and cast yourselves with all your attenuated weakness upon his irresistible might, and you shall have a full supply of all that your souls need.

But I know there are some here who are distressed, because, in addition to their having no merit and no power, they have no sensibility. "I do not feel my need as I ought," says one. "I have not such a sense of my sin and danger as I should like," says another. Oh! beloved, Jesus Christ came to raise the dead. He came to give sensibility to those who are callous and careless, to turn hearts of stone into flesh. I believe those persons who think they do not feel their need are those who do really feel their need the most. There is no sense of need so great as when a man feels that he does not feel, and thinks that he does not apprehend the depth of his own need, for then he is evidently alive to his true condition. You may possibly have more of the work of the Holy Ghost in you than some others, whose sense of need appears more lively, though it proves less lasting. That deep, awful solicitude which makes you fear because you do not feel, and makes you groan because you cannot grieve, is not to be despised, for it is an experience often associated with gracious operations of the Spirit of God. Whether it be so or not in your case, give no place to despondency, but believe that Christ can save you, for he is able and willing to do so. If you cannot come with a broken heart, come for a broken heart. If you cannot come to him repenting, come to him to get repentance, for he is exalted on high to give repentance as well as remission of sins. He does not require any preparation in you. All the preparation he requires he prepares himself, and that is the work of his Spirit in your souls. Come, then, ye that are distressed and distrustful, you that have not any good thing to recommend you as creatures, nor any good desire to extenuate you as sinners; you who are so consciously bad that there could not be found a good apology for you, even in your own estimation, if you were racked over and over again. Come to Jesus, lost, ruined, undone, poverty-stricken, as you are; do come and trust my Master, the Son of David. The way to be enlisted, you know, into Her Majesty's service is to take the shilling. The way to enlist in Christ's service is simply to trust him. You need not bring anything nor

take anything, but simply trust in him, and you shall become a soldier of the cross.

The next persons mentioned in the text in coming to David were those who were in debt. I would fain ask those in debt to come to Jesus. The man thus in debt says, "I have got to pay my life; I have sinned, and God has said that the sinner shall die. Yet I cannot afford to forfeit any life. How can I dare to die? I have no hope, no trust, no confidence with which to pass the iron gates of death; and then, after death, there is the terror of judgment for my soul, since I have broken God's law; and the law condemns me, and demands my banishment from his presence, and my final destruction. What shall I do? I cannot pay the debt, the thought of being put into prison for ever is terrible to me. How, how; oh! tell me how can I escape?" Ah! well, I should be glad indeed if there were some here who should thus own their debts and their inability to pay them. Happy preacher to have to address such an awakened audience! Happy hearers to be dismayed with such hopeful anxieties! Blessed indeed were our work if we always had those before us who knew the debt of sin; who felt its grievous demerit, and feared its glaring doom. Take counsel then; whatever debt you owe, whether it be great or small, come and trust in Jesus, and you shall be relieved of the responsibility. Come, and rely on him who suffered in the sinner's place, and was punished for the ungodly; bearing their iniquities in his own body on the tree. A look at him, one look of faith, will disclose to you the transfer of every debt and every sin from you to him. You shall see how he casts them into, the Red Sea of his atoning blood, where, though they may be sought for, they shall never more be found. I would fain enlist you, poor debtor, and take you out of the Debtor's Prison, and introduce you to my Master's table. Bankrupt debtors make good soldiers for the king; come, then, without more ado, and be enlisted in the King's army.

Another class that came to David was those who were discontented. Such there are, nor have we far to go to seek them out. Yonder is one, to whom I now would speak. But a little while ago you were a happy young fellow. You could go into all kinds of revelry, and little reckon the sin, so fully did you enjoy them all. You cannot do so now. You do not understand the reason why, but the keen edge of your appetite seems to have been blunted; your taste for dissipation is gone. Those companions that were once such rare jolly fellows have ceased to cheer you with their talk; you do not enjoy their gabble now, it seems so flat, and stale, and foolish. You cannot laugh at their lewd jests, or quaff their sparkling cup as once you

used to do. You have been behind the scenes of this poor world, and you have pitied the pale cheeks that are painted with the hue, of blooming youth; you have heard the heavy sighs of those that raise the merry laugh, and you have witnessed so much wanton disguise that it has filled you with woeful disgust. You have seen enough to know how it will all end. No marvel that you are discontented. You are the man for me; yours is the ear I want to catch; yours the heart I love to reach. A blessed case it is when a man gets discontented with this vain world, for then, perhaps, he may seek after another world, a brighter, better sphere. When he is out at elbows with himself and all his foolish companions, then perhaps he will make acquaintance with the exiled, but anointed Man of Bethlehem, and find in him a friend, a counsellor, who will be his helper, speaking kindly, advising wisely, and leading on triumphantly till he calls you to participate in the kingdom of his glory. You are discontented with yourselves. Your own reflections bitterly reprove you. When you sit down and think a — littlest habit into which, mayhap, you have but lately fallen — you discover that things are out of the square. You cannot feel satisfied. Strange strivings and manifold misgivings perplex you, and you get no peace. For my part, I am thankful, a thousand times thankful, that you have come to be so ill at ease when there was so much cause for disquiet. Now there is some hope that you will trust your future and your fate to the Son of David. Close in with the offers of his grace, and be saved by him.

I recollect an old sailor who, after having been for nearly sixty years a drunkard and a swearer, and everything that was bad, heard a gospel sermon that touched his heart, and when he came forward to make a profession of his faith in Christ, he said, “I have been sailing sixty years under a very bad owner, and under a very bad flag, but now I have taken on board a new cargo, and am running for a very different port, and under quite a different flag.” So I trust it will be with some of you soon, that you will change your cargo, change your flag, and change everything. After preaching in the Wesleyan chapel at Boulogne one day some time ago, a person recognized me, and was telling me how he had found Christ through reading the sermons, and an old salt came up to me and said, “Do you know me? My name was Satan once; I recollect you well. Now Satan came here one Sunday morning, and he richly deserved his name, for he was as much like Satan as a man could be; he sat there, and after the sermon the Lord touched old Satan, and gave him another name besides.” The man came to Christ because he was discontented with himself, and so

he gave himself up to Jesus, and was saved by him. Isn't there any old salt here who will do that now? May there not be some sailor, some soldier, some stranger somewhere here, who shall say this night, "I will approach to the King, and ask him to accept me, even me"? If he does not accept you, please to let us know, for we have never yet met with a case in which Jesus refused a poor sinner that came to him. He has said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Should he cast you out, it will be a new thing under heaven. But he cannot do it. If you are black as sin can stain you, yet if you come to him, you shall be taken into the Savior's bosom, washed in the fountain filled with blood, started on a new career, and helped to serve him all your days. But I must come to a finish. I have addressed myself to the Lord's people; I have beaten up for recruits for King Jesus, and now I want to: —

III. TELL THE RECRUITS A LITTLE ABOUT THE SERVICE, and then I have done. Remember the last words of the text, "And David became a captain over them." Whoever, then, comes to Christ must submit to Christ's rules. What are they? One of the first is that you should be nothing at all, and that King Jesus should be everything. Will you submit to that — that you shall have no honor, that you shall take to yourselves no credit, that you shall never lean on your own strength or wisdom, but you shall take him to be made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? I hope you will not kick at that.

Another of our Lord's rules in his kingdom is that, if you love him, you must keep his commandments. After trusting him, you are to become obedient unto him. One commandment is that you are to be baptized. Do not stumble at that! I think if there be anything plain in Scripture — I will only speak for myself, I cannot speak for anybody else — it is that every believer is to be immersed in water as a confession of his faith. I think I could as soon doubt that the Deity of Christ is declared as doubt that the baptism of believers is enjoined, for the one thing appears to me to be as plainly revealed in Scripture as the other. I pray you, brother, be not disobedient to the Lord's commands, but remember the gospel which we preach, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Keep to the two points, and claim the promise. Then there is the Lord's Table, whereof, if you join yourselves to Christ, you have a right to partake. Do not forget it. It will sweetly remind you of all that your Savior hath done and suffered for you. It is nothing more than a remembrancer; but take care that you do not neglect so blessed a memorial. All the precepts and statutes of our

Lord Jesus Christ are to be cordially obeyed. Albeit, Christ opens a hospital for all sick folk; he does not mean you to be always cripples, but his purpose is to heal you, and after that to teach you how to walk. He builds up his kingdom as Romulus built up Rome. He receives all the vagrants of the neighborhood, but then he makes new men of them. Even so those that are gathered from the outcasts are to be made faithful in Christ Jesus. Drunkard, you must have done with your cups. Swearer, you must have your mouth washed out; no more of those foul oaths must you utter. You who have given yourselves up to carnal pleasures must be purged from all your defilements. You who have been gay and frivolous must renounce these vanities, and seek after weighty, solemn, eternal interests. You who have had hard hearts before, you must ask the Master to make them soft, and whatsoever he saith unto you, you must do.

Now, my young recruit, what do you say to this? You who would bear the name of Christ, and get to heaven, are you willing to come to him and give yourselves up to him, henceforth forsaking all your sins? He that gives not up his sins makes a great mistake if he thinks to escape the wrath of God, or hopes to find grace in his eyes Oh! will you not give up your sins? They are vipers; they will only poison your souls; they will destroy you. Oh! give them up, man! Give them up, for what shall it profit thee to keep them, and to lose thine own soul? Come to Jesus first. Trust his merit; rely upon his precious blood, and then, by his help, renounce every evil way, and seek to obey him who has redeemed you by his blood. So shall the blessing of the Lord rest upon you for ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 68.

“A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.”

Exiled, ill at ease, hunted, exposed to danger. Yet he could sing. And some of the sweetest Psalms come out of the bitterest afflictions. God's songsters are like nightingales that reserve their sweetest music for the night. Whenever you and I come to be in the wilderness, may we refresh ourselves with such a Psalm as this.

Verse 1. *O God, thou art my God;*

Everything else has gone, but thou art my God. There are torts of the heathen, but thou, the true and real Jehovah, art my God. Oh! what a blessed thing it is to take a firm grip of God after this fashion, "O God, thou art my God,"

2. Early will I seek thee:

"Oh!" says one, "why did he seek God if God was his?" Would you have him seek another man's God, then? No; it is because he is ours that we seek him, and desire his company. If thou knowest God to be thy God, thou wilt not be satisfied unless thou art living near him. "Early will I seek thee." I will not wait. I cannot wait. I cannot tarry. I *must* not. tarry. Early will I seek thee.

2. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Thirst is one of the strongest longings of our nature, Hunger you can appease for a while, but thirst is awful. There is no staying that. When it is once upon a man, he must have water, or die. "My soul thirsteth for thee. My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." No means of grace; nothing to help me; no believers round about me: left alone, thirsting for my God. And yet it is so precious a thing, so sure a mark of grace to thirst, for God anywhere, that one may be thankful even to be in a dry and thirsty land if one possesses a true thirst after God.

2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

He had seen God in his holy place, and he longs to see him again. They that never knew God do not want to know him. But they that have known him desire to know him more and more. If thou dost not long for the bread of heaven, it is because thou didst never taste it. He that has once tasted it will sigh and hunger till he is satisfied with it.

3. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

"Better than life"; and surely life is better than anything else. "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Life is better than meat; life is better than riches; and if the loving-kindness of God is better than life, then we have a very high price set upon it, but none too high a price. Oh! that you and I may know how sweet, how precious, is the loving-kindness of God; and then we shall say that it is better than life. And

because it is so my lips shall praise thee. Not only my heart, but I will do it openly. I used to speak vanity when I served vanity. Shall I not now speak out for God when I have come to serve him? My tips shall praise thee.

4. *Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*

I will confess thee. I will rejoice in thee. I will work for thee. I will encourage myself in thee. I will lift up my hands in thy name. Are any of you cast down? Do your trends hang down? Then lift them up in God's name. Nothing else can make you strong. The name of the Lord shall be your strength.

5, 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

God's people know what perfect satisfaction means. When God reveals his love to them, and Christ draws near in the fullness of his grace, then they would not change value with the kings of the earth. Not all the richest dainties that were ever served up at royal banquets are equal to the love of God. My soul, not my body, but my inmost self, my very life, shall be satisfied, e'en as with marrow and with fatness. The Oriental's idea of luxury is to eat fat. How they will eat what we could not endure! But we, dear friends, understand the metaphor, and appreciate what is meant by David. God will satisfy us with the best of the best, with marrow and fatness. He will make that satisfaction double as with marrow and fatness; and we shall be so satisfied that we shall have nothing left to do but to praise.

"My mouth strolls praise." Says our poet: —

*"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to their King."*

He that wrote that verse knew what was meant by this, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."

7. *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*

What is God's logic. One likes to see "therefores" in Scripture. They are inferences drawn with great accuracy. Thou hast been my helper. Well, then, thou wilt be my helper; and if I cannot see thy face I will rejoice in the shadow of thy wings. I know that thou art there, if I cannot see thee; and if I only know that thou art there by the shade that thou dost cast over me — flint calming, cooling shade which damps the ardor of my worldly spirit — if this be all that I get from thee, yet in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

8. *My soul followeth hard after thee:*

I am after thee, my God, hard after thee, following hard after thee, longing for thee, like a dog at the heels of his master's horse, going with all his might, following hard after thee. Oh! this is a healthy condition to be in. If thou canst not yet reach thy God, yet if thou followest hard after him, it is well with thee, for notice the next sentence.

8. *Thy right hand upholdeth me.*

No man follows after God unless God helps him so to do. It comes of the grace of God. When thou art seeking God, it is because God is seeking thee; and though thou knowest it not, there is a vast amount of grace couched in a desire.

9, 10. *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.*

Or jackals, as his name did become.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God; everyone that sweareth by him shall glory; but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*

Very hard work to stop it though, for they are always breaking oat in a fresh place. They have always some new falsehood. A shovelful of earth will do it, if nothing else will. Let every one hear who is accustomed to slander, or to speak evil of his neighbor, listen to this prophetic voice: "The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped"; but the mouths that speak the praises of God shall go on singing for ever and ever. May such mouths be ours.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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DELIVERED BY C H. SPURGEON

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT,
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“Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” — John 8:12.

OUR Lord did not speak in this way at the beginning of his ministry. He did not thus bear witness to himself, saying, “I am the light of the world.” But it was befitting on this occasion, when the people before him had already received sufficient evidence from other quarters. John the Baptist, whom all men counted for a prophet, had testified that Christ was the true light whom lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The witness of John they rejected; startling, if not conclusive, as it must have been, considering the esteem in which his oracular voice was held. Moreover, Jesus himself had wrought conviction in their own hearts by his own teaching. Had they not listened to his famous Sermon on the Mount? Could they not feel the authority with which he spoke? Did they not confess to the impressions he produced on them? The weight and the wisdom of his discourse manifested a power that could melt their thoughts into the very mould of his ministry. Nor was it merely his teaching, trance parent though that was; but the signs he showed and the miracles he wrought with the majesty of his voice and the virtue of his touch proclaimed that he was the light of the world. Thus the infirmities of the creature called forth his divine compassion. With radiant eyes of pity he looked on the wretched, and gave them quick relief, he shone on their sadness like the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his beams. They hailed his visit in every town and village as the healer of all that were diseased. Might not the quick sense of every unprejudiced spectator detect in him the Messiah, and welcome his advent to the worlds

At length, as though aggrieved by their unbelief, he speaks loudly and proclaims plainly, "I am the light of the world." Such high ground does he take before his adversaries. Well might he say it to their teeth. Hardly an hour before he had flashed that light into their eyes and blinded them with its brilliance. They had stood before him, with the, unhappy woman whom they sought to make the instrument of entangling him, and anon they had sneaked out of his presence conscience-stricken, when he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." One ray of his omniscience had lighted up the secret chambers of their memory, and exposed, at least to themselves, the righteous law they had broken, and the crimes they had to answer for. He who could thus convince them is able to convince the world of sin. He who lit up the deepest recesses of the heart is the light of the world. So Jesus here boldly and openly avowed the truth concerning himself when he said, "I am the light of the world."

Let our meditation now be directed to our Lord Jesus Christ as the light of the world — the true light — the guiding light — and the universal light.

I. JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

That Jesus is the light — the light of the world — is to be seen in all parts Of his blessed history. Look at him in his cradle. Shines there a star above the house wherein the young child sleeps? Brighter far than yonder star is he, who lies cradled in the manger. He has come, the predictions of whose advent had illumined centuries of darkness. As a babe, devout men hail him, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." To the eye of faith, what radiance emanates from the new-born babe! Look, for the like was never looked on before. There God is veiled in human flesh. Behold the mystery of the incarnation. God is manifest in our nature; he dwells among us. The light is clear and dazzling.

Well might the angels have, sung, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill towards men." Sweet babe! thou hast pierced the thick darkness of earth's sorrow; thou hast enlightened her scenes of sadness, infusing joy into her gloom. Thy coming revealed the love of God, his sweet compassion, and his tender pity towards the guilty sons of men. With growing years, while his increasing wisdom kept pace with his increasing stature, he shone, exhibiting a child's delight in the two tables of the law; his first concern being to do his heavenly Father's business, and his constant habit being to submit himself, and to honor his earthly parent. Not rashly or recklessly did he begin to teach. His baptism throws a wonderful

light upon consecration to God; and the dire temptations that quickly followed, in all of which he foiled the tempter, have thrown a brilliant light on the pathway of Christian ministers. As a preacher, he was luminous. He expounded the spirituality of the law. Light penetrated the precept through and through as he made the very essence of purity apparent. His light cleared the law of the mists and fogs that the rabbinical writers had gathered around it. He shed light, too, upon the covenant of grace. He promulgated the gospel of peace among the sons of men. He told of God the Father, willing to receive his prodigal children back again into his bosom. His parables threw wondrous light upon the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven. His counsels and his cautions brought the final destinies of the righteous and the wicked into full view. Eternity dawned on his hearers while he spoke. His own life exhibited the power of love, the value of sympathy, and the virtue of forgiving injuries. His death gave yet more palpable evidence of unfaltering submission to the will of God, and unflinching self-sacrifice for the welfare of men. Oh! beloved, the light of Christ comes out brightest upon the cross. Someone called it the Pharos of this world's sea. So it is. This is the lighthouse that throws its beams across the dark waters of human guilt and misery, warns men of the rocks, and guides them to the haven. A Savior! God in human flesh! He whom the seers predicted: "A king shall reign in righteousness," appears as the divine symbol represented him — "a Lamb slain." Behold him shedding his precious blood to atone for the sins of men. Never did such light shine on the law and the prophets. Never did such light gleam on the faith and hope of pure hearts. Never did such light irradiate the repentance and conversion by which sinners are retrieved. Behold the Sun as he cometh forth from his chamber, and rejoiceth to finish his course! He before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified, hath seen a light which cloth outshine all earthly splendor. The sin And the sorrow, the shame and the sentence, all vanish when we see the Redeemer die for us. And if from the gloom of his death so much comfort can be extracted, what shall we say when he rose again from the dead? His dark sepulcher reflects glory now that he has arisen from the dead. The shroud, the mattock, and the grave are shorn of their terrors.

*"No more a charnel-house, to fence
The relics of lost innocence,
A vault of ruin and decay;
Th' imprisoning stone is rolled away."*

Into the sepulcher you can peer now that Christ has broken down the door and rent away the veil. Through it you can look. For those that follow Christ, it is a passage into everlasting life. He has brought life and immortality to light. Since he has risen from the tomb and left the dead, light, clear and transparent, shines on the exodus of the soul from earth. On, onward still, track his path as in his ascension he goes flaming up the skies. There, there is a road of light that shows us the way to God. He enters heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. There, as our representative, he sheds the light of comfort down upon us. There he waits, and while he waits he wills that where he is there should his people be. Oh! happy thought, to-day, my brethren, amongst the sons of men, Christ is still the light. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be his representative here on earth. He testifies of Christ. The Divine Paraclete occupies the place of our departed teacher. The Church, inspired by the blessed Spirit, with ten thousand tongues, proclaims the gospel of salvation. "Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus. In his people, Christ still shines forth with even a brighter light than in the days of his earthly sojourn. He has ten thousand reflectors, instead of twelve. Ten thousand times ten thousand tongues proclaim his gospel; and ten thousand times ten thousand hearts burn and blaze with the light of the Divine Word. Christ is the light of the world. From his cradle to his throne, and onward till he cometh in full splendor at the second advent, the Lamb is the light that illuminates this dark earth. "Then spake Jesus again Into them, saying, I am the light of the world."

II. JESUS IS THE TRUE LIGHT.

There are other lights. Before his Coming there had been some light typical. Do you not remember that a golden lamp stood in the holy place, with its seven branches? It was an admirable piece of sacred furniture, and highly instructive; but Jesus seems to put it away. In fact, it had been already put away. He had come to put an end to its meaning by fulfilling its intent. "This was not the light; it was only the type of the light. I am the true light," he says. Even that light which flamed across The desert way when Moses led the host of God through the wilderness was but a typical light. The veritable pillar of cloud and fire is Jesus, who leads the whole host of God's elect through this weary wilderness to the Canaan of the blessed.

Jesus Christ was the true light in opposition to the smoking flax of tradition. Listen to those rabbis! They think themselves the light of the

world. Their sophism is an endless strife of words; their research is not worth your study; their knowledge is not Worth the knowing. They can tell you exactly which is the middle verse of the Bible, and which is the middle letter of the middle word. They discussed their paradoxes till they became addleheaded. They refined on their subtleties till doctrine dwindled down into doubt; simple truth was degraded into silly twaddle; their translations of Scripture were a travesty, and their commentaries an outrage upon common-sense. But Christ, the true, the heavenly light, extinguishes all your earthly luminaries. The Jewish rabbi, the Greek philosopher, the ecclesiastical father, and the modern theological thinker, are meteors that dissolve into mist. They make void the Word of God through their traditions or their conjectures. Flee away from the nebulous forms and noxious fumes of their old traditions and new discoveries. Believe what Jesus said, and his Apostles taught, and what you have had revealed to you in his own pure Word Christ is the true light.

In opposition to the glare of priestcraft, with which so many in all ages have been enamored, Christ is the light of the world. There is some reason to suppose that this declaration of our Lord bore allusion to a custom observed among the Jews at that time in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles. Maimonides says that on the previous evening two enormous candelabra-golden lamps — of a vast size were set up in the court of the women in the open air, and that these flamed with such a brilliant light that they appeared to illuminate the whole city of Jerusalem. And the women came with a torchlight procession, and stood around these flaming candelabra, and there executed a sort of sacred dance and solemn pageant. This was done, not on the authority of Moses, but on the authority of tradition, to keep the people in mind of the cloudy and fiery pillar of the wilderness. The Feast of Tabernacles, you know, was designed as a memorial of the forty years that the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, dwelling in tents; but this particular rite was of their own invention, a supplementary observance, intended to remind the people of the fiery pillar that illumined the camp in those days of yore. Now it is supposed, not, I think, without good reason, that it was on the morning after this celebration that Jesus stood in the court. The lamps were gone out; but the golden columns, that the night before had flamed, still remained in their places, the remnant of a spectacle, the lamps minus the light. Just then the sun was rising in its own peerless splendor. The scene they beheld gave force to the sentence he uttered. The contrast between

the lamps which the priests had lit — a fit emblem of superstition — were all going out, perhaps with a noxious smell, while the mighty orb of day was rising, when Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.” Whether the scene and the circumstances were as has been so well imagined, or not, the truth is fitly illustrated by the similitude. When every lamp that ever man has kindled, and fed with the oil of superstition, shall have died out, as they must expire, our Lord Jesus Christ shall, like the morning sun, make glad the sons of men. Away ye go, ye bright meteors of the night, around which the children of superstition execute their maddened dance of implicit belief! Away ye go! Already ye begin to go out. I see how ye all flicker, even now. The day cometh on apace in which the blast of God’s eternal spirit shall blow you out in everlasting night. But Jesus shines; he is the true light, and will shine on for ever. “I live in the twilight of Christianity,” said Voltaire; and he spoke a truth unwittingly. He thought that it was the twilight of the evening, but it was the twilight of the morning, for Jesus shineth brighter and brighter still — the true light, before which the lamps of superstition and priestcraft must pale their ineffectual fires. This is what the Savior meant: he was the true light.

Very different, too, is the light of Christ from the sparks which are to be seen all the world over. Every now and then a scientific gentleman picks up a flint arrow-head, and he strikes a wonderful light with it; and he that has his tinder-box ready and a brimstone match may soon think he has got the true light, till another philosopher comes and, with the lid of the aforesaid tinder-box, puts out that light. This is the cardinal virtue of philosophers; they extinguish one another. Their fine-spun theories do not often survive the fleeting generation that admires them. A fresh race starts fresh theories of unbelief, which live their day, like ephemera, and then expire. Not so the light of Christ; it burns on, and beams for ever. We have friends who have been dazed by the light of “public opinion” — a very bright light that. And we have known some decent scholars who have been enraptured with “the light of the nineteenth century” — a wonderful luminary indeed, but slightly darkened by the follies, frauds, and crimes which every day’s newspaper reveals. We have had the light of erudition, which lauded Aristotle, and made the heathen author supply a text-book for Christian colleges. We have heard more than enough of the light of the Church, in which we can discern nothing but colors and conceits, borrowed from the medieval darkness of Christendom. But we have the trustworthy and the

true when we hear him exclaim, “I am the light.” Where else shall light be found? Where shall the bewildered sons of men find a reliable guide? In the teaching of the person, the life, the death, the sacrifice of the Christ of Nazareth, we have light self-evidential, palpable by its own brilliance. Guiding light is here alike clearly visible. This to follow is not fallacious. “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.” Thus, then, is he a light that is to be followed. Do any of you want to enjoy the light that streams from Christ, he assured you cannot realist it by reading about it — you must follow it. If a man could travel so fast as always to follow the sun, of course he would always be in the light. If the day should ever come when the speed of the railway shall be equal to the speed of the world’s motion, then a man may so live as to never lose the light. Now he that follows Christ shall never walk in darkness. To follow him means to commit yourselves to him, to believe him, and yield yourselves up, obediently doing what he bids, and implicitly accepting what he says. You must have no other Master. Say not, “I will be taught by Calvin,” or “by Luther,” “by Wesley,” or “by anybody else.” Jesus Christ only must be your light. His Word, by the testimony of his Spirit, must be your sole authority.

III. JESUS IS THE GUIDING TIGHT FOR THE SOUL.

For the soul that panteth after God. Dost thou say, with Philip, “show us the Father, and it sufficeth us”? Jesus saith, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Christ is the guiding light through the multitude of authors. If you want to thread your way among them, let the early Fathers, the sturdy Reformers, the rigid Puritans, and the modern evangelists be your companions, if so it please you; but let him be your guide, and his counsel your stay, till you reach the gates of glory. Amidst the conflict of opinions, his sure Word will prove your safe chart. He is the guiding light through sickness and suffering; trust him, and he will make your bed in your sickness; he will bring lasting benefits out of your most lamentable afflictions. He is the guiding light through death’s dark vale. In those gloomy shades you need fear no ill if you keep close to him.

*“Sun of my soul, thou Savior dear,
It is not night if thou be near.”*

Christ has said, “He, that followeth me shall not walk in darkness”; so the terror by night flies at his presence. The atoning blood shall speak peace to

you. Ignorance shall vanish before the brightness he manifests. Christ shall teach you. Despair shall dissolve before the sweet beams of hope. Even doubt, with all the indecision that comes of it, melts at the sound of his animating voice, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Thrice happy man who commits himself to Jesus! He shall always have light, and shall never walk in darkness.

IV. JESUS IS THE UNIVERSAL LIGHT.

He says, "I am the light of the world." He does not merely say, "I am the light of the Jews," or "I am the light of the Gentiles." He is both. He is the light of all mankind. There is no clear light in which any man can discern God, or rightly understand himself, perceive the bitterness of sin, or apprehend the destiny and the doom of heaven and hell, but what flows through Jesus Christ. I do not doubt that among the various religious professions spread over the world — in many of which Christianity is much debased — there are devout persons who enjoy a share of communion with God and a sense of pardoned sin, though the tone of their thoughts, like the tongue of their utterance, widely differs from our own; but it is all through one common Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ, they find acceptance. When I get hold of a book that teaches erroneous things, yet if there is a savor of Jesus Christ in it, I censure the faults without condemning the author. Never let my animadversions be mistaken for anathemas. I sometimes perceive that the man who wrote it has evidently found salvation, because he has laid hold of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that follows him is on the right tack. Though he may err in a thousand minor considerations, by following Christ in the main thing he is safe. Learn of him and obey him in all things — then shalt thou be blessed thyself and useful to others. Happy the man that hath seen this light and walks in this light of Christ, for "this is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world!" There is a little light in Mahometanism. Indeed considering the age in which Mahomet lived, he had a very great deal of light; the religion of the Koran is immeasurably superior to the religions of the age in which the prophet flourished. He even taught the unity Of the Godhead most clearly. Yet the light in the Koran is borrowed from the Old and New Testament. It is borrowed light. The intelligence is pilfered. The light of the Parsee, the light of Zoroaster, the light of Confucius came originally from the sacred books of the Jews. From one source they must have all come, for all light comes from the great Father of lights. Wherever you alight upon any truth in strange places about man's state and condition, or about

God and the way to safety, you may rest assured that the light, if tracked to its dawn, would lead you up to Jesus Christ; for all the true light comes from him.

Christ is the light of the world, destined to shed his beams over the whole earth. The day comes when all mankind will see this light. How often I have been told of late that the world is all going to rack and ruin, and that all that we ought to do is to try and man a lifeboat and save a few strugglers, hastening ourselves to leave the wreck before she breaks up! Well now, I am not so desponding as that. I am of opinion that, by God's good grace, we shall tug the old vessel off the rocks, and that the kingdom of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, for the Lord hath sworn that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. I cannot believe that this dispensation will be wound up as a tremendous failure, that the gospel zealously preached everywhere shall result in only a few being saved, and that the whole economy shall go out in darkness as the snuff of a candle is extinguished. Nay, I look for better things. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The isles shall bring him tribute; Sheila and Seba shall offer gifts, yea, all kings shall fall down before him. I cannot help believing that the gospel yet is to be triumphant. I look for the coming of Christ. Let him come when he may, our hearts will leap for joy to greet him. But for this dispensation to end without success would almost seem to me like thwarting the purposes of God. It is not his way in the world. He has entered into battle with Satan deliberately, choosing poor feeble instruments like ourselves to confound the forces confronted against him; and if he should withdraw his troops from the field, or come himself to the front and take up the fight single-handed which his chosen legions could not conduct, it would look as if he had not wisely foreseen the engagement, or had needed to alter his plans to compass his ends. His Spirit can inspire inveterate feebleness with irresistible force. He can use means without miracles, or he can work wonders without wantonness. His first act augured auspiciously. The twelve Apostles, like a little compact square of grenadiers to fight against the foe, is no ill omen. It surely does not mean that the battle shall end till the enemy has turned his back and fled. Moreover, he keeps on sending fresh battalions; he raises up new traps; and every now and then, when the battle seems to waver, he recruits the ranks and sends out new enlistments, strengthening the ranks that are thinned, and harassing the enemy with his reserves. Courage, my brethren!

There shall be revival after revival; there shall be reformation after reformation, shock of battle after shock of battle, and the dread artillery of God's great gospel shall be fired off against the hosts of hell. The gods of the heathen shall fall. Antichrist shall be overthrown. Babylon shall sink, like a millstone, in the flood. The crescent of Mahomet must wane into eternal darkness. Israel shall behold her King, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall be gathered at his feet. So let our faith excite our courage, and our courage stimulate our patience, and our patience give zest to the full assurance of hope, while we worship our Lord Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

Thus have I carried out my design of amplifying on the four points that I propounded to you at the outset. Let me wind up with a personal question: Since Christ is the light of the world, I would ask: —

V. HOW ARE WE ACTING TOWARDS HIM.

Do any of us shun the light? I know some men slight the privileges they ought to prize. They do not want to know him Whose going forth is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth. They never read the Bible, or search into the history, the prophecy, and the promises. They do not like an earnest ministry. They have a sort of happy-go-lucky style of religion; they take in whatever anybody else tells them; they attend their place of worship as a matter of habit, and observe all the proprieties of fashion; but as to doing right or seeking light, they seldom or never give it a thought. They do not count it desirable. Too much light could expose much that would not bear inspection. Dear friend, if you are afraid of light, be suspicious of yourself, for it is deceit that dreads detection. Who are the people that like darkness rather than light? If it were put to a meeting of the inhabitants of London, who would vote for putting out the gas at night? Well, I warrant you, every burglar would; every garotter would; and there are certain libertines who would rather like it. Every man that doeth evil hateth the light. I do not mean to compare you with those gentlemen. Still, the saying is very comprehensive, "He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved." Of course, when some men sneer we can appreciate their sensitiveness. The doctrine of Christ does not suit the dissolute. Lax living never does lead up to an admiration of pure piety. What a price the profligate have to, pay for their pleasures! Are you, my friend, conscious of anything you went to conceal? Look closely at it yourself. Recollect that you will have to look at it in that great day when

the secrets of all hearts will be exposed. When Jesus comes “to judge the world with righteousness and his people with equity,” from the light of justice, from the heat of judgment, nothing whatsoever shall be hid. Be wise, therefore, to repent now of the evil, lest calamity reach you when there is none to commiserate.

Do I see a curl of the lip, a shrug of the shoulder, a cynical expression of the countenance, as someone asks, Are we really, then to regard the Christ you speak of, the atonement you preach, the resurrection you are so confident about, as the light of the present age, the light of other ages; in fact, the light of the world? You put it well, my friend; and you look well as you put the question. It occurs to me that I might meet you in altered circumstances, when your tone would be altered likewise. Flesh is frail. Your eye will not be always full of lustre; your spirits will not be always blithe and gay; your health will not be always strong and vigorous. Not yet have you felt your need of the light which has irradiated past ages, can enlighten this age, and will shine with undiminished glory in the everlasting age. Proud man, are you a philosopher or a politician? Are you a man of science, or a mere sciolist — a pretender? Know this, that in darkness thou didst enter this world; years passed before you dreamed that life had a purpose; and in darkness, denser still, thou must make thine exit, if, pleased with a fancy or enamored of a fallacy, thou failest to see the Light that makes time and eternity resplendent. When we preach the gospel purely and simply, we seem to be challenging the question on the part of some of you. To what purpose? The light we propound you do not need. How can I answer you? No arguments of mine, will avail while you are blind to the perils you must meet with in traversing those unknown paths and untried experiences that lie before you. And as to the objections that any of you raise, let the man that takes objection to God’s counsel, and spurns his kindness, answer for the rashness he will have to rue. Petty scruples! Paltry excuses! They betray your insincerity. It is absurd to trifle when the outlook might well make, you tremble to plead for yourselves. You will not put your cause in the hands of the Counsellor. Hence the gloom that comes of your doubts; hence the wretchedness of a sinner’s reflections on the grace of his Redeemer. Do you cavil at the light? Do you know the reason why? Well, I think it is for very much the same reason that made the Brahmin break the microscope. He thought it wicked to destroy life of any kind. He would not eat meat, or feed upon flesh, fish, or fowl; for anybody that destroyed life would destroy his own soul. “Well,” said a missionary,

“but you must do violence to your own conscience every time you drink, for the water you swallow teems with animalcule-living, moving creatures.” Then he showed him a drop of water, magnified by a microscope. The evidence was clear, but instead of yielding to conviction, the Brahmin was enraged at the instrument which wrought the discovery, so he broke the microscope. In like manner, men despise and attempt to disprove the gospel, because it reveals truths that are unwelcome. It explodes their traditions; it disparages their opinions, it debases their cherished tastes; and so it destroys their peace of mind. It will not let them live comfortably in sin. The love of sin and superstition, a zeal for your clan and your craft, animate your opposition to malevolence and madness. Methinks I hear somebody say, “I wish I could see it.” Well, dear friend, I wish I could credit your candor. The light that streams from Christ is visible; but not to eyes that are shut; not to hearts that are hardened; not to consciences that are seared. “Open your eyes; it is all you have to do.” Look, sinner — look and live! All around you is the light of everlasting love. Do but open those poor eyes of yours, that unbelief has kept closed so long. O Lord, open thou the sinner’s eyes that he may now see! The light is all around thee, brother; the light is all around thee. Others see it and rejoice. Only let shine eyes be opened, and thou shalt hail the glorious orb which makes manifest all that is obscure and awful to thy present apprehension.

Have you seen the light? Is there one who says? “Well, thank God, I have seen that light”? Then, dear brother, be grateful and give thanks. We are, none of us, as thankful as we ought to be for the light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. There was a custom on the Alps in the olden time, which, I fear, has dropped into desuetude. Someone was appointed to stand upon the topmost Alp with a great cowhorn, and as soon as he beheld the rising of the sun, with a loud blast he gave notice. From peak to peak of the Alps might then be heard, in those good old days, a psalm of praise. Oh! ye happy souls that have beheld the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, tell it forth with trumpet tongue! Well may a thousand voices take up his praise. Blessed be the name of Jesus. For ever be his name adored. Magnify his grace for the light that shines; for the goodness it diffuses; for the joy, the abounding joy, it awakens on every side.

And now, brethren, let gratitude and benevolence prompt your zeal to spread the light, to reflect it all around, near and far. I am very anxious that all the members of this Church should endeavor to disseminate, the light of

the knowledge of Christ which has shone in their own hearts. I pray you, brethren and sisters, do not get cold, formal, or indifferent. The truth you have believed through grace is a precious trust committed to your charge. You have been a praying people, and you are so still; blessed be God's name. Do not forsake the meetings for prayer; frequent them regularly, and conspire together to make them still more full of life and energy. I have been wont to say with honest gratitude that most, if not all, the members in fellowship with us were actually engaged in some work for Jesus. Is it so now? Are you all interested and occupied in telling and teaching the good news and the great lessons of the gospel? We have no notion of leaving to pastors the whole work of the Christian ministry, in which every faithful disciple should take earnest part. One man alone, perhaps, may preach to such a throng as this; but if we are to have preaching everywhere, you must all preach by word and deed to circulate the heavenly wisdom in every sphere of earthly resort. Oh! my sisters and my brothers, the best of all preaching, because the most simple and unostentatious, is to be found in the ordinary intercourse you hold with your fellow-creatures, when with a good conversation you avail yourselves of all the occurrences and opportunities of daily life. In your families the sweetness of your temper, the gentleness of your manners, and the purity of your actions should bear witness that you have been with Jesus and learned of him. The integrity of your business habits should speak for the sanctity of your morals, and commend the school in which you have been trained. Your character must be clear, or the utterance of your lips will be despised. Then an outspoken testimony will take hold of men's hearts. Tell your children, your brothers, your sisters, and your intimate friends the way to Jesus. Tell the strangers who sit by your side, if you can, something of your own sweet experience of the light that there is in Jesus. God has recently taken away some of our best workers, as you know. Oh! brethren, make up for the loss of one of the best of men, long known as a deacon and elder in our midst, who is now laid aside, his health departed, his strength prostrate. Oh! sisters, try to make up by double energy for the loss of that good sister who was a mother among you all. Oh! let us all see to it that there be no gaps in the ranks of Christ's army which are not quickly filled up with fresh recruits. If there should happen to be a vacancy, and the man has fallen who stood next to me, I will try, by God's strength, to fight with both hands at this time till some other shall step up to take his place. Since Christ is our light, and he has ordained us to be lights in the world, let us shine to the utmost of our

capacity until the Master shall take us to dwell with him in the light for ever. Amen.

SAFE, THOUGH SIN- SURROUNDED.

NO. 3535

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8TH, 1869

“Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock; be not silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.” — Psalm 28:1.

I HAVE no doubt that the first and most natural meaning of these words is this, that David passed through such mental distress, such accumulated grief, that unless his prayer should bring him consolation from heaven, he felt that he must despair, and so become like those who sink into everlasting despair, going down into the pit of hell. I think it is a cry against his misery, which vexed him; an earnest petition that he might not have to suffer so long as to drive into that same despair which is the eternal inheritance of lost souls.

But in reading the other day Masillon's Reflections of the Psalms, I noticed that that eminent French preacher gives quite another turn to the passage, and he seems to regard this as being the prayer of David when he was exposed to the association of the ungodly, fearful lest he should become in character like those that go down into the pit, and even if that should not be the first meaning of the text, it seems to me to be a natural inference from it, and if not, still the thought itself is one which contains so much of holy caution about it, that I desire to commend it to all my brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus to-night, and especially to such as are usually exposed to danger from ill-society. We will begin, then, by remarking that:

I. MANY OF THE BEST OF GOD'S SAINTS ARE CALLED IN THE ORDER OF PROVIDENCE TO BE TRIED BY EVIL COMPANIONSHIP.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," said Christ, "but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Hence we are not shut up in monasteries or nunneries. We have not to: —

*"Lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade."*

We are placed in the midst of our fellow-men. We are not even placed amongst a selected body of men, but for the most part we are thrown down in the midst of society, and in the case of some, the society which they must inevitably keep is of the very worst and most dangerous kind. I say that first of all. This is in a measure the case with all, or nearly all of us. We are placed in a world in which there is nothing that is friendly to grace, but everything that is opposed to the spiritual life. That man must be very happily circumstanced indeed who does not find himself a stranger in a strange land, and a foreigner amongst aliens who do not understand him. Go out into the world at all, and you have need to put your armor on, for it is an enemy's country. There is no profession, no form of labor, no walk of life, no publicity, no retirement, in which the Christian is not in some measure exposed to the deteriorating influence of ungodly society. As long as we are in this world, it must in a measure be so. There are few indeed who are screened from this danger, but there are some who are peculiarly exposed to it some in the highest walks of life. It is not easy to be a Christian, and to be amongst the great. "Gold and the gospel," said John Bunyan very truly, "seldom do agree." The high mountains are cold. The tops of the hills — the tempest sweeps along them. We have had mournful examples lately that the most eminent rank does not even secure morality or guidance, even by the rules of common-sense. I have been inclined lately, when I have read the papers, to interpret the term "the scum of society" to refer to those who float on the top, for certainly there is no rank of society that could have figured more abominably in the Divorce Court, no rank of society that could have exhibited itself so detestably upon the racecourse, than the peerage of this realm, and unless God mend the manners of the Right Honourables, their names will have to be Right Abominables — the term will be more suitable to them by far. It is hard, depend upon it, to be great and to be good. No man need, then, be very ambitious to climb the high places. Brains swim when risen aloft, that had

been calm enough below. Be contented where you are, and rest satisfied with Agar's portion, who prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

It must be hard, too, for a man to keep himself free from the contamination of company in what are called the lowest ranks. Oh! how many of you, Christian brethren, there be he sons of toil, pure, and good, and holy men, who have to-morrow morning to go and mix with those who interlard almost every sentence with an oath. I remember it was the complaint of one of our sisters in the poor-house, not that the diet was sparse, not that the bed was hard, but that the language used by those with whom she must associate vexed her soul. Only in the lowest ranks men do not cover up their profanity. They have not learned that politeness which can blaspheme God secretly, but they speak right out their enmity, and they couch their offensive thoughts of the Most High in the most offensive words, and hence the people of God thrust into such society are like holy Lot in the midst of Sodom, who was vexed with the filthy conversation of the ungodly. Oh! dear young people, be very thankful, you that are yet nestling under the wing of parental care, and have not to go into a rough and wicked world. I am afraid for some of you good young creatures to join the Church, lest your piety should not stand the test of this rough world, when you must, by-and-bye, be thrust out into it; and you, my brethren and sisters, who, through the goodness of providence, are kept from being exposed to the temptations peculiar to the extremes of life, be very grateful, but, as you have less to contend with in this respect, bring forth more fruit unto God, and seek to be more eminent Christians because of the advantages of your circumstances.

Yet brethren, I may as well come back to where I started. I suppose that we are all of us, in whatever way of life we may be walking, exposed more or less to the associations of those who are not the servants of Christ. What business could a man select in which he would find that all with whom he had to deal were Christians? If there were indeed a parish of All Saints, it might be a very desirable place for residence, though I hardly know whether any man would be right in going to live there, since God's object in making saints on earth at all is that, by casting them like salt in the midst of the earth, they may work for good and savor the mass. You must, you must mix more or less with those who will tempt you. Do not be in a hurry, therefore, to change your position in life. If it be not in itself sinful — in case it is so, give it up to-morrow — but if it be not in itself sinful, stand not aghast at its peculiar temptations. There are temptations

elsewhere. You may go from the frying-pan into the fire, as the old proverb hath it, very readily. In getting out of one temptation, you may soon get into another, and, on the whole, probably the temptation that is troubling you most is the best that you can have. It is the temptation that would not trouble you that would be the most dangerous, and when a man's cross has been long on his shoulder, it begins to fit him, and he had better not change it for another. In every condition it is your lot to be crying unto God for help, but do not be earnest to get out of the fire. This much the first point then. The second is this. It appears from the text that: —

II. THE GREAT DANGER OF GOOD MEN IS LEST THEY SHOULD BECOME LIKE THE UNGODLY THROUGH ASSOCIATION WITH THEM.

Brethren, I shall speak very much from observation, actual observation, and, I fear, also partly from personal experience, when I briefly describe the way in which association with the ungodly tends to make Christians like them.

First, it too frequently happens that the Christian's testimony is silenced. We always try to make excuses for not doing what it is disagreeable to do. Now it is the duty of the Christian, wherever he may be, to bear witness for his Lord, but self-love and the love of ease come in, and they say, "You must not make religion offensive; you must not cast your pearls before swine; you must not bore people with your godliness." This is said to be prudent, and to a great extent it is prudent, but it is the easiest thing in all the world to think that we are prudent when we are really cowardly, and to make it out that we are using judgment when, instead thereof, we are only trying to protect ourselves from the sneers and jeers of the wicked. It is an easy thing only to bear witness for our Lord in the midst of those who thank us for so doing, and who confirm our testimony; but to stand out for Christ before the congregation of the wicked, this is not so easy a task, and oftentimes when the good man has found himself in evil company he has been tempted, as he thinks by a due regard for prudence, not to say anything for his Lord and Master. Now, in this, you become like them that go down into the pit. They do not praise God; they are silent about Christ; they talk not of the preciousness of his blood; they speak not of his eternal and unchangeable love. You speak not either, and therein you become like to them. Who shall tell the difference when both are silent?

The next stage is when the Christian man actually does fear, though he may not think he does, the sneers of his associates. You are like them the

moment you are afraid of them; they have discovered in you a likeness to themselves the moment you tremble at them. But there are some tongues so foul, some whose wit is so sharp, whose remarks are so sarcastic, that it is not to be quite marvelled at that Christians are afraid to be thorough Christians in their presence. And yet, my brethren, what is there to be afraid of in the greatest man that ever breathed? What is there in our holy Christianity that we wish to cover up, to conceal, in the presence of the most skeptical, the most witty, the most severe of the sons of men? Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of man, and the son of man that is but as a moth or a worm? Thy Lord has given thee in charge his precious truth, and to live out that truth in thine own proper character, and wilt thou for fear of a feeble man hide, and conceal, and cover up with a bushel the light thy God has given thee? Ah! then this is indeed to become like them, for they that fear man more than God make man their god, and what is this but to be idolatrous and to be godless? God delivers from this!

Another tendency will next crop up, and that is the inclination in Christian people just to yield a point or two. We are told that we must not be too precise and severe. Have I not often heard words like these, "If we exhibit too much of the Puritanism of religion, we shall probably disgust those with whom we associate, and more especially youthful minds will be, repelled by the severity of our piety"? Oh! I could laugh, if I did not weep, when I hear men talk so, for to tell me that in this age there is any fear of any man being too severely Puritanical is to assert the thing that is not. It is a lax age. Their tacklings are loosed; the old landmarks are pulled up. Principles — why, what do men care for principles now adays? There is no fear of being too tight and too precise, and if it were not so in this age, yet since we serve a jealous God we need never be afraid that we can be too jealous of our own hearts. George the Third in his older days did some very curious things, and very frequently made them think him insane, but there was a kind of method in all his madness. One day he met a Quaker gentleman, and accosted him, and was introduced to his wife. George said, "And are you one of the Society of Friends, madam?" She said she was. "Isn't there a little too much lace there" he said, putting his hand on some portion of her dress. She said, "Well, I have a little deviated from strictness, I am sorry to say." And I am sorry to see it, madam," he said, "for when people once get away from their strictness they generally go a very long way from it," and there is very great truth in that. Albeit I am not speaking now about dress, but merely quote it as an instance; still, it is so,

that when Christian people tolerate a little sin they will tolerate a great sin, and when they give up some little point of virtue they will give up some great point. "No," says the thief; "I do not mean to break open that door; no, I do not mean to try and force my way into that house." There is a little window, just a little window there, and here is a very little boy, and you mean to put him in? "Yes," and when that little boy is in, he opens the big door, and the burglar enters. And it is so with the Church of God. Some little sin, as men will have it; some little deflection from the rigid line of right is tolerated; and then the door is open, and all manner of mischief cometh in thereby. God grant that we may not, by giving way here and there, pull down the bulwarks of our Church, and so make the children of God to become like those that go down into the pit.

There is a point, my brethren, I would bring before you in which oftentimes, I am afraid, Christians become like ungodly men, and that is in joining in a laugh over a jest which almost compels laughter, but which is not altogether clean. George Eerbert tells us that in a jest we should take the wit, and leave out that which is evil, for: —

"He pares his apple that would cleanly feed."

but it is not always easy to pare the apple just at the time. When a Christian in company is seen to laugh over a doubtful jest, he has committed himself far farther than he thinks. It were much better if he drew himself up, and said, "I could laugh with you at what little wit may sparkle in that quotation, but I cannot endorse the sentiment with which it is accompanied, nor suffer it to pass without entering my protest against." Do we always do so? I am afraid that almost always we neglect the doing of that, and in that respect we become like those that go down into the pit.

Ah! brethren, how easy it is for us to fall by little and a little into the ways of the ungodly, to get to do as they do, and talk as they talk, and act as they act; and though on Sabbath day we take a different rule, yet on the weekday how much is the life of the professed Christian like that of the ungodly! I am not here to impeach the common Christianity of the age, but, if I were, what an impeachment might be brought against it! It is, alas! too true that many a tradesman who is a professing Christian is no more to be trusted than his infidel neighbor, that the Christian merchant is not proof against the injurious influence of the custom of his trade. We have had good men, whom God forbid that we should censure too severely, who ought to have, stood out against the methods of mercantile finance in years

gone by, but who fell into the custom of the rest, and, therefore, the world can scarce condemn them, but from the judgment of the Christian teacher they cannot go unscathed. They ought to have known, and to have done better. It is no excuse for a Christian that it was the custom of the business. He has no right to make himself the slave of men, nor yield to custom. Follower of Christ, independence of mind in carrying out integrity of purpose is that which you are bound to exhibit, and which the Holy Spirit will help you to achieve. May the day come when it shall not be our sorrowful task to have to utter such sentiments, but we are obliged to utter them now, and we beg believers here to put up the prayer, and pray to-night that God would let his voice be heard in your hearts, lest you should become like them that go down into the pit.

Brethren, just one moment here. There is nothing more horrible that I know of than that a man who professes to have been washed in the blood of Christ should defile himself as others do. What a dishonor to that dear name before which the angels bow, that we who wear it should act as Christ's enemies do! Paul saith, "I tell you, even weeping, that there are some that are the enemies of the cross of Christ, for their god is their belly; their end is destruction; they glory in their shame" — and these were professors! Nothing can be worse for the Church; nothing more disastrous to the world, than for Christians to become like the unconverted. The flood came upon the earth when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men. The day of chastisement is always near the day of sin, and the day when the godly assimilate with the Christless will be the prelude of the great overwhelming flood of fire that shall sweep away the earth. Do let us, if we would bless our age, be firm for the right and for the truth. If we would be happy ourselves, if we would honor and glorify Christ, let our prayer constantly be that we may not be as the wicked are. But I must not tarry longer, for I have to notice, in concluding: —

III. THE REMEDY TO WHICH DAVID RESORTED AGAINST THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY WHICH HE FELT.

David was a great deal better man than we might have expected him to be in the position he occupied. When you hear persons condemn the glaring fall of David, you may join in their condemnation, but you may also ask them to remember the remarkable circumstances in which David was found. The sin which David committed, great and grievous as it was, was all too common — what if I say is all too common? — in a soldier's life.

The first part of David's life he spent as a captain of free-booters. That word does not quite describe his band, for they were not lawless robbers, but they were men, we are told, who were discontented, and who fled from regular government, and we know from their character and conduct that they were rough, unbridled soldiery, who would never have been governed by anyone less strong in character than David. Now associations like these he must often have felt to be extremely dangerous to his spirit.

Notice, then, what this practical Christian used as his remedy. It was prayer — prayer with an earnest cry. He felt as if he were slipping, and he cried, "Lord, grasp me, hold me; arrest the sliding of these feet." It was a cry such as a child uses when it is lost, and it cries for its mother; a piteous cry of sorrow, of fear, of alarm. "My God, my Father," he seems to say, "I beseech thee interpose; I slide; I fall; the precipice is beneath me; the ungodly seek to thrust me over it; come to my rescue; my God, make haste and come to my rescue now."

Now, if David used prayer, I will confirm that by reminding you of David's Master. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here upon earth he had many temptations to sin. His heart was not, like yours and mine, a tinder-box to catch every spark of temptation but yet even he could not live here without much prayer. I say not that he could have sinned, but I do say that his holy nature seemed instinctively to understand that it must use prayer, that it must use much prayer in order constantly to cast off the temptations of the world. Cold mountains, therefore, and the midnight air continually witnessed to the intercessions and pleadings of Christ when he held communion with his God.

I shall not need, I think, to spend even a moment in making the personal application, and yet I will do so, after all, on second thoughts. If there be a working man here who is called to work with many men who are drunkards and blasphemers, let him take this word of advice to-night — pray twice as much as if you worked with the godly. If there is a young woman here placed in peculiar circumstances of temptation, let me say — keep up your communion with God with greater earnestness than if you were living at home with Christian parents. Pray more; pray more intently. Live nearer to God in communion. When a man is sick of some disease that takes away his strength, the physician urges him to take a more liberal diet. So with you. Live better now that there are greater drains upon your

spiritual constitution; if you do not do so you will be sore sick, but if you maintain this, you will be kept above the evil.

But I want your attention, in closing, to the last thought suggested by the text. The object of David's prayer was that he might hear the voice of God in his soul, "lest," says he, "if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit."

IV. WHAT, THEN, WAS THIS VOICE OF GOD WHICH DAVID DESIRED TO HEAR?

Let me guess at it for a minute. Was it not, first, than voice which would awaken sacred memories? You have been exposed to temptation, my brethren, and you are ready to yield, but a voice reminds you of the day of your first espousals when your heart was warm towards Christ; of the days of your baptism, when you were buried with Christ, professing to be dead to the world. It reminds you of the solemn vows that you made in years gone by, of solemn declarations that were registered before high heaven that you would be firm and faithful, and keep covenant with God. What, thou, thou, thou — wilt thou sin? A member of a Christian Church, one whose head has been leaning on Christ's bosom, one who has heard his voice, and rejoiced in it — canst thou, canst thou turn aside? Perhaps you have an invitation for to-morrow; canst thou accept it when it involves sin? It may be that this very night thou wouldest have fallen, but by the recollection of those holy and happy seasons that thou hast had at the Lord's Table, those times of private prayer, those hours when it was well with thee, and thou didst walk with God, the still small voice of God calls to thee, "What doest thou here, Elijah? Servant of God, what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the muddy river? Turn aside from the ways of sin, and seek thee unto thy God."

That voice would do something more, however, than startle the recollections of memory; it was intended to infuse vigor and courage. Sometimes a captain's voice has been known to win a battle, when the ranks are beginning to waver, when the pikes of the enemy are pushing forward. Here he comes — the gallant captain, always first in every charge. "'Tis he; 'tis he!" they say, and he comes to the front and cries, "Will you fly before them? Will you play the coward? Standard-bearer, unfurl the banner and advance!" and at that word, so full of fire, and force, and energy, the enemy is made to quail, and on they dash, and the victory is won. My God, let me hear thy voice within my soul just after that sort.

When I shall begin to run before my spiritual foes, when association with them has almost overthrown me, let me hear the voice of him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and my leader's voice as it calls me on shall re-animate my spirit that I may win the day.

The voice of God, moreover, may be regarded as that which actually impels the soul. "Let there be light," said God, and light flitted through the darkness. God's voice creates, upholds, strengthens, perfects, and when God's voice comes into the heart of a sinking Christian, when that Christian thinks, "It is no use standing out any longer; I may as well give it up, and become as others are," then if that voice comes, it speaks to the heart, and it throbs healthily; it speaks to the judgment, and it puts no longer bitter for sweet; it speaks to the will, and the will becomes firm for the right and for the truth. God's voice, that breaks the rocks and splits the cedars of Lebanon, inspirits and encourages the heart of the believer. Put up your prayer, then, to-night, you that are much tried and tempted, "Lord, let me hear thy voice; let me hear it every morning before I go into the world." Beloved, never look man in the face till you have seen the face of God. Oh! lock up your hearts every morning by prayer, and give God the key, so that no evil may get in while you are out of doors. Oh! you do not know how some members of this Church grieve us by their inconsistency. I would sooner bury you than that you should sin so as to grieve God's Spirit, and cause the enemy to blaspheme. The Lord has kept many, many of you with garments white and unspotted, but if you want our hearts to break, profess to be Christians, and then go into sin. May the Lord keep you, my beloved, keep you fast and firm amidst this crooked and perverse generation. You young people, you young men and women, may the Lord grant that none of you may ever turn your backs in the day of battle! And you old people the greatest pain we have ever had has been brought to this church not by young people, but by old people. It in the old fools that are the biggest fools when they are fools. When old people are wise, they are the wisest: but when they are foolish, they are the most foolish. God keep the aged, and preserve their reverend heads, that they may not disgrace them, but may be a crown of glory to them. The Lord keep the pastors, keep the elders, be with you all, and keep you all pure and unspotted from the world! This is our prayer and desire. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

DANIEL 6.

Verses 1-3. *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom. And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

Kings are never satisfied. The empire of Darius was always growing, and a chapter or two farther on we find that he had a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. There is no end to the greediness of man, and what does he get by it after all? One pair of hands can only do one man's work; he only gains more toils, and he has now to distribute the cares of his State among others. Then how good it is for any man when he is guided to a right, honest, and hearty helper! Such was the lot of Darius. How advantageous, too, it may be for the people of God when a man like Daniel is put in the high places of the land! Doubtless he was exalted, not only for his own sake, but that he might be as a brazen shield and bulwark for the people of God in that foreign land. No extortions would now be committed on the Jewish race, for they had a friend at court. Blessed be God, we have a friend at court too, one who will take up our cause, and speak for us to the King of Kings

4. *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault;*

Who can stand before envy? High places furnish very uncomfortable seats, for even if God exalt a man, men will try to pull him down; but he is an honorable man indeed who puts his enemies to their shifts before *they* can find anything against him.

4-7. *Forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius live for ever All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the councillors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make*

a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

We do not know with what ingenious arguments they moved the king's mind to pass this, but we think we can conceive them. He had just conquered Chaldea; they would, therefore, say, "It will be an excellent test of the obedience of your new subjects if you touch them upon the point of their religion; try whether they will for thirty days abstain from addressing their deities. Perhaps, too, since Darius had a colleague on the throne, the younger Cyrus, who was much more popular than he, they may have egged him on by hinting that Cyrus was much too vain, and that, therefore, if he would not allow anyone to address a petition, even to Cyrus, for thirty days, it, would tend to show who was really loyal to Darius, and it would also test the temper of Cyrus. I cannot tell how they did it, but somehow or other they managed to lead the foolish old man to carry out their designs.

8. *Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not*

The Babylonians entrusted their king with absolute power; hence he could will this or that as he chose. The Persians believed their kings to be possessed of perfect wisdom; and hence they never allowed a law to be changed, for that would be to suppose that the king who made it had made a mistake, a thing which could by no possibility ever occur. There is an amusing instance given by a modern traveler, who tells us that a few years ago one of the later Persian kings said he would never remove from the tent in the plain until the snow had gone from some mountains to which he pointed. It happened to be a very late summer, and the snow was long in melting, and his gracious majesty had to keep his place in his tent, while his troops were perishing with fever in a low marsh-district, until they procured men to sweep the snow from the tops of the mountains in order that he might be able to move. It is inconvenient for men to play the God; they cannot do it without bringing serious difficulty and danger upon themselves. So did Darius on this occasion. I never like men who, when they speak a hasty word, say they cannot alter it. Rash vows are better broken than kept; you had no right to say you would do the thing; much less have you any right to do it when you have said you would do it. However, the law of the Medes and Persians could not be altered.

9, 10. *Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into the house:*

That is right; the less we have to do with man, and the more we have to do with God the better; he did not go to the king to complain, but he went into his house to tell his God about it.

10. *And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem,*

That much-loved city, though now in ruins.

10. *He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*

‘Twas bravely done. A man in a meaner position might have Carried out his devotions in private without sin, but not so Daniel. He is a representative man: he must not play the coward; it is incumbent upon him to be more especially and deliberately public in all that he does, for if he be seen to slink in never so small a degree, then all the saints will lose heart.

11-13. *Then these men assembled. and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king’s decree: Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee O king. shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said. The thing is true. according to the law of the Mede and Persians, which altereth not. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel,*

Here is impudence! But they called Jesus Christ “this fellow.” Why. Daniel was the chief of the presidents, the prime minister of the king, and yet they say, “That Daniel.” Ill-hearts generally have ill-mouths, and what can you expect but ill-words out of ill-mouths?

13. *That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah,*

That captive, that slave, that serf — so they seemed to put it, forgetting that he was their Master by virtue of his high office.

13-14. *Regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself,*

There was a little conscience left. Calvin does not like the man at all. He says, What right had he to sign a decree hastily, which might take away the lives of the best men in his dominion? And his repentance does not seem to be a repentance of the act, but only of the consequences.

14. *And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.*

Here was a great king, made himself out to be a god, and yet he cannot have his own way. When that famous potter, who was a true Christian, was brought before the king, the king said to him, “Unless you change your views, I shall be compelled to have you burned.” “Ah!” said Bernard de Palissy, “you are a king, and yet say, ‘I shall-be compelled,’ and I am a poor potter, but no man can make me use those words; I will be compelled to do nothing against my conscience.” Oh! the holy bravery of men who are saved! When Bonner had one of the martyrs before him, he said, “I will convince you; a blazing faggot will convince you.” “A fig for your faggot,” said the man, “or a wagon-load of them; I can stand and burn better than you can wear your miter.” So the saints of God are strong, and can bid defiance to the adversary through divine grace.

15. *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.*

This is the reason of his deliverance, not his innocency, but his faith; we are told by Paul that it was faith that shut the mouths of lions.

16-24. *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel,*

and hath shut the lions' months, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives;

Which was a piece of injustice, the throwing in of their wives and children, though we cannot say as much of the throwing of them in.

24. *And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

A THREEFOLD MOTTO

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“One thing is needful.” — Luke 10:44.

“One thing I know.” — John 9:25.

“One thing I do.” — Philippians 3:13.

I HAVE “one thing” in view — “one thing” on which I want to rivet your attention. Forbear with me if I detain you a few minutes before announcing a text. It has been said that a man of one book is terrible in the force of his convictions. He has studied it so well, digested it so thoroughly, and understands it so profoundly, that it is perilous to encounter him in controversy. No man becomes eminent in any pursuit unless he gives himself up to it with all the powers and passions of his nature — body and soul. Michaelangelo had never been so great a painter, if his love of art had not become so enthusiastic that he frequently did not take off his garments to sleep by the week together; nor had Handel ever been such a great musician, if his ardor for sounds celestial had not led him to use the keys of his harpsichord till, by constant fingering, they became the shape of spoons. A man must have one pursuit, and consecrate all his powers to one purpose, if he would excel or rise to eminence among his fellows.

When streams of water divide themselves into innumerable rills, they usually create a morass, which proves dangerous to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Could all those streams be dammed up into one channel, and made to flow in one direction, they might resolve themselves into a navigable river, bearing commerce to the ocean, and enriching the people who dwelt upon its banks. To obtain one thing, one comprehensive boon from heaven, has been the object of many a saintly prayer, like that of

David, “Unite my heart to fear thy name” The advice of Paul was, “Set not your affection upon things on earth,” not “your affections,” as it is often misquoted. The Apostle would have all the affections tied up into one affection, and that one concentrated affection not set upon earthly things, but upon things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The concurrence of all our powers and capacities with one single impulse, to obtain one object, and to produce one result, is one great aim of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The “one thing” concerning which I am now about to talk very seriously to you will require three texts to elucidate it. There are three pithy passages of Holy Scripture which I shall endeavor to press home on your heart and conscience.

I. ONE THING NEEDED.

Our first text is to be found in the Gospel according to St. Luke 10:44, “One thing is needful.” This one thing, according to this passage, is faith in Christ Jesus, the sitting down at the Master’s feet, the drinking in his Word. If I may expand for a minute the “one thing,” without seeming to make twenty things of that which is but one, I will refer it to the possession of a new life. This life is given to us when, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we are created anew in Christ Jesus, and it develops itself in a simple confidence in Jesus, in a hearty obedience to Jesus, in a desire to be like Jesus, and in a constant yearning to be near to Jesus. “One thing is needful”; that one thing is salvation, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, through faith which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. The new heart, the right spirit, a filial fear of God, love to Jesus — this is the “one thing needful.” How I trust you all know how to distinguish things essential from things convenient, and that you are more concerned about needful things than about things merely attractive, or, at most, but accessory to your welfare. The little child may admire the field which is covered with red and blue flowers; the husbandman cares nothing for these flowerets; he delights in the wheat that is ripening for the sickle. So our childish minds are often fascinated with the flaunting flowers of fortune and fashion; craving after wealth, and fame, and worldly distinction; but our better reason, if it be allowed to speak, will prefer the necessary things, the things which we must have, or else must perish. We may do without earthly goods, for thousands have been happy in life and triumphant in death without any of the luxury which riches can purchase. The heart’s love of his fellow-

creatures has been fairly won by many a humble man we never courted popular applause. The patience of the poor has often counted for fine gold, while the pride of the affluent has passed for nothing but foul dross. Even lack of health, heaven's priceless boon to mortals here below, has not hindered some precious sufferers from serving their generation, glorifying God in a martyrdom of pain, and bequeathing treasures of piety to a grateful posterity. Ten thousand things are convenient; thousands of things are desirable; hundreds of things are to be sought for; but there is one thing, one only thing, the one thing we have described to you, of which our Savior speaks as the "one thing needful."

And, oh! how needful it is! Needful for your children — they are growing up about you; and much joy they give you; for you can see in them many budding excellences. To your partial eyes they give promise of goodness, if not of greatness. They will be the comfort of your declining years. You have carefully watched their education. Not a whit of their moral habits have you failed to overlook. To give them a fair start in the world has been your fond desire till their portion is the fruit of your providence. From perils you would protect them. Lest they should have to rough it, perhaps, as much as their father before them, you would pilot them through the straits. Good! but, dear parents, do recollect that "one thing is needful." For your children, that they may commence life, continue in life, and close life honorably, it is well that they should be educated; it is well that morality should be instilled into them, but this is not enough. Alas! we have seen many leave the purest parental influences to plunge into the foulest sins; their education has become but a tool for iniquity, and the money with which they might have helped themselves to competence has been squandered away in vice. "One thing is needful" for that bright-eyed boy. Oh! if you can take him to the Savior, and if the blessing of the Good Shepherd shall alight upon him and renew him while yet a child, the best will have been done for him — yea, his one chief need supplied. And if that dear girl, before she comes to womanhood, shall have been led to that blessed Savior who rejecteth none that come to him, she will have received all she shall want for time and for eternity. Quicken your prayers, then, dear parents. Think of your children, to seek their welfare more intelligently. Be more importunate in intercession on their behalf. Truly, this is the one thing needful for them. One thing, too, is needful for that young man just leaving home to go out as an apprentice and learn his trade. That is a trying time for an untried hand. The heart may well flutter as one,

young and inexperienced, reflects that he is now about to sail, not on a coasting voyage, but to put fairly out to sea. Ere long. it will be seen whether those fair professions had truth as a foundation. He will get to London — many of you have passed through this ordeal — the Metropolis, what a maze it seemed to you at first, and with what amazement you surveyed it! What with propensities within your breast, and profuse attractions without, temptation held you spell-bound. What could not be done in the village, what you dared not think of in the little market-town, seems easy to be done unobserved in the great city. Hundreds of fingers point you to the haunts of pleasure, the home of vice, the path to hell. Ah! mother and father, you present the Bible as your parting gift; you write the youth's name on the fly-leaf. You offer your prayers, and you shed your tears for him. Steals there not over you the conviction that the one thing he needs you cannot pack in his trunk, nor can you send it up to him by a post office order. The one thing needful is that Christ should be formed in his heart the hope of glory. With that he would begin life well. A sword of the true Jerusalem metal, that will not break in the heat of the conflict, will be serviceable all his journey through. Do I address some young man who has not forgotten his mother's kind remarks when he left home? Let me just echo them, and say to him, One thing thou lackest; oh! seek it, seek it now! Before going out of this house, seek till, through grace, you obtain this one thing needful which shall bear thee safely to the skies.

But "one thing is needful," not merely for those youngsters at home, or for those about to go abroad in the world. One thing is needful for the business man. "Ah!" smith he, "I want a great many things." But what, I ask, is the one thing? You speak of "the needful." You call ready cash "the indispensable.", "Give me this," says the man of the world, "and I don't care about anything else. Recommend your religion to whom you please, but let me have solid gold and silver, and I will be well content." Ah! sirs, ye delude yourselves with phantoms. You fondly dream that wealth in your hands would count for more than it has ever done for your fellows. You must have seen some men make large fortunes whom you knew to be very miserable. They have retired from business to get a little rest, and yet they could find no rest in their retirement. You must have known others who the more they have got the more they have wanted, for they have swallowed a horse-leech, and it has cried, "Give, give!" Of course, you never suspected that the money did the mischief, or that the precious metal

poisoned the heart. But are you in quest of happiness? It lies not in investments, whether in consols or mortgages, stocks or debentures, gold or silver. These properties are profitable. They can be used to promote happiness. As accessories to our welfare, they may often prove to be blessings, but if accredited with intrinsic worth they will eat as doth a canker. Money circulated is a medium of public benefit, while money hoarded is a means of private discomfort. A man is but a muck-raker who is for ever seeking, to scrape everything to himself. A miser is bound to be miserable. Before high heaven, he is an object to make the angels weep. One thing is needful for you merchants, brokers, and warehousemen, to keep you from sinking under your anxieties and losses, or to preserve you from becoming sordid and selfish through your successes, and lest your greed should increase with your gains. One thing is needful that your life may be a true life, or else, when it comes to its end, all that can be said of you will amount to this, "He died worth so much." Must that be your only memorial! When you depart from this world, the poor and needy will not miss you; widow and orphan will not grieve for you; the Church militant will not mourn; the bright spirits above will not be waiting to greet you. The grand climax of your career, a will! A testament sworn under a very large sum! What shall it profit any man what fortune soever he may have amassed, if he lose his soul! Think ye that riches possessed in this world will procure any respect in the nether regions? I have heard that in the old Fleet Prison the swell that was put into gaol for ten thousand pounds thought himself a gentleman in comparison with those common fellows who were put, in for some paltry debt of twenty or five-and-twenty pounds. There are no such distinctions in hell. You who can boast your talents of gold and talents of silver, if cast away, shall be as complete wrecks as those who never had do it or sliver, but lived and died in privation and poverty. You want one thing, and if you get this one thing your wealth shall prove a blessing; otherwise it will be a curse. With this one thing your sufficiency for the day guaranteed to you by promise shall make you as one of heaven's favorites, fed by the hand of God; ever needy, but never neglected. Ye aged sires — there are some such here — shall I have to remind any of you that one thing is needful — ay, most needful to you? Death has already put his bony palm upon your head, and frozen your hair to the whiteness of that winter in which all your strength must fail, and all your beauty fade. Oh! if you have no Savior! You will soon have to quit these transitory scenes. The young may die, but the old must. To die without a Savior will be dreary and dreadful. Then, after death, the

judgment. Brave old man, how will your courage stand that outlook, if so be you have none to plead your cause? Oh! aged woman, you will soon be in the scales; very soon must your character be weighed. If it be said of you, "Tekel: she is weighed in the balances and found wanting," there will be no opportunity to get right or adjust your relations to God or to your fellow-creatures. Your lamp will have gone out. There will be no chance of rekindling it. If lost, for ever lost; for ever in the dark; for ever cast away! Little enough will it avail you then that you have nourished and brought up children. It will not suffice you then that you paid your debts honestly. Vain the plea that you attended a place of worship, and were always respected in the neighborhood. One thing is needful; lacking that, thou wilt turn out to have been a fool. Notwithstanding many opportunities and repeated invitations, have rejected the one thing — the one only thing — what an irreparable mistake! Oh! how thou wilt weep as one disappointed! How thou wilt gnash thy teeth As do who upbraid themselves! Thou wilt mourn for ever, and thy self-reproach shall know no end.

I wish I could move you, as I desire, to feel as I feel myself, that this one thing is needful to every unconverted person here present. Some of you have already got this one choice thing that is so needful. Hold it fast; never let it go. Grace gave it to you; grace will keep it for you; grace will hold you true to it. Never be ashamed of it. Prize it beyond all cost. But as for you who have it not — I think I hear your funeral knell pealing in my ears, and as you Speed away, your spirits made to fly for very fear, tight into the arms of justice, methinks I hear your bitter cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" I would fain pluck you by the skirts, if I could, and say to you, "Why not seek the one thing needful without more ado? Get it now. It will not in any way hurt you. It will make you happy here and blessed hereafter." It is as needful for this life as for the next, as needful for the exchange as for the sick chamber, as needful for the street and for the shop as for the dying-bed and for the day of judgment. One thing — one thing is needful. And now suffer me to halt before taking you a stage further. Allow me, as it were, to change horses. I must take another text: —

II. ONE THING KNOWN.

It is in the Gospel according to John, the ninth chapter, and the twenty-fifth verse, and these are the words, "One thing I know."

The man who was born blind, whose eyes were opened at the pool of Siloam, said, "One thing I know." This simple statement I want to turn into a pointed question. Among the many things, dear friends, that you are acquainted with, do you know the one thing that this poor man knew, "Whereas I was blind, now I see"? Here is a wealth of self-knowledge in this single avowal. Little enough, I daresay, he knew about other people, but he knew a great deal about himself. He was well aware that he once was blind, and he was quite positive that he now could see. Oh! can you say it with sincerity, "I know that I was once blind; I could see no beauty in Christ, though I thought I saw great beauties in the world. Then I could not love God. I did not hate sin; I had no repentance, nor had I any faith; I was blind; but now — oh! blessed change — now I see my sin, and weep over it; now I see a Savior, and I trust him; now I see his beauties, and I admire him: now I see his service, and I delight to spend my strength in it. One thing I know." What a marvellous experience of a marvellous change this implies! Nor can its importance be over-rated. There is no going to heaven unless you undergo a change which shall make you entirely new, and make all things entirely new to you. A young convert once said, "I do not know how it is; either the world is changed, or else I am, for nothing seems to me to be the same as once it was." Ah! this old Bible, what a dry book it used to be; but, oh! how it abounds in marrow and fatness now! Prayer — what a tedious duty once, but what a delightful exercise now! The going up to God's house on the Sabbath — used it not to be a weariness of the flesh? How much better to be in the fields! Yet now, how delightful we feel it to assemble with the Lord's saints! With what pleasure we hail the festal morn! All things are altered. Behold, all things are become new. What we once hated we love, and what we loved we hate. Is it so, dear hearer — is it so with you? Do not, I pray thee, be content with mere reformation. Were you aforetime a drunkard, and are you now a teetotaller! Good — very good; yet, good as it is, it will not save your soul. Dishonest and knavish you once were, but truthful and trustworthy you may now be; yet rely not upon it for salvation. In former days unchaste, by stern resolve you may have given up the favourite lust, but even that will not save you. Those who never fell into your foul sloughs need the change. "Ye must be born again." You must have an entire renewal — a radical change. It is not cutting off the limbs of a tree, nor shifting it to another place, that will convert a bramble into a vine. The sap must be changed. The heart must be renewed. The inner man must be made completely new. Is it so with you? Why, I think if some of us were to meet

our old selves walking down the street, we should hardly know ourselves. 'Tis true old self has taken good care to knock at our door pretty often since. Of all the knocks we hear, not even excepting, that of the devil, there is none we dread so much. The knock of the old man when he says, "Let me in with my corruptions and lusts, and let me reign and have my own way." pay, old man, you were once ourselves, but go your way, for we have put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man; we cannot know you, for one thing we know now that we knew not before — whereas we were blind, now we see.

Need I linger any longer upon this point? Let it suffice if I leave it as a kind of awakening question upon the heart and conscience. There are not twenty things, but there is one thing you have to enquire about. Do you know of a surety this one thing that you are not now what you used to be? Do you know that Jesus has made the difference; that Jesus has opened the eye that was once without sight; that you now see Jesus, and seeing, you love him? Our third subject is: —

III. ONE THING DONE.

The text is in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, at the thirteenth verse. There the Apostle Paul says, "One thing I do". Pray observe that I did not introduce "doing" first. That would not answer. We do not begin with doing. The one thing needful is not doing. Coming to Christ, and trusting to him, must take the lead. Not until after you have got the one thing needful, and know that you have got it, and are conscious that, whereas you were blind, now you see, can you be fit to take the next step — "one thing I do." And what is that one thing? "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It seems, then, that the Apostle gave his whole mind up to the glorifying of God by his spiritual life. He was never content with what he was. If he had a little faith, he sought for more. If he had a little hope, he aimed to obtain more. If he had some degree of virtue, he coveted more. Oh! Christians, never be satisfied with being merely saved. Up with you! Away! off! Go onward to the high mountains, to the clearer light, to the brighter joy! If saved, and brought, like the shipwrecked mariner, to shore, is that enough? Yes, for the moment it is enough to warrant the purest satisfaction and the warmest congratulations. But the mariner must seek a livelihood as long as he lives. He must put forth his energies. Whatever

avocations open up before him, he must vigorously seek such favors of fortune as may possibly be within his reach. Just so let it tie with you. Saved from the deep which threatened to swallow you up, rejoice that you are preserved from death, but resolve that the life vouchsafed to you shall be active, earnest, vigorous, fruitful in every good and work. Be diligent as your traders are. See how they wake their servants up in the morning, how they scold them if they are not up betimes. This man must be hurried to one place, and that man to another. How sharp they speak! How quickly they move about! They will do their business; and they spare no pains to increase it. Oh! that we were half as diligent in the service of God. Here we are drivelling away our time. We do not put out all our talents, augment our faith, and enlarge our coast. Why are we so indolent in going to that great giver of every good and perfect gift, for fresh supplies? Why do we not wait upon him to be enriched? Would to God that we were as diligent in spiritual as we are in temporal things! Oh! that we were avaricious with a holy covetousness for the best gifts God can bestow, and the choicest blessings saints can receive!

Paul was anxious to do more good, to get more good, to be more good. He sought to win souls. He wanted to make Christ's name known. An ardent passion inflamed him; a high enthusiasm inspired him. Tent-making, it is true, was his trade, but tent-making did not monopolise quite all his heart, and soul, and strength. Does your secular vocation absorb all your thoughts? Though Paul was proud of his industry, and could say conscientiously, "My own hands have ministered to my necessities," yet preaching was the one thing he pursued as his life-work. He was a workman; just as many of you are; but where were his tools? They were ready to hand when he wanted them. And did they, think you, ever creep up into his heart? I believe never. "For us to live," said he, "is Christ." That was as true, I will warrant you, when he was tent-making, or picking up sticks on the island of Malta, as when he was talking heavenly wisdom to the worldly-wise, addressing the Athenians on Mars' Hill or when he discoursed touching the resurrection of the dead to the Jews, or when he expounded the way of justification to the Gentiles. He was a man of one idea, and that one idea had entirely possessed him. In the old pictures they put a halo round the head of the saints. But, in fact, that halo encircles their hearts, and penetrates every member of their bodies. The halo of disinterested consecration to Christ should not be about their brows alone, to adorn their portraits, for it encompassed their entire being, their spirit,

soul, and body. It environed them, their whole being. "This one thing I do," was the motto of early saints. Let it be your motto. Beloved, I address you as the, saints of this generation. My earnest desire is that you should not come behind in grace or in gifts. When the believers of all ages muster, and are marshalled, may you be found amongst the faithful and true. If ot amongst the first or second class of worthies in the army of the Son of David, yet good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our God is a loving Father. He likes to praise his people. To this end do be clear about the one thing you need, the one thing you know, and the one thing you do; so will you stand well in that day. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

JOHN 9.

Verses 1-3. *And as Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

We are not to look upon such afflictions as any indication of special sin on the part either of the person or the parent. Of course, sin lies at the root of all our suffering as a grit generic fact, but not so that we may attribute such an affliction to any one sin. The disciples, you see, dear friends, are thinking about difficult problems. Their Master is thinking about how, practically, to meet the difficulty, and to this day there are a large number of Christians, professors, and even ministers, who occupy their time about questions which really are to no profit. If they could be answered, nobody would be the holier or the better. What does it matter to us what is the origin of evil? Far more important to turn the evil out than it is to find out how it came in. Very frequently, you know, after there is a terrible calamity or accident, we have an inquiry as to how it was done, and then we think the thing is all attended too. It would have been better, perhaps, to have an inquiry, before it was done, as to how it could be prevented. Our Lord has that wisdom — that practicalness. He begins to deal with the evil rather than to raise questions about it. Yes, and he sees in that evil a good coming out of it. He says that this man was blind, that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

4-7. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night-cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

Our Lord used instrumentality. It did not appear, however, to be very likely to achieve his purpose. The clay seemed more likely to blind than to give sight, yet if the Lord chooses to use the poor and weak instruments that seem nothing better than dust and spittle, he has the glory of the grand result. If he takes the humble ministry of his servants and uses it in the pulpit, or in the Sunday School, or anywhere else, he has all the more glory, and is the less likely to be robbed of it because he uses such unlikely means.

8, 9. *The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was, blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he:*

We are sure of it.

9. *Others said, He is like him:*

They were cautious bodies.

9. *But he said, I am he.*

He knew there was no mistaking his witness.

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

Very straightforward, very concise, very accurate, and when we make answer about our conversion, it is always well to take this for a copy — not too many flourishes, no coloring. He even leaves out about the spittle, but he gives it all as he can recollect it; so when you are talking about the Lord's love to you, and his way of converting you, it is quite sufficiently remarkable, without any touch of rouge. Let it be given just as it is.

12. *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said I know not.*

Enough for him to know what he did know — that his eyes were opened, and how it was done. So sometimes I have known persons come upon the new convert with a question which has rather baffled him, and he has been troubled, because he could not answer it. Do not let it trouble you. You are not expected to know everything. The very best and most honest thing is to say, “I know not”

13-14. *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*

So you may be sure that the Pharisees would be down upon him for that, because, according to the Rabbis, the making of the clay to put upon this man's eyes would be a kind of brick-making, and they would bring him in guilty of brick-making directly. So did these men pervert things and make men guilty where no offense had been committed whatsoever.

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

He is shorter with them. Some tales grow in telling. His gets shorter. Besides, he has to deal with captious people; end then the least said the soonest mended; and this shrewd man thought so.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

He could see that.

18-24. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know*

not; he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put

out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

How piously these Pharisees can talk; and generally in the name of God all sorts of mischief begin. When men are persecuting the Son of God, yet still they take the name of God upon their lips. Did they not burn *the* martyrs to the glory of God? Oh! yes, and so did these men thus slander Christ by saying, “We know that this man is a sinner,” and yet they spoke about giving God praise.

25. *He*

Our shrewd friend of the opened eyes.

25-27. *Answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them. I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?*

The man is sharp, acute, cutting.

28, 29. *Then they reviled him, and said, Then art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.*

The word “fellow” is supplied by the translators. There is no such word there, because they did not know a word bad enough with which to express their scorn.

30-33. *The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

He proves; he administrates. The thing is as clear as possible, and yet they refuse to see it.

34. *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins,*

It is the old rule, "Abuse the plaintiff." Nothing could be said. Now abuse the man. He has answered you, and his arguments are too hard for you. Now throw hard words at him. "Thou wast altogether born in sins."

34. *And dost thou teach us?*

Wonderful, that "us." "Dost thou teach us?" Folly, ignorance, and pride go together. This man, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, had told his tale and urged his argument, and now they abuse him and exalt themselves. "Dost thou teach us?" No, great Pharisees, he does not teach you, for you will not learn.

34. *And they cast him out.*

That is the last argument. Out with him. Now we have defeated him. 35.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out: and when he had found him,

What a blessed thing to be east out, if Christ finds us! Many and many have been put out of the synagogue and treated with contempt, but then outside Jerusalem they found their Lord, for there he died without the camp, and his people need not be ashamed to go after him bearing his reproach. "When he had found him."

35-38. *He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord. that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him. Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

He does not appear to have been a Unitarian, therefore; and if those persons had their eyes opened, they would do the same. "He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

39. *And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*

Christ is the turner of the tables. Did not the virgin mother sing, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and he hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away"? So he ever does.

41. *Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind,*

Really could not see.

41. *Ye should have no sin;*

If you really did not know better, were totally and altogether without knowledge — then you would have no sin compared with what you now have.

41. *But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.*

You acknowledge that you have sinned with your eyes open, and, therefore, your sin is all the greater.

A DEFINITE CHALLENGE FOR DEFINITE PRAYER.

NO. 3537

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And Jesus answered and said unto him,
What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” — Mark 10:51.*

No doubt our Lord's disciples imagined that he was going up to Jerusalem to take unto himself the kingdom. They hoped that they should be partakers of that earthly grandeur which they had fondly pictured would glitter around the person of the Son of David. When, therefore, the blind man ventured to cry out clamorously to him, whom they esteemed to be a great King, they thought it daring intrusion. Who was the son of Timaeus that he should say, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me”? They were all anxious to hush the voice of misery in the presence of so much majesty. But our Lord Jesus Christ did not spurn the blind man's prayer as intrusive or impertinent. He was not angry with him. He did not even pass on without taking any notice. What he did was to stand still, and command the man to be brought to him.

May we not draw some comfort from the thought that our prayers never are intrusions? Whenever we go before God in deep distress, he is always ready to hearken to our cry. Whatever grand purpose or momentous project engage his mind, he will be surely attentive to the longings of his needy suppliants. Though our Lord Jesus Christ is at this moment King of kings and Lord of lords, and inconceivably glorious, though hosts of angels count it their highest delight to do his bidding, yet he bears in heaven the same heart towards sinners which he had on earth. Amidst the thunders of the everlasting hallelujahs, he can detect the sighs of the prisoners, the

plaints of the sufferers, and the groans of the contrite. He will halt to give heed to the requests of blind beggars and, in his pity, he will relieve their distress. Should not this encourage those of you who are seeking him? Whatever Satan may suggest to the contrary take this passage of God's Word for cheer. He did hear the blind man's cry when he was upon earth, and he will hear you now that he is in heaven. And you, backsliding child of God, difficult as you may find it to pray, if enabled to vent your griefs, your sighs shall be heard, your tears shall be seen, and you shall certainly have an audience from him who delighteth in mercy. There are times even with those who live nearest to God when they fall into despondencies, and imagine that their voice is shut out from heaven's gate, but it is not so. When I cannot come to God as a saint, what a mercy it is that I may come to him as a sinner! And if I have lost all my evidences, what a blessing it is that I need not stop to find them, that I may go to the mercy-seat without any!

*“Just as I am without one plea,
But that his blood was shed for me.”*

When, reduced to the utmost beggary as to internal grace, I find myself naked, and poor, and miserable, I may still hear God saying to me, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed.” In our worst estate, prayer is still efficacious. Long as we live, let us pray. Until ye hear the bolts of perdition fast closed upon you, and ye are shut up in hell, doubt not the right of petition, or the prevalence of your earnest plea. There is an ear to hear in heaven so long as there is a heart to plead on earth.

Let this first impression be riveted on your minds, and you will, I trust, be prepared for three further reflections which I now wish to introduce to you. Our Lord, before he healed the blind man, said to him, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Hence I infer that: —

I. IT IS IMPORTANT A SEEKING SINNER SHOULD KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT HE REALLY WANTS, AND SOMETIMES CHRIST DELAYS TO GIVE SALVATION UNTIL MEN ARE BROUGHT MORE CLEARLY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS COMPREHENDED IN THAT INESTIMABLE BLESSING.

A large proportion of those persons who express a certain desire to be saved have no Scriptural idea whatever of what being saved is. I am afraid that many who profess to have found salvation are really the victims of

religious excitement, greatly moved by the exhortations they have heard, yet little or in no degree enlightened as to the fundamental truths on which a good hope is based.

The most current idea, of course, is that to be saved means to be delivered from going down into the pit, from enduring the sentence of everlasting perdition. That it does comprise that we grant you, though that is far from being its sole intent. This is a result of salvation, though it is not the essence of salvation as it is discovered to the souls of the redeemed. Men are saved, blessed be God, many years before the time of death, and conscious of being saved too. In some respects they are as thoroughly and perfectly saved as they will be when they get to heaven. Salvation is not postponed till the day of judgment, when thou shalt have deliverance from hell; it may be enjoyed here on earth when thy sins are forgiven, and thou art redeemed from the present evil world.

Or it may be that you have a vague impression that salvation consists in the pardon of your sins. This is true, but it does not compass all the truth. When thou sayest, "I would have my sins forgiven," dost thou know what sin is? Hast thou ever had any clear view of what it really means? We use certain terms and common words often, I fear, without a corresponding thought in our minds. Know, then, that thou hast broken God's law, both by omitting to do what thou shouldest have done, and by doing that which thou shouldst not have done. Those ten commands which thou wilt find in the twentieth chapter of Exodus are like so many looking-glasses, in which thou canst see what thou hast done, and what thou hast not done; what crimes they are which cry out against thee before the judgment throne of God, which will certainly drag thee down to hell unless thou be delivered from the dread penalty. Consider, too, the heavy weight, as well as the grievous guilt, of sin. Hast thou felt the load and burden of sin?" A stone is heavy and the sand weighty," saith Solomon; but, ah! what specific gravity will compare with sin! Well might David groan beneath the load, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me."

All the burdens that may devolve upon you through the toils of life, the calamities of the world, or the visitations of Providence, cannot equal the load of sin, for this is a burden that oppresses the conscience, crushes the heart, and paralyses every faculty of the soul. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" A conscience

stricken with a sense of sin will readily interpret that wounded spirit which is not bearable for a man. Were that terrible incubus to rest long upon him, his spirit would fail utterly before the Lord. If mercy did not come speedily to their rescue, men might soon lose their wits, and become frantic, despondency leading to despair, and despair to insanity. Oh! how venomous the poison of sin, when the arrows stick fast and fester! Hast thou known what sin is? If not, I am afraid thy prayer will be unmeaning as that of James and John, to whom it was said, "Ye know not what ye ask." Have you ever had an idea, when asking for the forgiveness of sin, what sin really deserves? what kind of recompense it justly demands? Let it always be remembered by us that every sin we have committed exposes us to the wrath of God — a wrath that is represented by terrible pictures in God's Word, as a flame that is never quenched, a fire that never ceases to burn. In order to deliver us from this penalty, it was absolutely necessary that someone else should bear this punishment on our behalf. I do not think that we intelligently ask for the pardon of sin unless we have some view of the crucified Savior, the slaughtered Lamb, who stood in our room and stead, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Ah! seeking soul, if thou knowest the weight of sin, and if thou knowest that Christ carried it, then canst thou say, "Lord, I would have my sins forgiven," in answer to the question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

And yet salvation includes more than deliverance from hell and a free pardon; for it emancipates the soul from its dominant power. Those among us who are saved from the guilt of sin are abundantly conscious that we are not fully released from the power of sin in our own breasts. Loved ones who have passed beyond the stars, and see God's face without a veil between, are saved, completely saved, from indwelling sin, but none of us here enjoy that blessed emancipation, though there be some who boast a perfection it were hard to prove; but, alas! they slightly prejudice their profession by their pride. Still, salvation, from the despotic power of sin, must be achieved, and in a high degree it must be compassed, by all believers, or they shall never see God's face with acceptance. Brethren, we must have our reigning sins subdued. Know ye not that no drunkard, or whoremonger, or covetous person that is an idolater, can have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God? These sins must be cut off; they must be slain and overcome. And so far as any other sins are concerned, they must be no longer citizens of the heart. You must look upon them as intruders and aliens that are to be driven out, like the Canaanites out of the

land of promise. Mortify, therefore, your members; subdue your lusts, overcome your corruptions. "But," the man replies, "how can I do this?" A most fitting question! Thou canst not do it, but Christ says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" His power is equal to every emergency. There is no sin too strong for Christ. During his sojourn on earth, there was no devil that he could not cast out, so there is no sin which he cannot eject and eradicate. A legion of devils fled at the fiat of our Lord. Doubt not that, legions of furious lusts and fiery tempers can be overcome by the faith that pleads his prevailing name. Brethren, let us never sit down content with small degrees of sanctification. Reason not with yourselves as though ye could never get beyond your present dwarfed stature. Others have outgrown it. There have been men far more distinguished for piety, and humility, and every grace, than we are. The attainments to which the Master has led them are accessible to all saints under the same guidance, through the same divine power. Let us aspire to holiness. Let us follow after it with fresh ardor. Be not satisfied merely to live, but seek to grow; be not content to remain babes, taking your portion of milk, but seek to be strong men who shall enjoy the strong meat of the Word of God.

Now I believe there are hundreds of persons who have no desire to be saved, and would rather not be saved, if this is what salvation means. Why, man, if you are saved, you will be saved from those pleasurable sins in which now you are wont to revel. Some of when you get a holiday, following the inclinations of a corrupt heart and a vicious taste, hie you off to haunts where birds of your own feather congregate. Should you be saved, you will seek far different society. The company you now love you will then hate, and the pleasures you enjoy so much now will become as detestable as they were delightful to you. When you say, "Lord, save me," do you mean, "Lord, save me from being what I am; Lord, I have been a drunkard, make me sober; I have been unchaste, make me pure; I have been dishonest, make me upright; I have been deceitful, make me to speak the truth to my neighbor; I have been violating thy statutes, make me mindful of thy Word; I have been thine enemy, Lord, make me thy friend; I have made my belly my god, now do thou be my God; I desire to be reconciled to thee, so that thy will shall be my will, thy service my delight, and thy way the path which I shall choose"? Do you mean that? If any man says honestly, "I do desire to be saved from sin," I do not think you will long have such a desire ungratified; but the Lord Jesus will say, "Thy faith

hath made thee whole.” he can and he will save you, if that is what you mean.

As for you good Christian people who are seeking the conversion of sinners, try to go about it in Christ’s own way. It is right for you to exhort them to believe in Christ. I like to hear you sing: —

“There is life in a look at the fortified One.”

but do recollect that a man must have some understanding, both of what sin is, and of what the Savior is, before he can believe, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” Endeavor, therefore, to instruct persons in the gospel. Merely to exhort them to believe; simply to cry, “Believe, believe, believe!” is of little worth, however earnest a man may be in raising that cry, for the sinner naturally enquires, “What is it that I have to believe? On whom am I to believe? For what reason am I to believe? Why do I need to believe?” So, go about your work of soul-winning in the power of the Holy Spirit. Go about it intelligently, understanding that, as Jesus Christ would not open the blind man’s eyes till he had first made him state, not for Christ’s information, but for the man’s own cogniscence, what it was that he wanted, and made him say, “Lord, that I may receive my sight,” so must you endeavor, when you tell out the gospel, to let men know what their need of that gospel is, give them not merely the expostulations, the admonitions, and the exhortations of the gospel, but give them its instructions likewise. Or else you go and bid them come, and there is no feast; you invite them to the waters, but you do not tell them what the waters are. Let it be with you, then, henceforth to instruct sinners in the way of the Lord. As David says, “Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” We will leave that first homily, and proceed to a second. Our text clearly indicates to us all: —

II. THE GREAT NECESSITY OF PRAYING WITH A DIRECT OBJECT.

This poor man was not allowed to pray in general. “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me”; a very proper prayer, and a very blessed prayer, but certainly it was a very wide prayer. So he was encouraged to be more specific in his request. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? Thou askest for mercy; what form of mercy dost thou need? In what particular shape shall the bountiful hand dispense the mercy to thee?” The blind man at once replies, “Lord, that I may receive my sight!” He hits the mark with

precision. It is sight he wants, and for sight he asks. This is the right way for believers to pray. I wish we had more of it in our prayer meetings; I do not find fault, for we have had blessed seasons of prayer here; but rest assured that those are the best prayers in all respects, if they be earnest and sincere, which go most directly to the point. You know there is a way of praying in the closet, and praying in the family, in which you do not ask for anything. You say a great many good things, introduce much of your own experience, review the doctrines of grace very thoughtfully, but you do not ask for anything in particular. Such prayer is always uninteresting to listen to, and I think it must be rather tedious to those who offer it. A negro, who was noted for his great earnestness in prayer, was once asked how it was that, whenever he prayed, he seemed to be so earnest, and he said, "Because I always have an errand when I go to the King; I always have an errand; I go to him knowing that I want something, and I ask him for it, and I stop till he gives it to me; and if he does not give it to me, I ask him again and again, for I know what I am at." Of what avail were it to keep on going in and out of a banker's door all day if you have no business to transact, and nothing to get? but it is quite different when you go up to the counter with your cheque and receive in return the golden sovereigns. It would be very uninteresting to wait upon Her Majesty every morning and evening with an address which merely said, "Your Majesty's attached and most loyal subject," if you never asked for anything. Yet how much prayer of that kind is addressed to heaven; sheet lightning prayer — not the forked flash that does the work; like shooting arrows up at the moon, instead of imitating David, when he said, "In the morning will direct my prayer unto thee." He looked at the target, marked the bull's-eye, then drew the bow; and after he had shot the arrow he adds, "And will look up" — as if to see whether the arrow really went to the mark, whether the prayer had sped with God so that a gracious answer would be given. Should we not sometimes, when alone, and about to pray, sit down a little while to consider what we are about to ask? Should we not often pray better if we recollected that the preparation of the heart in man, as well as the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord, and that the preparation of the heart precedes the answer of the tongue? In offering our sacrifices to God, this helter-skelter ill becomes us, Not with heedless step should we rush into His presence. The decorum which is due to a king's court might admonish us of the reverence due to the King of kings. Although we enjoy the privileged familiarity which permits us to say "Our Father," as dear children of the Lord of heaven and earth, let us never forget the humility

that becomes us, the profound obeisance we owe as subjects of the great King. Tenderly he asks; devoutly may we answer, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

Now, dear friends, let me challenge a plain answer to a plain question. As you are sitting here in this house, what is your desire before the Lord? Let your conscience make such a reply that, when you get home, you may intelligently, in the closing prayer of the day, approach the Lord for what you want. What is the upper-most desire of your soul? Perhaps with some it is that some besetting sin may be overcome. "Oh!" say you, "what would I give could I but get rid of that bad temper of mine! It is my daily cross, and I do not want to harbour it." "Ah!" says another, "I am so unbelieving, a little trouble soon casts me down; oh! that I could get rid of my unbelief!" Well now, very likely, dear friends, the sin you ought to pray against is one you are not striving against. Were I to come to you in the aisle, and take you by the button-hole, and tell you what your principal sin is, you would feel very vexed with me, for we are apt to resent the faithfulness of those who tell us of our faults. To touch the tender place makes the nerves tingle, and it seems like wilful torture. When somebody complains of something which our conscience does not endorse, we take it kindly, and accept their good intentions, thinking that had they known us better they would have esteemed us more highly; but if they really touch the sores where most they smart, we do not admire their treatment. The flush we feel — the blush we fain would hide. Yet cloak not now the vice which an Omniscient God discerns. Let this be a time of heart-searching. Say now, "Lord, is my sin covetousness?" That is a sin which never yet did I hear a man confess. A Roman Catholic priest, who had heard the confessions of some two thousand persons, said he had heard men confess heinous iniquities of every kind, even murder and adultery, but that he never had heard any man confess covetousness. This is a crime they christen and call it by another name. A covetous man thinks he is prudent; he is just laying by a little money for a rainy day. His greed, he tells you, is not to gratify himself, but a generous impulse to provide for his family; for their wives and their children, they would have us believe, that they waste their strength and wither their souls. Nevertheless, their fortune is their fallacy. To grip and to grasp, to have and to hold, is their desire so long as they live, and late enough they commonly leave it before they devise to their dear ones the possessions they can no longer retain. Alas! we are often wicked enough to try to make our affection an excuse for our

avarice. Let us come to the point honestly. When we are dealing with our sin let us confess it with all its iniquity and its heinousness. Do not dissemble by accepting a small share in a public company. David, when he wanted full discharge, said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness.” He acknowledged the atrocity when he sought the atonement — “Forgive my blood-guiltiness” — as one who saw his crime in the light of its consequence, not as one who attempted to palliate it with vain excuses. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee in that matter?”

If thou best no particular sin to confess — if that is not thy uppermost anxiety at this time — what, then, is thy petition? What want hast thou to be supplied? Is it some great want? Hast thou numerous little wants? They may all be told to God. Get a clear idea of what it is that thou really dost need that he should do for thee, knowing that, whatsoever thy necessities may be, there is the promise, “My God shall supply all your need” — not some of it, but “all your need”; not he may do it, but he shall do it; not you will have to supply it yourselves, but he will supply it; “My God shall supply all your need.” Think, therefore, what your want is, and then go to God. Is there any choice blessing that you desire? Get a clear idea of the blessing before you pray for it. What form of blessing would you wish to have? Oh! if I might have my choice, it would be heavenly-mindedness. Oh! if a man could but get that, he need not make much account of where he lived, nor what he had to eat, nor how much he slept, nor how much he suffered, for a heavenly mind is heaven. The mind makes its own heaven here below, and up above. Though, doubtless, heaven has a locality — yet it is much more a state than a place. Oh! for more heavenly-mindedness! What is it thou wouldest have? Communion with Christ? Love to souls? A broken heart? True humility? I may say of all these things, “The land is before thee, that thou mayest go forward and possess it; ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee.”

What promise is there that thou wouldest wish to have fulfilled to thee to-night? It is a good exercise to sit down before evening prayer, and look out the promise that seems most suitable, or to ask the Lord to look it out for you, and apply it to your soul. Take this promise, if so be there is disease next door, “Lord, thou hast said, ‘Thousands shall fall at thy side, and tens of thousands at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee.’ Lord, fulfill that promise now.” Art thou startled by a noise at dead of the night, then quote this promise, “Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night.” Perhaps it is shortness of provision that troubles you. Then here is another

promise, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." When you lost a key the other day, and could not open the drawer, what did you do? You sent out for a locksmith, and in he came with a whole bundle of old rusty keys. What for? Why, he looked out one that fitted the lock of your drawer, and opened it for you at once. Now many people's Bibles are just like that bundle of rusty keys. There is always a key in the Bible that will fit the wards in the lock of your necessities, if you would but seek till you find it. But sometimes we are in distress, as Christian and Hopeful were in Doubting Castle, and we have to say, as Christian did, "What a fool am I to lie rotting in this stinking dungeon, when I have a key in my bosom that I am persuaded would open every lock in Doubting Castle!" Search out the promises, then, and go before God with a distinct answer to the question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "Lord, I would have that promise fulfilled, or that grace bestowed, or that want supplied, or that sin forgiven."

So, dear friends, in intercessory prayer, it is very necessary, I think, in order to keep up our own interest in it, that we should have distinct objects. I do not find that I can pray for all mankind anything like so fervently as I can pray for my own children. I do not find that I can pray for the nation as well as I can for London. When I pray for London, I seek to do it earnestly. It behoves us to pray for all men, according to Scripture. All sorts of men are to be included in our supplications. I must, however, confess that I am most fervent in prayer when I pray for this congregation, and that because I have the most vivid thought of this people, and the clearest idea of their present requirements. If you want to pray for any particular person, or any special object, the better you understand the case you have in hand, the warmer and livelier your pleading will be. There are people in this chapel who have asked me to pray for them. Well, I have tried to do so, and I hope the Lord heard my prayer. But since I have known more of them, and found out where they live, and who they were, I can pray for them with more freedom than I could before. They were a sort of abstraction to me once; I have a definite acquaintance with them now. How easily you remember anything that is tied to something else, or linked by association with a place. Thus you recollect a transaction that occurred to you in the City of London. Every time that you go by the Bank, just at one spot, you say, "I met so-and-so just here the day before he died." You will never forget it, but you think of it every time you go by. Or perhaps at the corner of a road in the country, just by a hand-post, such and such a

thing happened to you, and the site of land revokes the circumstance. Thus we recollect. our friends in prayer when we get a knowledge of them, call them up before our mind's eye, and knit, ail it were, the* secret interests with what we have seen of them when we have talked to them. and been interested in their trials. Some good people have prayed for others by name. Well, you cannot do that if you have a long list, and happen to be a busy man; still, it is good to pray for others by name, if you can. I like those prayers, even in public, in which men do pray for others with some distinctness. Oh! what time we waste when we go beating round the bush! We know individuals who pray for their minister with a circumlocution that distracts the listener. They travel round and round a circle, instead of going at once to the point. A man hardly likes to say, "Lord, save my wife." He prefers talking about "those who are dear to us in the ties of consanguinity, and her who is the partner of our being." Yes, that sounds pretty, very pretty indeed, but would it not be as well if you said at once, "Lord, convert my, wife"? There is one brother here who does pray in that way at the prayer-meetings, and who uses those very words. When pleading with God, do let us come straight to the mark, knowing what we are at ourselves, and, therefore, stating our case plainly in answer to the question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" May the Lord teach us to pray in this distinct manner! Time fails us; therefore, we will only mention a third point. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in asking this question of the blind man, makes: —

III. NO RESERVATION. BUT THROWS OPEN THE PLENITUDE OF HIS HEART, AND THE BOUNDLESSNESS OF HIS POWER.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" is tantamount to saying, "Whatever it is I will do it; I can do it. Only tell me what you want." There is no bound to the Savior's ability. Nor does he put a limit on the suppliant's leave to command the favor he desires. It was not then for the blind man to say, "Lord, if thou wilt." He has the opportunity of procuring any boon he solicits. Mark, brethren, it is no question of "can" with regard to Christ; the question is, what do you desire? Now, sinner, observe the Lord Jesus Christ did not stop to enquire about this man's blindness, whether he had been blind from his birth, or whether he had been affected with a cataract or amaurosis, or any other form of ocular disease. He just said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" No species of ophthalmia could baffle him. In any form, or at any stage, it was possible for him to cure it. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to thee. He says to thee to-

day, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” He does not say anything as to whether thou hast been moral or immoral, whether thou hast been profane or religious, but simply, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Thy blackest sins will disappear the moment the scarlet of the blood touches them. Thy foulest crimes shall melt like snow as soon as the thaw begins. Thou canst not have sinned thyself beyond the reach of the long arm of Christ, nor can the weight of thy sin be too heavy for the back of Christ, the great Sin-bearer, to bear. Whatever shine iniquities, though they be red like scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be as crimson, they shall be whiter than snow. Some of us would have no hope if we did not know that Christ will save the chief of sinners. We should long since have sunk into remorse and despair if we had not seen it written in letters of gold, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” You know John Bunyan’s hint about that text. He says, “Who is this man? Who is this ‘him that cometh’? Why, any ‘him that cometh’ in all the world, be he who he may, he will in no wise, under no pretext, for no reason, and in no way, ever cast out.” If thou comest to Christ, he will keep his word. He cannot be a liar. He must be as good as his own declaration. If thou comest to him, he will not cast thee out. What wilt thou that he should do unto thee?

Oh! believer, hast thou a desire upon thy soul, hast thou a longing in thy heart, then Christ does not say that he will give thee this mercy, if it be possible, but he is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. I hear that text still quoted by some of my brethren, “Above all that we can ask or even think.” I beg their pardon; that is not a faithful quotation of Scripture. It says, “Above all that we ask or think” — above all that we do ask. God can open a man’s mouth as wide as his mercies, and he can make us ask for anything, but he generally does for us above all that we ask or think. Never keep thy mouth closed because thou thinkest the mercy to be too great. “He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also, with him, freely give us all things?” Do not stint thyself. Enlarge thy desire. Open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it. He gives thee carte blanche; sue for what thou wilt. He puts it before thee, “Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart.” So may it be to us, according to our faith, and his shall be the glory. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

LUKE 13:10-23.

Verses 10-12. *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath, And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her,*

With that quick eye of his which was always in sympathy with his audience.

12-14. *He called her to him, and said unto her, Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people,*

In what a cold-blooded, heartless manner he must have said it, you may well imagine. For a man not to rejoice when he saw his poor fellow-creature thus healed, shows that he must have been destitute of much milk of human kindness, and that bigotry had dried up his soul.

14. *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.*

He did not dare to speak to Christ. I suppose the majesty of Christ's manner overawed him, so he struck at the people directly, and at Christ through them. Now our Lord did not go sideways to work when he replied to him.

15-17. *The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

The Jews had reduced the Sabbath to a day of idleness and luxury. The only thing they forbade themselves was the doing of anything. Now the Sabbath was never intended to be spent in idleness and luxury. It should be spent in the worship of God; and works of mercy and works of piety make

the Sabbath Day holy, instead of being contrary to its demands. And our Savior, by giving rest to that poor burdened woman, was in truth, making Sabbath in her body and in her soul.

18, 19. *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.*

A little grace grows and becomes great grace. If thou hast at present but little faith, be thankful for that little. Bring it to Christ; let it feed upon him; and thy mustard seed will grow till it becomes a tree. The same is true of the gospel throughout the world. We need never be afraid because we happen to be few in number. If we have got the truth, the truth will live; and if the truth be small as the mustard seed, there is life in it — vitality in it, and it is sure to grow ere long. We must not be afraid to be in the minority. Majorities are not always right. Are they ever? Perhaps sometimes.

20, 21. *And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Some read this as a parable to set forth the power of evil, and I do not doubt that it does set it forth. At the same time it sets forth the power of good, too, for it is put side by side with the other as the likeness of the kingdom of God. And truth in the soul does work, and ferment, and permeate the entire nature, if it be placed there.

22, 23. *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

That is a question that I have heard a great many times. What is the fascination that makes men so fond of asking it? I do think that some ask it as if they almost hoped that there would be few. If they do not go to our Ebenezer or Rehoboth, what can become of them? Surely you cannot expect that there should be any good come to those that do not frequent Salem and Enod. What must they hope? In that spirit the question is often asked; but, brethren, may God lift us up above that spirit, and make us desire that there should be multitudes saved. I suppose that one of the surprises of heaven will be to see vastly many more there than we ever

dreamt would reach that place. Jesus Christ gave a very practical answer. It was no answer, and yet was the best of answers.

23. *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, wilt seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Make a push for it; agonize for it; for many will seek — not strive, but merely seek. Or, to put another meaning into it, strive now to enter in at the strait gate, for many will be unable, when it is too late; and that, doubtless, is the sense of the passage.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” — 2 Corinthians 5:5.

HOW very confidently Paul contemplates the prospect of death! He betrays no trembling apprehensions. With the calmness and serenity, not merely of resignation and submission, but of assurance, and courage, he appears joyous and gladsome, and even charmed with the hope of having his body dissolved, and being girt about with the new body which God hath prepared for his saints. He that can talk of the grave and of the hereafter with such intelligence, thoughtfulness, faith, and strong desire as Paul did, is a man to be envied. Princes might well part with their crown for such a sure and certain hope of immortality. Could emperors exchange their treasures, their honors, and their dominions, to stand side by side with the humble tent-maker in his poverty, they would be great gainers. Were they but able to say with him, “We are always confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord,” they might well barter earthly rank for such a requital. This side heaven, what can be more heavenly shall to be thoroughly prepared to pass through the river of death? On the other hand, what a dreary and dreadful state of mind must they be in who, with nothing before them but to die, have no hope and see no outlet the pall and the shroud their last adorning; the grave and the sod their destination. Without hope of rising again in a better future or realising a better heritage than that which should know us no more ere long; no prospects of seeing God face to face with rejoicing; well may men dislike any reference to death. So they shrink from the thought of it; far less can they tolerate its being talked of in common conversation. No marvel that they recoil from the shade of mortality when they are so ill-prepared to

face the reality of the soul's departure. But, dear friends, since it is so desirable to be ready to depart, it cannot be inexpedient sometimes to talk about it; and on my part the more so, because there is a proneness in all our minds to start aside from that grave topic which, as God shall help us, shall be our subject this evening-preparation for the great hereafter. "For," saith the Apostle, "God hath wrought us for this self-same thing"; he has prepared us for the dropping of the present body, and the putting on of the next, and he has given us the earnest of his Spirit."

Our three departments of meditation will be — the work of preparation itself, the Author of it; and the seal which he sets to it, the possession of which may resolve all scruples as to whether we are prepared or not.

I. THE WORK OF PREPARATION stands first. Is it not almost universally admitted that some preparation is absolutely essential? Whenever the death of a friend or comrade is announced, you will hear the worst-instructed say, I hope poor man, he was prepared." It may be but a passing reflection or a common saying. Yet everybody will give expression to it, I hope he was ready. Whether the words be well understood or not, I do not know; but the currency given to them proves a unanimous conviction that some preparation is necessary for the next world. And, in truth, this doctrine is in accordance with the most elementary facts of our holy religion. Men by nature need something to be done for them before they can enter heaven, and something to be done in them. something to be done with them, for by nature they are enemies to God. Dispute it as ye will, God knows best. He declares that we are enemies to him, and alienated in our hearts. We need, therefore, that some ambassador should come to us with terms of peace, and reconcile us to God. We are debtors as well as enemies to our Creator — debtors to his law. We owe him what we cannot pay, and what he cannot pardon. He must exact obedience, and we cannot render it. He must, as God, demand perfection of us, and we, as men, cannot bring him that perfection. Some mediator, then, must come in to pay the debt for us, for we cannot pay it. neither can we be exempted from it. There must be a substitute who shall stand between us and God, one who shall undertake all our liabilities and discharge them, and so set us free, that the mercy of God may be extended to us. In addition to this, we are all criminals. Having violated the law of God. we are condemned already. We are not, as some vainly pretend, introduced to this world on probation; but our probation is over; we have forfeited all hope; we have broken the law and the sentence is gone, out against us, and we stand by nature as condemned criminals,

tenants of this world during the reprieve of God's mercy, in fear of a certain and terrible execution, unless someone come in between us and that punishment; unless some gracious hand bring us a free pardon; unless some voice divine plead and prevail for us that we may be acquitted. If this be not done for us, it is impossible that we should entertain any well-grounded hope of entering heaven. Say, then, brethren and sisters, has this been done for you? I know that many of you can answer, "Blessed be God, I have been reconciled to him through the death of his Son; God is no enemy of mine, nor I of his; there is no distance now between me and God, I am brought near to him, and made to feel that he is near to me and that I am dear to him." Full many here present can add, "My debts to God are paid; I have looked to Christ, my Substitute; I have seen him enter into suretyship engagements for me, and I am persuaded that he has discharged all my liabilities, I am clean before God's bar; faith tells me I am clean." And, brethren, you know that you are no longer condemned. You have looked to him who bore your condemnation, and you have drunk in the spirit of that verse, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Surely this is a preparation for heaven. How could we enter there if our debts were not discharged? How could we obtain the divine favor eternally if we were still condemned criminals? How could we dwell for ever in the presence of God if we were still his enemies? Come, let us rejoice in this: that he hath wrought us for this self-same thing having championed our cause from the cradle to the grave.

Preparation for Heaven consists still further in something that must be wrought in us, for observe, brethren, that if the Lord were to blot out all our sins we should still be quite incapable of entering heaven unless there was a change wrought in our natures. According to this Book. we are dead by nature in trespasses and sins — not some of us, but all of us; the best as well as the worst; we are all dead in trespasses and sins. Shall dead men sit at the feasts of the Eternal God? Shall there be corpses at the celestial banquets? Shall the pure air of the New Jerusalem be defiled with the putrefaction of iniquity? It must not, it cannot be. We must be quickened; we must be taken from the corruption of our old nature into the incorruption of the new nature, receiving the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. Only the living children can inherit the promises of the living God, for he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; we must be made living creatures by the new — creating power of grace, or

else we cannot be made meet for glory. By nature we are all worldly. Our thoughts go after earthly things. We “mind earthly things,” as the Apostle says. We seek after the world’s joys; the world’s maxims govern us; the world’s fears alarm us; the world’s hopes and ambitions excite us. We are of the earth earthy, for we bear the image of the first Adam. But, brethren, we cannot go to heaven as worldly men; for there would be nothing there to gratify us. The gold of heaven is not for barter to use, nor for covetousness to hoard. The rivers of heaven are not for commerce, neither are they to be defiled by men. The joys and glories of heaven are all spiritual, all celestial.

*“Pure are the joys above the skies
And all the region peace.”*

Such peace is of a heavenly kind, and for heavenly minds. Carnal spirits, greedy, envious spirits — what would they do in heaven? If they were in the place called heaven, they could not be in the state called heaven, and heaven is more a state than a place. Though it is probably both, yet it is mainly the former, a state of happiness, a state of holiness, a state of spirituality, which it would not be possible for the worldly to reach. The incongruity of such a thing is palpable. Therefore, you see, brethren, the Holy Spirit must come and give us new affections. We must have a fresh object set before us. In fact, instead of minding the things that are seen, we must come to love and to aspire to the things that are not seen. Our affections, instead of going downwards to things of earth, must be allured by things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. In addition to our spiritual death and worldliness, we are all unholy by nature. Not one of us is pure in the sight of God. We are all defiled and all defiling, but in heaven they are “without fault before the throne of God.” No sin is tolerated there; no sin of thought, or word, or deed. Angels and glorified spirits delight to do God’s will without hesitation, without demur, without omission; and we, like them, must be holy, or we cannot enter into their sacred fellowship.

*“Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame
None shall obtain admission there
But followers of the Lamb.”*

But what a change must come over the carnal man to make him holy! Through what washings he must pass! What can wash him white, indeed,

but that far-famed blood of the Son of God? Through purification he must pass! What, indeed, can purify him at all but the refining energy of God the Holy Ghost? He alone can make us what God would have us to be, renewed in his image in holiness and righteousness.

That a great change must be wrought in us, even ungodly men will confess, since the idea of the heaven of the Scriptures has always been repulsive, never agreeable, to unconverted men and women. When Mahomet would charm the world into the belief that he was the prophet of God, the heaven he pictured was not at all the heaven of holiness and spirituality. His was a heaven of unbridled sensualism, where all the passions were to be enjoyed without let or hindrance for endless years. Such the heaven that sinful men would like; therefore, such the heaven that Mahomet painted for them, and promised to them. Men in general, be they courtly, or be they coarse in their habits, when they read of heaven in the Scriptures with any understanding of what they read, curl their lips and ask contemptuously, Who wants to be everlastingly psalm singing? Who could wish to be always sitting down with these saints talking about the mighty acts of the Lord and the glorious majesty of his kingdom? Such people cannot go to heaven, it is clear; they have not character or capacity to enter into its enjoyment. I think Whitefield was right. Could a wicked man be admitted into heaven, he would be wretched there; being unholy, he must be unhappy. From sheer distaste for the society of heaven, he might fly to hell for shelter. With the tumult of evil passions in his breast, he could not brook the triumph of righteousness in the city of the blest. There is no heaven for him who has not been prepared for it by a work of grace in his soul. So necessary is this preparation — a preparation for us, and a preparation in us. And if we ever have such a preparation, beyond all question we must have it on this side of our death. It can only be obtained in this world. The moment one breathes his last, it is all fixed and settled. As the tree falleth, so it must lie. While the nature is soft and supple it is susceptible of impression, stamp what seal you may upon it; once let it grow cold and hard, fixed and frigid, you can do so no more, it is proof against any change. While the iron is flowing into the mould you can fashion it into what implement you please; let it grow cold, in vain you strive to alter its form. With pen of liquid ink in your hand you write what you will on the paper, but the ink dries, the impress remains, and where is the treachery that shall tamper with it? Such is this life of yours. It is over,

all over with you for eternity, beyond alteration or emendation, when the breath has gone from the body. Your ever lasting state is fixed then.

*“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair
Reign in eternal silence there.”*

We have no intimation in the Word of God that any soul dying in unbelief will afterwards be converted to the faith. Nor have we the slightest reason to believe that our prayers in this world can at all affect those who have departed this life. The masses of priests are fictions, without the shadow of divine authority. Purgatory, or “Pick-purse,” as old Latimer used to call it, is an invention for making fat larders for priests and monks, but the Scriptures of truth give it no countenance. The Word of God says, “He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Such as you are when death comes to you, such will judgment find you, and such will the eternal reward or the eternal punishment leave you, world without end. Preparation is needed, and the preparation must be found before we die.

Moreover, we ought to know — for it is possible for a man to whether he is thoroughly prepared. Some have said not, but they have usually been persons very little acquainted with the matter. The writings of those grand old divines of the Puritan period abundantly prove how thoroughly they enjoyed the assurance of faith. They did not hesitate to express themselves in such language as the Apostle used: “We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal ill the heavens.” They were wont to speak as Job doth when he saith, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” And indeed, many of the children of God among us at this present time are favored with a confident, unstaggering confidence that, let their last hour come when it may, or let the Lord himself descend from heaven with a shout, there will be nothing but joy and peace for them — no cause of trembling, nothing that can give them dismay. Why, some of us live from year to year in constant assurance of our preparation for the bliss that awaiteth and the rest that remaineth for God’s people. Beloved, God has not so left us in such a dubious case that we always need to be enquiring, “Am I his, or am I not?” He has given us good substantial grounds to go upon to make sure work of it. He tells us that “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”; if we have been obedient to these two commands, we shall be saved, for our God keepeth

his word. He tells us that such believers, patiently continuing in well-doing, inherit eternal life. If we are kept by his grace, walking in his fear, we may rest assured that we shall come to the ultimate end of such a life, namely, the glory which abideth for the faithful. We need not harbour endless questionings. What miserable work it is to stand in any doubt on this matter. Let us not be satisfied till we are sure and confident that heaven will be ours. Alas! how many put off all thoughts of being prepared to die! They are prepared for almost anything except the one thing for which it is most needful to be ready. If the summons should come to some of you at this moment, how dread it would be! Were we to see an angel hovering in the air, and should we have intelligence by a message from the clouds that someone of us must, on a sudden, leave his body behind him and appear before God, what cowering down, what trembling, what muttering of forgotten prayers there would be with some of you! You are not ready. You never will be ready, I fear. The carelessness in which you have lived so long has become habitual. One would think you had resolved to die in your sins. Have you never heard the story of Archæus, the Grecian despot, who was going to a feast, and on the way a messenger brought him a letter, and seriously importuned him to read it? It contained tidings of a conspiracy that had been formed against him, that he should be killed at the feast. He took the letter, and put it into his pocket. In vain the messenger urged that it was concerning serious matters. "Serious matters to-morrow," said Archæus, "feasting to-night." That night the dagger reached his heart while he had about him the warning which, had he heeded it, would have averted the peril. Alas! too many men say, "Serious things to-morrow!" They have no misgiving that, when their sport is over, they will have alike the leisure and the leanings for these weighty matters. Were it not wiser, sirs, to let these grave affairs come, first? Might ye not, then, find some better sport of nobler character than all the froth and frivolity to which fashion leads on? a holy merriment and a sacred feasting that well become immortal spirits. How vain and grovelling the mirth which reduces men to children, pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw; then brings them down to drivelling fools, and degrades them often till they become worse than brutes. I wish I could imprint a solemn thought on the mind of some careless individuals. Reck ye not that time is short, that life is precarious, that opportunities cross your path at lightning speed, that hope flatters those on whom the fangs of death are fixed; that there is no vestibule in which to fit your frame of mind, that the shack will always come sudden at last. What sentence more trite; what sentiment more

prevalent; yet what solemnity more neglected than this, “Prepare to meet your God”! Propound it, profess it, preach it as we may, the most of men are unprepared. They know the inevitable plight, they see the necessity of preparation, but they postpone and procrastinate, instead of preparing. God grant you may not trifle, any of you, until your trembling souls are launched into that sphere unknown, but not unfear’d, and read your doom in hell. Now: —

II. AS TO THE AUTHOR OF THIS PREPARATION FOR DEATH, the text saith, “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.” It is God alone, then, who makes men fit for heaven. He works them to the self-same purpose. Who made Adam fit for Paradise but God? And who must make us fit for the better Paradise above but God? That we cannot do it ourselves is evident. According to the Scriptures, we are dead in trespasses and sins. Can the dead start from the grave of their own accord? Do ye think to see coffins opened and grave-stones uplifted by the natural energy of corpses? Such things were never dreamed of. The dead shall surely rise, but they shall rise because God raises them. They cannot vitalise their inert frames, neither can the dead in sin quicken themselves and make themselves fit for the presence of God. Conversion, which prepares us for heaven, is a new creation. That word “creation” puts all the counsel, the conceit, and the contrivance of man into the background. If anyone saith that he can make a new heart, let him first go and make a fly. Not until he has created such a winged insect let him presume to tell us that he can make a man a new creature in Christ Jesus. And yet to make a fly would not demonstrate that a fly could make itself, and it would offer but a feeble pretext for that wonderful creation which is supposed in a man’s making himself a new heart. The original creation was the work of God, and the new creation must likewise be of God. To take away a heart of stone and give a heart of flesh is a miracle. Man cannot do it; if he attempts it, it shall be to his own shame and confusion. The Lord must make us anew. Have not we, who know something of the Lord’s working in us, this self-same thing, been made to feel that it is all of his grace? What first made us think about eternal things? Did we, the stray sheep, come back to the fold of our own accord? No; far from it.

*“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.”*

And ever since we have been living men in Christ Jesus. To whom must we ascribe our preservation and our progress? Must we not attribute every victory over sin, and every advance in the spiritual life, to the operation of God, and nothing at all to ourselves? A poor simpleton once said, “‘Twas God and I did the work.” “Well, but, Charlie, what part did you take in it?” “Sure, then,” said he, “I did all I could to stop the Lord, and he beat me.” I suppose, did we tell the simple truth, we should say much the same. In the matter of our salvation we do all we can to, oppose it — our old nature does — and he overcomes our evil propensities. From first to last, Jesus Christ has to be the Author and the Finisher of our salvation, or it never would have been begun, and it never would have been completed.

Think, beloved, of what fitness for heaven is. To be fit for heaven a man must be perfect. Go, you who think you can prepare yourselves, be perfect for a day. The vanity of your own mind, the provocation of this treacherous world, and the subtle temptation of the devil, would make short work of your empty pretensions. You would be blown about like chaff. Creature perfection, indeed! Was ever anything so absurd? Men have boasted of attaining it, but their very boastings have proved that they possessed it not. He that gets nearest to perfection is the very man who sighs and cries over the abiding infirmities of his flesh. No, if perfection is to be reached — and it must be, or we shall not be fit for heaven — by the operation of God it must be wrought. Man’s work is never perfect; it is always marred on the wheel. His best machinery may still be improved upon; his finest productions of art might still be excelled. God alone is perfect, and he alone is the Perfecter. Blessed be God, we can heartily subscribe to this truth, “He that hath wrought us for the self-same, thing is God.”

But what shall I say to those of you, my friends, who have no acquaintance with God? You certainly cannot be fitted for heaven Your cause is not committed to him. He is doing nothing for you. He has not begun the good work in you. You live in this world as if there were no God. The thought, the stupendous thought of his “Being” does not affect you. You would not act any differently if there, were twenty Gods or if there were no God. You utterly ignore his claims on your allegiance, and your responsibility to his law. Virtually in thought and deed you are without God in the world. Poor forlorn creature, thou hast forgotten thy Creator. Poor wandering soul, thou hast fallen out of gear with the universe; thou hast become alienated from the great Father who is in heaven. I tremble at the thought. To be on

the wide sea without rudder or compass; to be lost in the wilderness, where there is no way! Cheerless as thy condition is, remember this: Though thou seest not God, God sees thee. God sees thee now; he hears thee now. If thou breathe but a desire towards him, that desire shall be accepted and fulfilled. He will yet begin to work in thee that gracious preparation which shall make thee meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. And now, thirdly: —

III. LET THE SEAL OF THIS PREPARATION be briefly, but attentively considered.

The Apostle says, “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” Masters frequently pay during the week a part of the wages which will be due on Saturday night. God gives his Holy Spirit, as it were, to be a part of the reward which he intends to give to his people, when, like hirelings, they have fulfilled their day. Our country friends just before harvest go out into the fields, and they pick half a dozen ears that are ripe, braid the ends, and hang them up over the mantleshef as a kind of earnest of the harvest. So God gives us his Holy Spirit to be in our hearts as an earnest of heaven; and as the ears of wheat are of the same quality and character as the harvest, so the gift of the Holy Spirit is the antepast of heaven. When you have him, you have a plain indication to your soul of what heaven will be. You have a part of heaven — “a young heaven,” as Dr. Watts somewhere calls it, within you. Ask yourself, then, dear hearer, this question, “Have I received the earnest of the Spirit?” If so, you have the preparation for heaven; if not, you are still a stranger to divine things, and you have no reason to believe that the heaven of the saints will be your heritage. Come, now, have you received the Holy Spirit? Do, you reply “How may I know?” Wherever the Holy Spirit is, he works certain graces in the soul — repentance, to wit. Hast thou ever repented of sin? I mean, dost thou hate it? Dost thou shun it? Dost thou grieve to think thou shouldst once have loved it? Is thy mind altogether changed with regard to sin, so that what once seemed pleasure now is pain, and all the sweetness of sin is poison to thy taste? Where the Holy Spirit is, repentance is followed by the whole train of graces, all in a measure, not any in perfection, for there is always room to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Such is patience, which submits to the Lord’s will; such, too, the gracious disposition of forgiveness, which enables us to bear injuries and to forgive those that vex us; such, likewise, that holy courage which is not ashamed

to own our Lord, or to defend his cause. In fact, where the Holy Ghost is bestowed, all the graces of the Spirit will be communicated in some degree. Though they will all need to grow, yet there will be the seeds of them all. Where the Holy Spirit is, there will be the joy. No delight can be more animating or more elevating than that which springs from the indwelling of God in the soul. Think of God coming to abide in this poor bosom! Why, were a cross of diamonds or pearls glittering on your breast, some might envy you the possession of such a treasure; but to have, God within your breast is infinitely better. God dwelleth in us, and we in him. Oh! sacred mystery! Oh! birth of joy unspeakable! Oh! well of bliss divine that maketh earth like heaven! Hast thou ever had this joy — the joy of knowing that thou art pardoned; the joy of being sure that thou art a child of God; the joy of being certain that all things work together for thy good; the joy of expecting that ere long, and the sooner the better, thou shalt be for ever beyond gunshot of fear, and care, and pain, and want? Where the Spirit of God is, there is more or less of this joy, which is the earnest of heaven.

This gift, moreover, will be conspicuously evidenced by a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is not in you if you rely on anything but Jesus; but if, as a poor guilty sinner, you have come to him, partaken of his gracious pardon, kissed his blessed feet, and are now depending upon him alone, you have received the Holy Ghost, and you have got the antepast of heaven.

Brethren and sisters, it is intensely desirable that we should seek more to be consciously filled with the Holy Spirit. We get easily contented with a little spiritual blessedness. Let us grow more covetous of the best gifts. Let us crave to be endued with the Holy Spirit, and to be baptized in the Holy Ghost and in fire. The more we get of him the more assurance we shall have of heaven for our peace, the more foretastes of heaven for our happiness, and the more preparation for heaven in lively hope.

Thus have I shown you the need of preparation, the Author of preparation, and the great seal which proves the verity of that preparation. If your honest conscience allows your humble claim to have received this sacred token of salvation, how happy you would be! Do not be afraid to be happy. Some Christians seem to court the gloom of despondency as if they dared not bask in the sunshine of heaven. I have sometimes heard people say that they have not enjoyed themselves. No, dear friends; pity, methinks, if any of us ever should. It would be a poor kind of enjoyment if we merely

enjoyed ourselves. But, oh! it is delightful when you can enjoy your God, and when you can enjoy the mercies that are in him, and the promises that are in him, and the blessings which, through him come to you. When you gather round the table of the Lord's love, do not be afraid to partake of the feast. There is nothing put there to be looked at. There is no confectionery spread out for show. If you dare conclude that you are living in Christ, and living on Christ, do not be afraid to sing as you go home: —

*“Now I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.”*

It will be a blessing to your family for you to be happy. You may find that something has gone wrong while you have been away. Go home as happy as you can be, and you will be better able to bear the cares and vexations that must and will befall you. Keep your spirit well worked up to the fear of the Lord, and the enjoyment of his presence. Then, if some little cross matter should come to disquiet you, you can say, “Who am I that I should be vexed and chafed, or lose my temper, or be cast down about such a matter as this? This is not my sphere of well-being; this is not my heaven; this is not my God.”

*“If thou shouldst take them all away,
Yet should I not repine;
Before they were possess'd by me
They were entirely shine.*

*“Nor would I speak a murmuring word,
Though the whole world were gone,
But seek enduring happiness
In thee, and thee alone.”*

But, oh! suppose you feel persuaded and honestly admit that you are not prepared to die, not made meet for heaven. Do not utterly despair, but be grateful that you live where the gospel is preached.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Be much in hearing the Word, and be much in earnest prayer that the hearing may be blessed to your soul. Above all, give diligence to that divine command which bids thee trust in Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Eternal life lies in the nutshell of that one sentence, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. and thou shalt be saved.” All that is asked of you — and even that grace, gives

you — is simply to trust in him who, as Son of God, died for the sins of men. God give you that faith, and then may you meet death with joy, or look forward to the coming of the Lord with peace. whichever may be your lot. Amen.

FINE PLEADING.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPT. 24TH, 1871.

*“Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people;
O visit me with thy salvation.” — Psalm 106:4.*

How gracious a thing it is on God's part to make prayers for us! He puts them into our mouths. No one need say, “I cannot pray because I am unable to compose a sentence.” Here is a prayer already composed, which would be suitable for the lip of any one here present — high or low, rich or poor, saint or sinner. And it is a yet greater mercy that the God who thus gives us the form of prayer waits to give us the spirit of prayer, “for the Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” Whereas we know not what we should pray for, as we ought, he “maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” When he gives you the prayer, and gives you the power to pray it, what a sweet blessing! But that is not all; for when the prayer is thus presented on earth aright, there waits one above, quick of ear and ready of plea, who takes the supplication, presents it before his Father's throne, perfected by his wisdom, and perfumed by his merit; and then the Father smiles, and the prayer is answered with abundant blessing.

My prayer to-night is that many here present may take the words of our text and have them laid upon their souls like burning coals, and that then the smoking incense of holy prayer may go up to heaven, and the Lord may smell in it, through Jesus Christ, a sweet savor of rest.

We shall regard our text to-night in three lights — first, as a suitable prayer for every Christian; secondly, as a very fitting petition for distressed souls — I mean Christians who are desponding and have lost their evidences; and, thirdly, as a very suitable cry for an awakened, seeking sinner. My dear brethren in the faith, will you join me, then, under the first head, while we consider:

I. HOW SUITABLE THIS PRAYER IS FOR EACH OF US WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.

You will observe that he who prays here asks for no exceptional favor. He says, “Remember me with the favor that thou bearest to thy people.” It is not an ambitious prayer that asks to be distinguished beyond the rest of the beloved family. It is not a discontented prayer that seeks to have some special blessing which shall be denied to the rest of the Christian brotherhood. It is a prayer for benedictions common to all the saints. “Remember me with the favor which thou bearest to thy people.” And this is a lesson for us in our prayers. For instance, nature suggests to me that I should pray to be saved of all bodily pain; but that is not a favor which God bears towards his people. Many of his people here endure even excruciating pain — some in the pangs of martyrdom, and others through his laying his hand upon them in natural sickness. He never intended to keep his people from pain. He had a Son without sin, but he never had a Son without suffering. The perfected One, the First-born, must have hands and feet pierced, and every nerve must become the means of fresh agony to him. I dare not, therefore, pray, “Lord, keep me from all physical pain.” Why should I ask to have what he has not given to the rest of his people? Nay, if there be a cup on the table that tastes of the bitter, and he means it for the sons, let me have my share, and his love with it. So, too, I have no right to ask God to preserve me in riches, or in a comfortable position, or to keep me from poverty. I may ask this, but it must always be with complete submission to the divine will; for who am I that I should not be poor? Better ones by far than I have been poor — much poorer than I am likely to be. Why am I to expect to go to heaven by a smooth, grassy road, while others have had to tread the flints that cut their feet?

*Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody sea?”*

To desire to escape from every form of trial is natural to us, but it is not a dictate of grace that we should turn it into prayer. No; be content with the common lot of God's people. "Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord?" Let this content you, "Father, whether healthy or sick, whether rich or poor, whether honored or despised, extend to me the favor which thou bearest to thy people; and my largest desires can ask no more."

But please to observe, next, that while this prayer asks for nothing more than the common blessing, it also is content with nothing less,

*"Extend to me that favor, Lord,
Thou to thy people dost afford."*

It is the same favor that is extended to them that is asked for; for, brethren, anything short of this will not answer our turn. I would desire, and I know you do, my brethren, to have that favor from God which is eternal — that favor which hath no beginning — that everlasting favor which was in the Divine mind or ever the earth was. You want to have also immutable favor, the favor that never changes. Though we change, yet it abides the same. What would you do if the favor of God were changeable? Of what avail would his love be, if that love could come and go — could sometimes give, and then again could take away itself? You want immutable favor. And I know you want boundless favor, for your wants are unlimited. You want the love of Christ that passeth knowledge; you want it in all its heights and all its depths; you want the very heart of God; you want his bowels of compassion; you want a Savior to be one with you, and yourself to be one with him. You would not like to be put off with a crown; you would not like to be put off with an empire, or with all that earth calls good and great. You want no more, but you want no less than such favor as the Lord extends towards those that he loveth, who are the objects of his sacred choice. No more. No less.

You must note, next, in the prayer what is peculiarly to be observed — that he who is praying in this case ask for blessings on the same footing as the rest of the saints. You will observe that it is on the footing of grace He asks that he may have the favor which God beareth towards his people. "Favor." If there be one saved who has been a great offender against God's law, immoral, debauched, and depraved, it must be by favor. And, dear Christian friend, whoever you may be, there is no other way in which you can be saved; and you know it. When the Lord extends the blessings of the

covenant to gross sinners, it is clear that they are given to them simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. But to you, also, the favor comes in precisely the same way. I am sure you dare not ask God to deal with you on the ground of merit, for what were your merits, O ye saints — what were your merits, but to merit the eternal flames? You ask the Lord that he would extend to you, not the dealings of his justice, but that he would remember you with the compassions of his grace. Is there any professed Christian here that refuses to stand on such terms as these, and come to God and ask for favor — for gratuitous mercy? Then, friend, thou art no child of God. Whatever else the children differ in, they never disagree in this — that “salvation is of the Lord,” and is of grace, and of grace alone. Your spot is not “the spot of his children,” unless you look at even the bread you eat and the raiment you wear as the gift of divine charity, and unless you found all your hope for pardon of sin, and for acceptance at the last, entirely upon the free, undeserved, spontaneous favor of the Lord your God.

Well then, you see, what we ask for is what he gives to all his people — no more, no less; and we ask for that, not as our due, but as a favor — a favor for which we will bless him in life, and bless him in death, if he will but remember to grant it to us.

Still looking at our text as the Christian’s prayer, I would observe that he wishes, according to the text, that the same results may follow as in the case of all God’s people, for he adds, “Visit me with thy salvation” Beloved, God’s favor ends in salvation; and that word “salvation” is a very extensive term. If you read the Psalm you will see that the Psalmist evidently uses it, first, in the sense of deliverance. The children of Israel came to the Red Sea, and they were afraid that there they should be destroyed; but. God led them through the deeps as through the wilderness. Well then, when I pray this prayer, “O Lord, remember me with the favor that thou bearest thy people,” I mean this: “When I come into any trouble, I ask thee to help me to go through it. As thou didst make a way through the sea for thy people of old, make a way for me.” Oh! how often does God do this for us! When it seems as if the obstacles were almost insurmountable — when our wit seems to have failed us, and we can do no more — we have been ready to say, “Alas! Master, what shall we do?” Then our extremity has been the divine opportunity, and through the depths of the sea he has led his rejoicing people. Then the word salvation is meant in the Psalm evidently to include the forgiveness of sins; for you

remember, as we read the Psalm, how the sins of Israel were mentioned over and over again. But it is added, “Nevertheless, when they cried unto him, he heard their prayers.” So if I use this prayer, I am to mean just this, “Lord, thou art accustomed to forgive thy people. Forgive me. Thou dost blot out their sins like a cloud. Blot out mine. Thou cast, moreover, help thy children to overcome their sins. Help me; sanctify me, spirit, soul, and body. Thou dost preserve thy people in temptation, and bring them out of it. Gracious Shepherd, keep me as one of thy flock. Thou dost save thy children in the hour of great peril, and as their day so is their strength. Oh! infinite preserver of thy beloved, cover me with thy feathers, and under thy wings permit me to trust Let thy truth be my shield and buckler!” I think it is a very, very sweet prayer. “Visit me with thy salvation when I am on my bed, tossing to and fro, and raise me up if it be thy will. Visit me when I am slandered, and my name is cast out as evil, and cheer thy servant’s heart. Visit me when I am in the deep waters and the depths overflow me — when I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. Come and prove thy saving might. Visit me when I come to die. When the chill floods of the last river are about me, visit me with thy salvation. Then deal with me as thou hast dealt with thy saints whenever they have passed through the valley of the shadow of death. May thy rod and thy staff comfort me. Visit me with thy salvation.” I suggest, Christian brethren, that this prayer will do for you living, and will do for you dying. It is a suitable prayer for the morning and for the evening, for the young and for the old, for days of joy and days of distress. Blessed prayer, let it be often on your lips!

Only one more remark we will make upon it in reference to the Christian. You observe that, all through it is a personal prayer. Our prayers must not always be personal. Our Savior has taught us not to say, “My Father,” but “Our Father which art in heaven.” Yet, for all that, he that never prays for himself in the singular ever prayed aright for others in the plural. If you have never said, “Lord, remember me,” you have not got so far as the thief on the cross. You are not qualified at all to go as far as Abraham on the plains of Mamre, when he interceded for others. He that has the largest heart must look to it that his own personal salvation be secure. So, dear friend, professing Christian, let me ask you to take the prayer in the first person singular, and say, “Lord, remember me with the favor which thou bearest to thy chosen.” I pray it. If thou callest me, Lord, to minister to this great people, as my day is, so may my strength be. As thou hast dealt with others of thy servants in a like position, deal thou so with me. Elders and

deacons, with your responsibility upon you, pray that the God of Stephen and the God of Philip will be with you, and extend to you the favor which he gave to elders and deacons of old. Mothers, fathers, ask the grace that he gives to Christian parents. Children, servants, ask for the grace that he has been wont to give to those in your position. Ye who are rich, pray often that you may not miss the divine favor, for these things are often dangerous. You that are poor, pray that you may have this to sweeten all — to make your little to be enough. You that are in health, pray this, lest the vigor of your body be the weakness of your soul. And you upon whose cheek there is the hectic flush of consumption — you that are weak and near departure — you have got already your death-song ready. Here it is: “Lord, remember me! Remember me, O Lord, with the favor which thou bearest toward thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.” I leave that prayer with every Christian heart here, and ask that it may be engraver there by the Holy Spirit. This prayer is also: —

II. A FITTING PRAYER FOR DEPRESSED, DESPONDING SOULS.

They are God’s people, and we give to them now this prayer, and we trust that as they pray it they may have “the oil of joy given them for mourning, and the garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness.” I ask them to look very briefly, but with all their eyes, at this prayer. You will note that here is a case in which a good man may seem to be forgotten. It is a good man that wrote this Psalm an inspired man, and yet he says, “Remember me, O Lord.” Did he think himself forgotten? He feared he was. There have been others of God’s saints who have endured this fear. Yea, a whole church has sometimes labored under it. Zion said “My God hath forsaken me. My God hath forgotten me.” Thus you may be, as you think, forgotten, and yet you may be very dear to God — as dear as ever you were.

Notice, next, that when you, child of God, come into this condition, the very best prayer you can pray is a sinner’s prayer. Why do I call this a sinner’s prayer? Why, because it so reminds me of the dying thief. “Lord, remember me,” was such a suitable prayer for him. Oh! child of God, if thou doubt thine own salvation, do not dispute about it, but go as a sinner; use a sinner’s prayer; begin where the dying thief began with, “Lord, remember me.” I would recommend to every Christian who is in the dark, and has lost his evidences, to go, at once by the old track that sinners have

trodden so long. "I will go to Jesus, though my sin doth, like a mountain, rise. I know his courts; I will enter in." Go to him. Go even now.

And you will observe, too, that for a desponding soul it is good to remember that everything it can obtain in the future by God must be by favor. "Remember me, O Lord, with the favor." I dwelt on this when speaking to the child of God in the light; but it is even more important that we should dwell on this when speaking to the child of God in the dark, for the danger is when you are desponding to begin to be legal. Your own conscience and Satan together will be setting you upon legal methods of getting comfort. They are all fruitless. Go on the track of grace. Free grace is what you want, and nothing else will suit you. Cry, "Lord, remember me with thy favor. Give me what thou couldst not give me as a mere matter of justice! Deal with me as thou couldst not deal with me if thou didst see me in myself as guilty before thee! Deal favorably with thy servant. Have a favor towards me, for this alone can restore me."

And then, next, it is good for a person who is in distress to remember that God's favor towards his own people does not change, for evidently this good man, though he asked God to remember him, had not any doubt whatever that God had a favor towards his own people. Nothing like being sound in doctrine to help you towards comfort. If a man shall doubt the perseverance of the saints, and believe that God will cast away his people, I really do not see what he has to do when he is brought into distress of mind. But if he still holds to this, "Truly the Lord is good to Israel — to such as be of a clean heart. As for me, he may have forgotten me. I fear I am not one of his; but I know he would not forget his own" — why, then the fact of the immutability of God towards his people becomes, as it were, as an argument; and we come before the Lord with better heart and greater hope, and say, "Lord, since thou never changest towards them, introduce me into their number, and let thy eternal love pour forth itself on my poor, broken, disconsolate spirit. Remember me — poor, fallen, backsliding me — with the favor, the free grace. which thou bearest towards thy people." It is well to hold to truth, for it may serve us like an anchorage on the day of storm.

Once again. Let me speak to the depressed, and remind them that the prayer is instructive, for it shows that all that is wanted for a forsaken, forgotten spirit is that God should visit it again. "Remember me, O Lord. Anybody else's remembering can do me no good, but if thou only give one

thought toward thy servant, it is all done. Lord, I have been visited by the pastor, and he tried to cheer me. I have had a visit in the preaching of the gospel in the morning and the evening of thy day. I went to thy table, and I did not get encouragement there. But, Lord, do thou visit me!" A visit from Christ is the cure for all spiritual diseases. I have frequently reminded you of that in the address to the Church at Laodicea. The Church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot, and Christ said that he would spue it out of his mouth; but do you know how he speaks of it as if he would cure it? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." That is not an address to sinners. It is sometimes used so, but it is rent out of its connection. It is evidently an address to a church of God, or a child of God, who has lost the presence and the light of God's countenance. All you want is a visit from Christ. All you want is that once again your communion should be restored; and I do bless the Lord that he can do that of a sudden, in a moment! He can make thy soul, "or ever it is aware, like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." You may have come here to-night about as dead in soul as you could be, but the flashes of eternal life can reach you, and kindle a soul within, within the ribs of your old dead nature once again. You may have felt as if it was all over, and the last spark of grace had gone out; but when the Lord visits his people, he makes the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice, and the desert to blossom as the rose. I do pray it may be such a happy hour to you that the prayer may be fulfilled, "Visit me with thy salvation." I have great sympathy with those that are cast down. God, the comfort of those that are cast down, comfort you! May he bring you out who are bound with chains; and you solitary ones, may he set you in families! And I do not know a wiser method for you to pursue than incessantly to cry unto him; and let this be the prayer, "Remember me — me — with the favor which thou bearest to thy people: O visit me with thy salvation." And now our last point. This is: —

III. A VERY PROPER PRAYER FOR THE AWAKENED, BUT UNFORGIVEN SINNER.

There are some in this house of that character. I know there are unforgiven sinners here. I only hope that some of them are awakened to know the danger of their state. If they are, may God help them to, pray this prayer, because, first, it is a humble prayer. "Lord, remember me" — as much as to say, "Lord, give one thought to me. I am a poor miserable sinner. I am not worth much thought, but, Lord, do at least recollect me. Pass me not, O

healer of sin-sick souls. Pass me not. Hear my cry; answer my anguish; regard the desires of my soul. Remember me!" It is an earnest prayer too. No doubt it was earnest as this inspired man prayed it. It breathes life as you read it. Oh! dear heart, if thou wantest a Savior, be in earnest for him. If thou canst take "no" for an answer, thou shalt have "no" for an answer, but if it comes to this, "Give me Christ, or else I die! — I must have mercy" — you shall have it. When you will have it, you shall have it. When God stirs you up to agonise for a blessing, the blessing shall not delay. Note that this prayer, which I can recommend to you, is not only humble and earnest, but it is a prayer directed in the right way. It is to God alone. "Remember me, O lord. Visit me, O lord, with thy salvation." All our help lies yonder. There is none here. There is none in any man. No priest can help you — no friend nor minister. When you apply to us we might say what the king of Israel said to the woman in Samaria, when it was straitly shut up with siege, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? Out of the winepress, or from the barn floor?" There is nothing we can do. "Vain is the help of man!" Turn your eye to God alone — to the cross where Christ suffered. Look there, and there only, and be this your prayer, "Lord, remember me!" When the thief was dying, he did not say, "John, pray for me." John was there. He did not look on the mother of Christ and say, "Holy Virgin, pray for me." He might have said it. He did not turn to any of the apostles, or the holy company that were around the cross. He knew which way to look; and, turning his dying eye to him who suffered on the center cross, he had no prayer but this, "Lord, remember me." 'Tis all you want. Pray to God, and God alone, for from him alone must mercy come to you.

Observe, again, O sinner, if thou wouldst use this prayer, that it is a personal prayer for thee. "Lord, remember me." Oh! if we could get men to think of themselves, half the battle would be over. Who are you? Who are you? I would put this prayer into your mouth, whoever you may be, "Lord, I have been a Sabbath-breaker this day. All the early part of it was spent as it ought not to be; but, Lord, remember me." "O God, I have been a drunkard. I have broken all the laws of sobriety — have even blasphemed thy name; but Lord, remember me." Is there one here into whose mouth I might put such words as these, "Lord, I stand trembling before thee, for I am a woman that is a sinner. Lord, remember me. Call on me with the favor that thou bearest to thy people. As thou didst look on the woman of Samaria, so look on me"? Is there one here that has been a thief — almost

ashamed to have the word mentioned, lest those who sit near should look at you? Well, this is peculiarly the thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me." How I wish I could come round now! I should not know who you were, but, oh! if I could, I would put this right into your heart, "Lord, remember me." Up in the back gallery, where you can hardly hear, and cannot see, it is a good place to pray in — a capital place, there hidden away in the corner, to breathe the cry, "O God, remember me!"

Another thing about this prayer is that it is a gospel prayer. It says, "Remember me with thy favor." Everything a sinner gets must come by favor. It cannot come anyhow else, for if you get what you deserve, you will get no love, no mercy, no grace. Oh! sinner, do come to God on the footing of favor, and say, "For thy name's sake, and for thy mercy's sake, have pity upon poor undeserving me." It is a gospel prayer.

Once again. It seems to me to be an argumentative prayer. "Where is the argument?" say you. Why, here, "Thou hast had favor towards thy people. Lord, have favor towards me." It is always an argument for a man to do a kindness to you if he, has done a kindness to others. We generally say, if we are very poor, "Such a one has been helping poor people like me." There is a sort of implied argument that he will help you, being in the same case. Can you see it? There are the gates of heaven. Can you bear the lustre of those massive pearls? I want you not to look at them, however. Do you see them? Do you see them who are streaming through in long ranks? They go through like a mighty river. There are hundreds, there are thousands, there are tens of thousands of them. Who are they? Who are they! They are, all of them, sinners — just such as I am, dear friend — just such as you are. They are all clothed in white now, but their robes were all black once. Ask them, and you will hear them say they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Ask every one of them how it is they passed so happily through that pearly gate into the golden-streeted city, and they will all tell you, with united breath, that they: —

*"Ascribe salvation to the Lamb;
Redemption to his death."*

Oh! I will e'en creep in that way. Ah! through the sinners' Savior I hope to find a passage to the sinners' heaven, where sinners washed white dwell for ever. There is an argument in the prayer. I hope you will have skill to use it till you prevail.

Once again. I commend this prayer to the awakened sinner because it is a prayer for a helpless soul, for it says, Oh! visit me with thy salvation.” There are patients in London that would be very glad to be received into a hospital. They would be glad if they could be carried to-morrow morning into some one of those noble institutions, there to be cared for. But there are people worse off than they are, for there are some that could not be carried to a hospital, for they would die on the road. If they are ever to be healed at all, they are in such a bad case that the doctor must come to them. Oh! and that is a sinner’s case too, and some feel it; and hence the prayer, “Visit me with thy salvation.” “Here, Lord, I lie before thee, so ruined by my sin that I can scarce turn even an eye to the cross; I am so blind. ‘Tis true thy grace can save, but my hand is paralyzed, and I cannot grasp thy grace. ‘Tis true thy love can penetrate my heart, but, ah! my heart feels so hard, how can thy love get into it? O Savior, thou must do all for me, for mine is a desperate case.” Such cases Christ loves. He came to seek and save — not the half-lost, but the lost. Commit thy desperate case into his hands, who has saved desperate sinners thousands of times, and will save them yet. I do pray that before you rest to-night-before you go to your bed, and dare close your eyes — this may be your heart’s prayer, “O Lord, remember me with the favor which thou bearest to thy people. Visit me with thy salvation.”

I can do no more than leave it in the hands of the Eternal Spirit. May he bless the word, for Christ Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 116:10-19; SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7.

The whole Psalm is one of joyous thanksgiving because of God’s mercy to the singer. He had been in deep waters of trial and affliction, but had not been suffered to sink. He had known fierce assaults of sin that threatened tearful eyes and falling, stumbling stops, but God had upheld and strengthened. As he recalls all this, he longs to make some return by way of praise, and witness to others. Hence he now inquires.

Verses 10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

And uncommonly near the truth he came, even though he was in a hurry in saying it, for if you trust in any men they must be liars to you. They will fail you, either from want of faithfulness, or else from want of power. There are pinches where the kindest hand cannot succor. There are times of sorrow when she who is the partner of your bosom cannot find you alleviation. Then you will have to come to God, and God alone, and you will never find him fail you. The brooks of the earth are dry in summer, and frozen in winter. All my fresh springs, are in thee, my God, and there neither frost nor drought can come. Happy man who has got right away from everything to his God.

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits towards me?*

Here we see gratitude is springing up in this man's breast. He lives upon God, and he loves God, and now the question comes, "What shall I do for God?" Service is not first. We make a mistake When we begin with that. No: we begin as he did, with "I love the Lord."

Tell what the Lord has done for you, and then go on to, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

13-15. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the right of the LORD is the death of his saints.*

We do well to notice those deaths, for God notices them. They are among his precious things. And if God thinks so much of dying saints, depend upon it he will not forget the living ones. He will help us. He will help us to the end.

16. *O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds.*

What a sweet thing to be the servant of God. Well does David say it twice over. Well does he delight to look upon himself as a slave that was born in his Master's house. "My mother," says he, "was one of thy servants. I am the son of thy handmaid." Oh! it is a blessed thing to be able to be God's every way — to feel in looking back, "I am not only his by redemption and by the new birth, but I seem as if I was bound to be his by a long angry of men and women, whom his sovereign grace called to himself." Grace does not run in the blood, but it is a great mercy when it runs side by side with it; and when the handmaiden of the Lord is mother of a man who is a child

of God as well as her child. "Thou hast loosed my bonds." You are never quite free you *have* never got your bonds all loosed — till you can doubly feel the bonds of God. Read that: "I am thy servant. I am thy servant." That is two blows. "Thou hast loosed my bonds." There is no freedom except in perfect subjection to the will of God. When every thought is brought into captivity to the mind of God, then every thought is free. You have heard much of the freedom of the will. There is no freedom of the will till grace has bound the will in fetters of divine affection. Then is it free, and not till then. "I am thy servant — thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds."

17. *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and, will call upon the name of the LORD.*

He has been doing it. What a man has done he will do. Oh! it is a blessed thing that the children of God at last catch a habit of devotion. Just as the sinner continues in his sin, so may I venture to say, "Shall the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, then he that has once heartily learnt to praise his God may begin to forget to do so. Use is second nature, and the holy use to which God has put us by his grace shall be our nature for ever.

18, 19. *I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.*

I see that David liked company. He would have been happy here, though we meet under conditions not wholly pleasant. He would have been glad to be in the midst of a smiling company of grateful saints, who could all say, "That is true, David. What you have written of yourself, you might have written of each one of us, and we can each one say, 'I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.'"

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7.

We believe that this song sets forth the mutual love of Christ and his believing people. It is a book of deep mystery, not to be understood except by the initiated; but those who have learnt a life of sacred fellowship with Jesus will bear witness that when they desire to express what they feel they are compelled to borrow expressions from this matchless song. Samuel Rutherford, in his famous letters, when he spoke of the love of Christ as shed abroad in his heart, perhaps was scarcely conscious that he continually

reproduced the expressions of the song, but so it is. They were naturally fresh enough from him, but they came from this wonderful book. It stands in the middle of the Bible. It is the holy of holies — the central point of all. Thus he speaks — the glorious “greater than Solomon.”

Verses 1, 2. *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

So does Christ's Church spring up singular for her beauty — as much different from the world — as much superior thereto as the lily to the thorns. Now see how she responds and answers to him.

3. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood. so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

To him there is none like her; to her there is none like him. Jesus values his people. He paid his heart's blood for their redemption, and “unto you that believe, he is precious.” No mention shall be made of coral or of rubies, in comparison with him. Nothing can equal him. There are other trees in the wood, but he is the one lone fruit-bearing — the citron tree, whose golden apples are delicious to our taste. Let us come up and pluck from his loaded branches this very night.

4. *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.* You and I know what this means — at least, many here do. You know how delightful it is to feel that it is not the banner of war now, but the banner of love, that waves above your head, for all is peace between you and your God. And now you are not brought to the prison-house or to the place of labor, but to the banqueting house. Act worthily of the position which you occupy. If you are in a banqueting house, take care to feast.

5. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.*

Oh! that I knew him better! Oh! that I loved him more! Oh! that I were more like him! Oh! that I were with him! “I am sick of love.”

6, 7. *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand cloth embrace me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*

If he be with me, may nothing disturb him — nothing cause him to withdraw himself. Our Lord Jesus is very jealous, and when he manifests himself to his people, a very little thing will drive him away like the hinds and the roes that are very timid, so is communion a very delicate and dainty thing. It is soon broken. Oh! may God grant to-night that nothing may happen to the thoughts of any of you by which your fellowship with Christ should be destroyed.

A REMARKABLE BENEDICTION.

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“And for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.” — Deuteronomy 33:16.

MOSES died blessing the people. This showed his meekness, for they had been his plague all his life, and yet his last word with them is full of blessing. He has a blessing for all the tribes, though all the tribes had in turn grieved his spirit. It is a graceful thing to die scattering benedictions — for the old man to feel that life just about over, and that ere he dies he will distribute his legacies — legacies of benediction. It is the most graceful way of departing out of this life to another, leaving a blessing behind, while we ourselves are going into the fullness of the blessing to come. But the blessing of Moses was graceful at the close of his life, because it was constant with all of his life that went before. Had he lived cursing, it would have been absurd, if not impious, to die blessing. I would not wish to have that man's benediction in words on his death-bed who never gave a benediction in actions while he was in his life. But the whole course of Moses's life was that of blessing the people. He had been a nursing father to them; he carried them in his bosom; often he stood in the gap between them and an angry God. He had spared them by acting as a Mediator, when the sword of vengeance was drawn against them. Countless blessings had been bestowed upon them through him. Was it not his rod that wrought wonders in the field of Zoan? Was it not his hand which was

stretched over the Red Sea, by which God made a way for his people? Did not his rod, when it smote the rock, bring forth the liquid stream,? Was it not by his voice that God communicated to them that the manna should drop around their camps? He had blessed them from the very first moment that he had come into contact with them, for he came forth from the palace of Pharaoh, giving up all the riches that might have been his, that he might side with his brethren, and began to fight their battles, smiting the Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand. It was from this cause that he was banished from the courts and when he returned again it was with the same resolute determination to abide with his people, and the same warmheart towards them. Brethren, if you wish to give your children a blessing when you die, be a blessing to them while you live. If you would make your last words worth the hearing, let your whole life be worth the seeing. It is graceful to die blessing, but let it be always consistent with the blessedness of our former life.

The particular blessing which he gave to Joseph shall now have our attention, and, first, we shall notice the blessing itself, which he wished to Joseph; and, secondly, the peculiar form in which he worded it; and, when we have thought that over, it shall be in our heart to wish the same to all who are present here. First, then, let us look at: —

I. THE GREAT BLESSING WHICH MOSES WISHED CONFERRED UPON JOSEPH.

The good will of God — “the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.” I should like any man’s good will. The better the man is the more I would desire to have his good will. If it did not come to the benefactor or the good doing, I would like him to think benevolently towards me, to have his good will, if I never derived any particular good directly from him. One does not like to go to bed and feel you have an ill-will from any man. Certainly, it is well always to feel that we have no ill-will ourselves towards any, but that our good will reaches out to all. One would like to have the good will of wise men who could counsel us, and of great men who could help us. One would like to have the good will of angels, to know that they cheerfully obey the divine command to watch over us. But how much superior to all this is the good will of God — the good will of him whose will is power, whose wish is fact, who has but to will it, and the good that is willed becomes our good in very deed. Oh! ‘tis a high blessing to have the good will of God. Beloved, our heart wishes, this to every one here present, and

every Christian wishes this for his children wishes it for his household, wishes it for his neighbor, wishes it for his fellow-countrymen. May the good will of God be with you.

For, beloved, in the first place, this is the fountain of every blessing. It is from the good will of God that every good thing which comes to us takes its rise. Election is according to the pleasure of his good will. He chose us because he would choose us — because he had a good will towards us. Redemption springs from that good will. What else but good will could give the Savior to such unworthy ones as we were? Our calling into the divine life is a work of his good will Our preservation in that life, our growth in it, and all the blessings with which God loads that life to make it blessed — all these are fruits of his good will. You cannot find a single blessing that comes to us by the way of merit. We may say of every blessing, it is according to his loving-kindness and his tender mercies. He forgave us because he had a good will towards us. He restored us from our wanderings because of his good will. He daily cleanses us, and he makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and all because of his good will. To what else can we ascribe the covenant of grace? To what else can all the blessings which are pledged to us by that covenant be attributed? it is according to his good will. In wishing, therefore, to anyone that he may have the good will of God that dwelt in the bush, you are wishing to him the fountain-head of all mercies; you are wishing to him the infinity, the immensity, the immutability of the goodness and love of God.' It is a comprehensive blessing, and who is he that shall tell all its heights and depths?

The good will of God is also the sweetener of all other blessings. It is the source of them; it is the sweetener of them. Everything that comes from God to us derives a double blessedness when we feel that they are the fruit of his good will. Take spiritual mercies, and though they be in themselves so rich that none can estimate their value, yet is there a peculiar brightness put upon them when we know these come from God's love; these are all tokens of his favor towards us, his people. And truly, brethren, the lower mercies of daily life become more blessed to us as we know they come from his good will. As you cut that loaf, each slice off it is flavoured with his good will. When you put on your garments to-morrow morning, though they be those in which you exercise your toilsome labors, yet are they tokens of God's good will, as much as those coats of skins which God gave to our first parents. Yea, beloved, sitting here to-night, this air we

breathe, the power to breathe it, and the health which enabled us to come up to the house of prayer, and this house itself, and the ears with which we hear the words, and the good tidings which are given us to hear — all these are of his good will, and are the sweeter because we recognize the favor of God in them. Oh! to have temporal blessings with a curse — that is a dreadful thing. I hardly know a text more fearful to contemplate than that one, “I will curse your blessings.” Oh! if God makes any bitter, how bitter the wormwood and the gall must be! If he puts death in the pot in which the broth is made to sustain life, what death must there be when he shall deal out the poison-cup of His eternal wrath to the ungodly. Sweet, indeed, are blessings when they are thus honeyed with his love; but would they be if, instead thereof, they were seasoned and salted with his wrath? Be thankful, Christian; for I will venture to say that this makes even our trials pleasant to us when we know that they also are the fruits of his good will. We cannot always make our hearts believe that the rod is a good thing; we cannot always persuade our unbelief that our dark, heavy, gloomy hours are really for our good; but they are so, and we shall believe this when we perceive that they are sent out of good will to us — not out of anger, but out of love — love to us that he may love us right up out of our sins, and love us away from our infirmities, and love us into a higher state of grace, attracting us by his Divine love till we become like himself. Note, then, the two things: it is a great blessing because it is the source at all blessings, and the sweetener of all blessings.

But the next consideration about this is — and let us carefully notice it — that, nevertheless, it surpasses all other blessings. The good will of him that dwelt in the bush is a greater blessing than all the blessings in the worldly, what if I say in heaven itself! — besides; for, brethren, all the blessings in the world without this are less than nothing; and if they were all gone, if that were conceivable, and yet we had this left to us, we need not regret the loss of all, since we should find all in God. You remember hoer the old Puritan put it. He had been rich, and then was brought to poverty, and he said he didn’t find much difference, for, he said, when he was rich he found God in all, and now that he was poor he found all in God. Perhaps the latter is the higher state of the two. Without God, alas! my soul, if thou wert in Paradise! But with God, oh! joy and bliss if thou wert in prison. All the thngs put together shall perish in the using; like leaves of the forest, they shall wither ore long; but thou, my God, art an unwithering tree of life, and under thee I shall ever have a shade; I shall sit down beneath thy

shadow with great delight, and shall always have food, for thy fruit is sweet unto my taste. I will rejoice in thee, for thy good will is better than all things. I will tell you what it is — you that have not this good will; if you should lose everything else, you have to win it, you would make a good bargain. If you have not God's good will, and could not have it except by losing the sight of your eyes, and the hearing of your ears, and the renouncing of all your bodily and mental faculties; if you could not have the good will of God without losing house, and home, and friends, you might cheerfully, gladly, at once close in with the negotiation, and say, "Let me have God's good will, and I will take whate'er he pleases, or lose whate'er he takes." But let me remind you that you have not to lose these things to get his good will. If thou hast his good will, thou mayest know it by this: wilt thou accept the gift which he presents to thee in his dear Son? Having nothing, wilt thou take Christ to be shine? Being naked, and poor, and miserable, wilt thou let him be to thee thy raiment and thy riches? If so, thou hast God's will, thou hast God's good will, for thou hast Christ, who is the good will of God towards us, incarnated in the flesh. The Lord grant each one of us, then, this blessing, to have his good will. And now, secondly:

II. THIS BLESSING IS PUT IN A VERY PECULIAR FORM.

He says, "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush." And why did he put it so? Was it, first, because Moses looked back to the appearance of God in the bush with peculiar delight on account of its being the first manifestation of God to his soul? I have no doubt that Moses had fellowship with God before, but we do not read that he ever had, an appearance of the Divine Being to him until he was at the back side of the desert near to Horeb. And there he saw God in the burning bush. Beloved, we always set most store — at least, I do — in our memory upon the first appearance of God to us. It brings the tears to my eyes when I recollect those words of the old hymn: —

*"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did thee meet?"*

Ah! I do mind it, and always shall, while memory holds her seat. I may forget anything else, but I shall never forget that, and though I have had many, many manifestations to the comfort of my heart, yet that first one has peculiar charms. And I do not marvel that Moses called his God the God that dwelt in the bush. Now, have not some of you remembrances of

the first days when the love of your espousals was warm in you, and when the manifestations of Jesus were bright to you. Well then, wish to others that the good will of God, who appeared to you behind the hedge, or out in the field, or down in the saw-pit, or at your bed-side in your chamber — the good will of him that said to you, “I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud” — wish that that good will may rest upon your kinsfolk and your friends.

Is it not also very likely that Moses mentioned that peculiar circumstance in his blessing, because God on that occasion pledged himself to him. He gave that burning bush to be a token to Moses, and a sign, and that token had been redeemed; and that good old man, at the end of the last forty years of his life, recollected how God had appeared to him when he was eighty years age and given him that pledge, and now that he was a hundred and twenty years old, God had redeemed it; he had been true to him for forty years. Have not we some pledges and tokens? Have not you some place where the Lord appeared to you, and said, “Certainly, I will be with thee, and will bring thee again unto this place”? Are there no remembrances in your soul in which a faithful God has pledged his promise to you, and has redeemed it? If so, each man will know his own case, and each man, if he speaks naturally, will wish a blessing for others, according to his own experience of the blessed God. I do not wonder that after Moses had seen God redeem the token of the burning bush, when he wished to convey the idea that the good will of a faithful covenant-keeping God should rest upon his servant Joseph — the tribe thereof — should say, “The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.”

Moreover, at that time, in the bush God did show himself as a covenant God. He began thus, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” He was a covenant God. Brethren, may you have the good will of a covenant God. I often wonder what those do who do not know the covenant of grace. It seems to me to be the richest well of consolation that God has ever digged — the covenant ordered in all things and sure. It was the stay of David on his death-bed; it is the comfort of many of God’s Davids in the battle of life. I wish to-night with all my heart, dear friends, that you may not look for the good will of an absolute God out of Christ, but look for and enjoy the will of God, who has pledged himself to you in your representative, Christ Jesus, in the eternal covenant of his love. I think that is another reason why Moses put it in that form.

And, perhaps, Moses looked upon that bush as the place of his call to a more active life, and regarded God in a different light from that time forth from what he had ever regarded him before. His own name was Moses; he was drawn out of the water, and now he might have changed his name, for God had called him out of the fire. Now he saw the God of fire. Oh! there are some believers that have never got to this. They, I hope, have renounced the world as Moses did when he counted the reproach of Christ greater, riches than all the treasures of Egypt; they have got also into the wilderness where Moses was; they are separated; they love contemplation, and they live near to God; but they have never been called into active service. That third forty years of Moses' life was the crowning part of all his career. The forty years with Pharaoh, the forty years in the desert, all prepared him for the forty years in the wilderness with his people. But some Christians have not begun that last period of their lives. I wish they had; and I shall be glad and rejoice if, to-night, the Lord should appear to any of his servants and call them, saying, "I have called you to bring sinners out of Egypt, and to set them free." If he ever does, when you come in after times to pronounce a blessing upon others, you will put it thus, "The God that called me to preach the gospel, the God that led me as his servant, be, with you, each one of you"; and if that is the form in which you put the blessing, it will be a very rich one.

But now I will come back to the words again. What did Moses mean? We see why he used the term, but what did he mean by saying, "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush be with you"? Did not he mean, first, "May the blessings of condescension ennoble you"? What condescension for God to dwell in a bush! Had the Eternal dwelt in a cedar, it would have been a stoop, but for him to dwell in the uncouth-shaped, worthless shrub — a bush — oh! this was matchless. Oh! beloved, may every one of us know what it is for God to condescend to dwell with us. We are as the bushes of the heath. There is nothing in us that fits us for God's mercy. What are we, and what is our father's house? Why should the Lord look upon us — perhaps as little in talent as we are in merit; low in our own esteem, but much more low in very deed and truth? Oh! may the Lord deal with each one of you in his condescending way. He is wont to give his mercy condescendingly. "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." After that fashion may he deal with you; and if he should do so, then how ennobled will you be; for

that bush in Horeb had a greater glory about it than the cedars of Lebanon. It was but a bush, but it was a bush in which God had dwelt. And thou, too — thou wilt have to say, “Thy gentleness hath made me great. He hath lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of his people.” A drop of grace gives more honor than a world of fame. One spark of love of Christ is more ennobling to thee heart into which it falls than though it were all ablaze with the stars and orders of all the knighthoods of the kingdom. The love, of God makes poor men truly rich, and little men supremely great, and the despised to be honorable, and the nothing, to be lifted up amongst the mighty. I wish you, then, beloved, God’s condescending love to ennoble you — “the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.” or, as we might read it, “the good will of the Shekinah of the bush,” for that is the very same Shekinah that shone between the cherub wings. The good will of him that dwells upon the throne in heaven is the good will of him that dwells in humble and contrite hearts to-day.

But Moses, however, meant something more than that. Did not he mean that he wished to Joseph’s tribe indwelling and mysterious, mercies — “the good will of him that dwelt — dwelt in the bush”. It was a strange dwelling. Can anyone understand how God, who is everywhere, can be in one place, in particular; and shall anyone tell us how he, who is greater than all space, should yet dwell in a bush — in a bush? He that sets the heavens on a blaze with lightning, and kindles all the stars, comes down and sets a bush aglow with his Divine presence! It is mysterious. Oh! may every one of us know the mysterious good will of the indwelling Spirit of God! Do you know it? Do you know it? Oh! beloved, as the fire was in the bush, is the Spirit in you? Do you know he is there? Search yourselves. If he be there, may he tell there; and if he be not there, oh! may some sparks of that divine fire fall into your nature now — enough, at least, to make you desire more, and set you longing and praying for the wondrous blessing of an indwelling Spirit. Ignatius of old used to call himself “Theophorus” or “the God-bearer.” Truly, every Christian is such. a God-bearer. “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” “I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall walk in my way.” Surely Moses meant that — at least, the sense is in his words. May you enjoy the mysterious indwelling, and the blessings that come from it.

Further, did not the man of God mean that he desired that Joseph might possess enlightening blessings? “The good will of him that dwelt in the bush” means this: he set the bush alight; it became a luminary. It had light;

it gave forth light; it had light more abundantly. It was a dark bush; God came into it, and it struck the attention of Moses, though it seems to have been daylight. He was watching his flock, but so bright was this that it outshone the sun, and Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight." A bush is not a great sight; it was God that made the bush so bright that it became a great sight. May you, beloved, have the light of God's Spirit to reveal to you God's truth, and may that light be in you so brightly that others may see it and learn God's truth through you. What is the Scripture to us, unless God shine on it? The Bible is only like a country sign-post at the turning of a road in a dark night. Unless there is light to read it by, the sign-post is of no service. We want the Spirit of God to shine on the Scriptures. O God, come into us, and give us thy light! We need thee. Let this be a token of thy good will to us.

But that is not all. Surely Moses meant, "May the Lord grant you the blessings of trial and the blessings of preservation." For all through the various branches and twigs of that bush, there went a fire, a devouring fire, a fire that would have licked it up as the blaze licks up the stubble in a single moment. Yet that fire in its nature was preserving, as well as consuming, and, through the goodness of God, the bush was as safe when it was ablaze as it had been before. Beloved, how I wish to you that, whenever fiery trials may come, the consuming fire may spend itself upon your corruptions; but oh! may God grant that there may be nothing in it that shall touch your better nature. May it be a conserving as well as a consuming fire. We do, some of us, own to have been in the furnace when it has been heated very hot. Weary nights have been appointed to us, and days of anguish of body and of sinking of spirit. We have lain cast out even from the presence of God, sometimes in our apprehensions, in the very deeps of the valley of the shadow of death, and God — blessed be his name — he hath sent the fire, and come with it, and we have not been consumed, but can sing this day of judgment and of mercy. That mingled song is well set forth in the bush that burned, but was not burnt — burned, but was not consumed. I would not wish for any of you perfect immunity from trouble, lest you should miss the coming through tribulation into the inheritance of the kingdom; but I do pray for you that, when the trouble comes, the God that raised the trouble may come with it, so that you may be burned, but not consumed.

I will not tarry longer over this explanation of the text, but now most earnestly and from my heart I wish to you, beloved, this blessing. May "the

good will of him that dwelt in the bush" dwell with you! In your dwellings, may his good will dwell. Whatever your homes may be, may God be with you there. May his good will be with your husband, with your wife, and your children, your servants, your business, your field, your estate. May he that dwelt in the bush condescend to dwell in that little chamber and that narrow room! If a bush can hold him, so can your poor room; if a bush revealed him, so can your bed — ay, and your sickbed too. Believe in it — that God's good will can perfume every chamber of your dwelling, can make your going out and your coming in to be blessed, and all your ways the same. I wish for you, beloved, that "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" may dwell with you wherever you may be. Are you like Moses just now, alone and solitary in a wilderness? Have you come into this great city, and are you yet feeling as if you were a lone person, as in a desert? May "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" be with you, and may God reveal himself to you in your solitude, as he did to the prophet at Horeb. Perhaps you will be called from this day forth to conflict, as Moses stood before Pharaoh, and had to face the wrath of the king. May you confound your adversaries and be very mighty for your God. Possibly God intends to give you success in your service; like Moses, you will bring out Israel from under bondage. May "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" keep you sober in success and humble in prosperity. Peradventure, before you there shall soon be a difficulty as great as that which met the children of Israel before Pi-hahiroth; you will come to the Red Sea; the rocks will be on either hand; pursuers may be behind you. May the good will of him that dwelt in the bush and wads with Moses be with you in the hour of stern trial. Through your Red Sea, may the Lord lead you, as he led the children of Israel like a flock. Perhaps you will be subject to many provocations, as Moses was from the people whom he loved. They spake of stoning him. They murmured against the Lord, and against his servant Moses. May you be as meek as Moses, because the good will of him that dwelt in the bush shall over-shadow you. Possibly you may have a long life of Christian service before you. It; may be for forty years you will have to carry a people in your bosom, and nurture them for the Lord. My brother in the ministry, I wish the good will of him that dwelt in the bush to be with you through all that toilsome task. Perhaps you are soon to die. Old age is creeping upon you. May you die like Moses, blessing the people with the good will of him that dwelt in the bush with you to your last moment. And may your spirit climb her Pisgah, and look from the top of Nebo, and have a view of the glory to be revealed? the brooks that flow with milk and

honey, and the goodly land. May you see it, even unto Lebanon, and in those last moments of yours, e'er your spirit melts into glory, may "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" still be with you. Beloved. this is wished to you all. and I speak not my wish, but the benediction of the Lord upon tall his servants, "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush be with you." But, alas! all here are not servants of God. Yet even to them will I:

III. ANXIOUSLY DESIRE THAT THIS WISH MAY BE FULFILLED TO YOU ALL.

Oh! sinner, to-night may he that dwelt in the bush call you. Moses little thought of it. He was keeping sheep, but a bush was enough to attract him. These few simple, feeble, but affectionate words, may, perhaps, be like the bush to you. Or if not, perhaps, a trouble at home will come and be like a thorn-bush to you. I pray it may, and may God be in the bush. I do desire that God would in some way speak to you careless ones and arrest you, for you must come to know him, or you will perish everlastingly. And may you be humbled in the presence of God, each one of you, as Moses was, for he put off his shoes from off his feet, feeling that the place whereon he stood was holy ground, and he was unholy. May you feel the solemnity of your position — a dying man soon to meet his Maker — a guilty man soon to meet his Judge — a despiser of Christ soon to see Christ on his throne. O soul, may you put off your carelessness and have done with your neglect, and begin to pray, and as the Lord of the burning bush said to Moses that he knew the sorrows of his people, I do pray, oh! sinner, that when you stand humbly before the presence of God, you may see that God has pity upon you. May you look to Jesus on the cross, and see where he was like a bush that was burned with the anger of God, though not consumed; and may you, as you look, hear him say, I know your sorrows, for I have borne your sins and carried your transgressions for you"; and may you find peace to-night. Oh! it does not matter whether it is the back side of the desert, or the back gallery of the Tabernacle, or down below, beneath the galleries, or where it is — it will be a blessed spot to you if you find God to-night. Moses could never forget that spot near to Horeb, neither will you if the Lord should appear to you. It matters not who the preacher is; though he should be no more than the bush, yet shall he be an angel of God to you. The Lord grant that such an appearance may come to you by faith. May you look to Christ to-night; for, if not, you will have to see God by-and-by as a consuming fire. And remember this word, "Beware, ye that forget

God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver!" May you never know the meaning of that, but on the contrary, may "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" be with you. Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

EXODUS 3.

Verse 1. *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*

It must have been a great change for Moses, after forty years in the court of Pharaoh, to be spending another forty years in the wilderness. But it was not waste time; it required the first two periods to make Moses fit for the grand life of the last forty. He must be a prince, and he must be a shepherd, that he might be both a ruler and a shepherd to God's people, Israel. He must be much alone; he must have many solitary communings with his own heart; he must be led to feel his own weakness. And this will be no loss of time to him; he will do more in the last forty years because of the two forties thus spent in preparation. And it is not lost time that a man takes in putting on his harness before he goes to the battle, or that the reaper spends in sharpening his scythe before he outs down the corn.

2. *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*

How near God seemed in those ages when he could be beheld in a bush or sitting under an oak! And is he not equally near to us if we are but prepared for his presence? Surely pure eyes are scarce, or sights of God would be more frequent, for "the pure in heart shall see God."

3-5. *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes frets off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

God is not to be viewed by curiosity; he is not to be approached by presumption. A holy trembling well becomes the man who would

commune with the most holy God. We are not fit for intercourse with God without some measure of preparation, There is something to be put off ere we can behold the Lord.

6. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Partly because of the universal superstition that if God appeared to any man, he would surely die; but in Moses' case, perhaps more because of an appreciation of the holiness of God and of his own unworthiness. There is not a man among us but what must do as Moses did if we are in a right state of mind. They that think they are perfect might presume to look, but they that are truly so, as Moses was, would, as he did, hide his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

7. And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

Beautiful verse. God had seen and God had heard, as if their griefs had had two avenues to his heart. God seeth not with eyes, and heareth not with ears, as we do, but he speaketh after the manner of men, and he saith by two ways they had reached his very soul: "I have surely seen the affliction; I have heard their cries"; and then he adds, as if to show the perfection of his sympathy with them: "I know their sorrows." Now it is quite true to-day concerning us and concerning our God, he has seen, he has heard, and he knows — "I know their sorrows." When the sorrow is known, then God begins to work. He is no passive spectator of the misery of his chosen, but his hand goes with his heart.

8. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

"Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me," and when the cry of God's children goes unto him, depend upon it there will be something moving before long. When a father hears the cries of his children, when a mother hears the cry of her babe, it is not long before there will be a movement of the heart and of the hand. I am sure, brethren

and sisters, there have been crises in English history which have been entirely due to the prayers of God's people. There have been singular occurrences which the mere reader of history cannot understand, but there is a number still alive who wait upon God in prayer, and they make history. There is more history made in the closet than in the cabinet of the ministry. There is a greater power at the back of the throne than the carnal eye can see, and that power is the cry of God's children.

9-10. *Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

I do not wonder that Moses opened his eyes when he knew what a poor creature he was for God to say, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh" — the very man, whose life was sought by Pharaoh — "I will send thee unto Pharaoh" — the man that had been rejected by his own people when he took their part — "Thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Oh! let us be ready for any commission. If, God were to say to him he would build up heaven by the poorest and meanest among us, it would not be for us to draw back. Let him do what he wills with us! Oh! for a faith to believe that in the midst of our weakness God's strength would appear.

A MEMORABLE INTERVIEW

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered, and said unto him, My Lord and my God.” — John 20:27, 28.

WE are all of us apt to fall into a wrong state of heart, not because we are unconverted, nor yet because we are false to Christ, but simply because of our natural infirmity. So long as we are in this body, exposed to trial and temptation, we shall be prone to start aside like a broken bow. Thomas was a true-hearted follower of Jesus. He loved his Master. It had been a severe shock to his sensitive disposition and his thoughtful mind to see his Master betrayed, arraigned, scourged, crucified; dead, and buried. he could not at once rally from the agitation it caused him, or think it possible that Jesus could have risen from the dead. Pondering the matter scrupulously, it seemed to him to involve too great a miracle to be credited — far beyond anything to be expected. He would require, he said, very clear and satisfactory proofs before he would believe it. In like manner, you and I have each of us our characteristic faults. We may not be too thoughtful, like Thomas; we may, perhaps, be too thoughtless, and that is quite as mischievous. Even our pleasing qualities which adorn us as virtues may become our temptations. The best point about us, as a sound judgment was in the ease of Thomas, may become the very snare that entangles us. Let no man judge his fellow. Above all, let no man exalt himself. He that is in his best estate to-day may be in spiritual poverty to-morrow. He who rejoices in God and walks in holy consistency may, ere another sun has risen — few though the hours of interval be — have felt his feet slide from

under him, and so fallen from his steadfastness as to have dishonored his God, and pierced himself through with many sorrows.

God grant that our meditation may be for the comfort of some present, while we proceed to notice the Master and the servant Jesus and Thomas — narrowly looking at the actions of them both.

I. LET THE MASTER FIRST ENGAGE OUR ATTENTION — THE MASTER IN THE PRESENCE OF AN UNBELIEVING DISCIPLE WHO HAS TREATED HIM WITH NO LITTLE PRESUMPTION AND RASHNESS.

How exquisitely touching his gentleness! Does he upbraid Thomas? Is there indignation in his tone? Is there petulance in his chiding? Does he exclaim, “How darest thou doubt that I am alive?” Or turns he upon him with some rough sentence, asking “Whence this impertinence that thou shouldest speak of putting thy finger into my wounds, and thrusting thy hand into my side? Unworthy servant, from this moment I disown thee for having spoken so disrespectfully of thy Lord and Master.” No, far from it. He rather takes Thomas on his own ground; considers his infirmities, and meets them precisely as they are, without a single word of rebuke until the close, and even then he puts it very lovingly. The whole conversation was indeed a rebuke, but so veiled with love that Thomas could scarcely think it so. He speaks to him as if nothing had occurred to give any cause of offense, or by his presumption to occasion any estrangement.

Dwell for a moment on the mercy which our lord must have shown: and the blessed patience he must have exercised, to bear thus with Thomas. Ought he not to have known from the Old Testament that the Christ would rise from the dead? Had he not been reminded once and again by his Master of the prophecies which spoke concerning the death of Christ, and the glory that should follow? Had he not heard the Master himself frequently say that the third day he should rise again? He must have been present with the other Apostles when they turned his oracular sentences over in their minds, and said one to another, “What doth he mean by this, that he shall suffer and that he shall rise?” And had he not just before seen the women and conferred with the Apostles who testified that they had found an empty tomb, that they had been told by angels that Jesus had risen — yea, more; that when they were sitting together Jesus had appeared in their midst? Yet, so strong was his unbelief, that he puts his own judgment against their assertion of fact, against the inspired Scriptures, against the thrilling words that fell from the Master’s own lips, against the united,

concurrent acknowledgment of all the brethren. And think ye not, brethren, that our wilfulness is sometimes as irrational and unwarranted as his. We harbor doubts in the teeth of accumulated evidences, and then credit ourselves with being wise and right, while we disparage all others as being foolish and wrong. The principle which lies at the root of all the heresies and the schisms that rend and divide the Church is just that self-confidence which will not let us yield, even though better men than ourselves — yea, though the united consent of the whole Church should bear testimony to a fact or a truth to which we demur. Through some lack of information or through some flaw of judgment, we judge differently from our companions; and forthwith our self-approbation is unyielding, and our conduct is intolerant. It was no small scandal thus to put his own self in opposition to the Master, in opposition to the Scripture, and in opposition to all his fellowservants. Still, our Lord Jesus Christ forbears to utter a word of denunciation. He just says, “Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.” Softer words he could not have spoken. He responds without reproach. Such loving-kindness and tender mercy as David was wont to sing of old, did our blest Redeemer show.

Another ground for admiring our Lord’s great patience with Thomas is that he had dared to dictate the terms upon which he would believe, and he had selected such terms as must have been most offensive had Jesus Christ been of a lofty, imperious, uncondescending spirit. Who is Thomas that he should put his hands into those wounds so lately healed; that side pierced by the soldier’s spear? Is Thomas to make a road again to that sacred heart? Strange that he should have asked so mysterious a sign to strengthen his faith! What! was there no other way of believing in his Lord but that he must pass into the very wounds of that blessed body his finger and his hand? Ah! see how presumptuous the servant; see, also, how sympathising the Master! Was it not asking too much — far too much? Such a prayer ought not to have come from a disciple who had never forsaken his Master, much less from Thomas, who had fled with the rest, and had been absent when the Apostles had gathered together and seen the Master. But yet Jesus is so forbearing towards him. I know not whether to wonder more at the impertinence of the servants or the clemency of the Master. Let us take the lesson to ourselves. Have we during the past week fallen into a signal state of gross unbelief? Have we been thinking hard thoughts of God? Has some sin suspended our communion with our

Savior? Are we now cold at heart and void of spiritual emotion? Do we feel quite unworthy to draw near unto him who loved us with so great a love? Be not desponding. The God of all patience will not desert you. The love which our Lord Jesus Christ bears to his people is so great that he passeth by their transgression, iniquity, and sin. No; there is no anger on his part to divide you from your Lord. Behold! he cometh over the mountains of your sins; he leapeth over the hills of your follies. Since he thus graciously comes to you, will you not gladly come to him? Do not think for a moment that he will frown or repulse you. He will not remind you of your cold prayers, your neglected closet, your unread Bible, nor will he chide you for losing occasions of fellowship; but he will receive you graciously and love you freely, and grant you just what at this moment you need. I pray you notice the Master's patience. Come to him, dear child of his, thou beloved disciple of his, and have fellowship with him now.

While we are, speaking of the Master, I should next like to call your attention to the Master's great care. He had been to see his disciples once; he had stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you"; he had given them their commission, had breathed upon them, and given them the Holy Ghost. But there was an absent one. Well, "what man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go and seek after that which has gone astray?" There was one away, and Jesus must come again. There must be the same salutation of peace; there must be the same blessing bestowed again, for Thomas must not be left out in the distribution of spiritual gifts. Thomas ought to have sought after Christ, especially after having been absent on the first occasion when he visited them. He surely ought to have said, "My Master came to me and I was not there; I will, therefore, seek him, be he where he may, and I will tell him how I regret that I should have missed the golden opportunity of his presence." But, beloved, Thomas did not seek his Master. Therein he was just like to us. It is preventing grace, brethren — it is grace that is beforehand with us — even with our faint desires, which comes to us from Jesus Christ. Oh! how our Lord outruns us! Our sense of need is not so swift of foot as his perception of our need. Long before we know we want him, he understands that we do require him, and he comes to us to bless us. It was for one he came, and for that one who did not seek him. He was found of one who sought him not. You might have thought that Thomas would have been as well left alone a little while. We should have said, "Well, if he be so obstinate as to lay down such conditions, let

him cool a bit; let him just stop while in the cold till he is willing to come in at the door, and not to make conditions that he must come in at the window, or by some way of his own. So let him wait, for beggars ought not to be choosers, nor should impertinent disciples he tolerated." Yes, but Jesus will tolerate what we will not, and he will put up with us when we cannot put up with our brethren. We have not half so much to bear with from them as he has from us. Though Thomas might thus have been left, and deserved to have been left, yet Jesus came to him because he knew that his coming to him would be much better than letting him stop away. So, disciple, do not say to yourself, "I cannot come to the table tonight, I do not feel fit; I shall not strive after fellowship with Christ; I do not feel as if my soul could enjoy it." Nay, but it will do you no good to stay away. Will you turn aside from the Master, Will you refuse the symbols of his death? Be not so rash and inconsiderate, I entreat you. Why should he not come to you? Before that bread is broken, you may have experienced a delightful change in the state of your heart, and with pleasing surprise you may be crying out, like Thomas, "My Lord and my God." And, oh! is it not blessed to think that Christ does not stop till his disciples invite him? He does not wait for them to get ready for him. Nay, he comes to them and meets them, and finds them or ever they have sought him. If you are in the mood of Thomas, perhaps you may be insisting upon some signs and wonders, as he did. Know thou that the Master can give you his own sign, unfold his own wonder, and bestow upon you such a blessing that your heart shall scarcely have room enough to receive it. His tenderness and his care baffle all our thoughts and expectations.

Though we have already observed it, linger, I beseech you, upon the Master's matchless condescension. Behold the Lord of life, who had overcome the sharpness of death, and passed out of the portals of the tomb in triumph, having spoiled principalities and powers, and overthrown sin, death, and hell; the Son of God, at whose resurrection angels had attended, glad to wait as servants upon his royalty, that Lord — what think you? He must needs unrobe himself to gratify a disobedient, unbelieving disciple — yes, he must strip himself. 'Twere not enough to show his hands — that were kindness; but those hands must be touched, and those wounds themselves must be probed by a finger all too curious. It would have been profane, had it not been for the divine pity that allowed it. The way into his heart must be revealed. Well, well, but he did it. Angels must have been shocked when they heard a man say, "I will not believe unless he bare his

side to me” — still, he did it. Yes, just before he died, you will remember how he laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, and washed his disciples’ feet. Now that he is risen from the dead, he is the same Christ; and if he condescended then to wash his disciples, feet, he will condescend now to bear with a disciple’s ill-manners, and will even meet him in his infirmities. If they cannot be healed without a sight of his wounded person, he shall gaze upon his side again. He will do anything for the love of his people. There is no kindness too costly for Christ to show. Now then, you who, while eagerly longing for his oompany, hide your face, and blush for very shame, do you say, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; my heart is not worthy to receive thee as a guest”? True, you are not worthy; neither was Thomas. Yet you shall have his favor, and rejoice in the light of his countenance, if you sigh and cry for it. Doubtless you have been very far, during the week, from what you yourself wish you had been; nevertheless, He will blot out your iniquities like a cloud, and your transgressions like a thick cloud.” Your old friend may have passed you in the street and did not recognize you, because you are now so poor, but Jesus knows you. No one, peradventure, knows the privations you have had to put up with, poor Christian. You fancy you are despised and neglected by everybody — perhaps it may be your fancy, yet it is cutting to the heart even to think that your Christian brethren look down upon you. But Jesus never looks down contemptuously on his people. He condescends to stand on their platform, and put himself on a level with them with a sacred familiarity suited to their case. Full often he draws most near with most engaging smiles to those who are in saddest plight. This is how Jesus is wont to act. He never speaks proudly and loftily. His condescension unto his children, like his watchfulness over them, is unvarying.

Once more. The Master’s bounty challenges our admiration and our confidence. When Thomas had received what he asked for, you might easily have conjectured that he would be put down in the second class of disciples. Instead of that, however, he was well commended in the apostleship, and though not present when Jesus breathed on them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” yet on the Day of Pentecost Thomas received the same cloven tongue and the same power as the rest. Indeed, we have reason to believe that Thomas became as earnest an apostle, as faithful a witness, and as blessed a martyr of the faith of Christ, as either Peter or James. The Master will not stint his goodness because we once

and again betray our meanness. No, beloved; he will give us according to our ability to receive. If we are not able to receive to-day, he will enlarge our desires and expand our capacities. till to-morrow we may be able to receive from his fullness, and grace for grace. Come, then, ye hungry, starving souls, ye believers who are coming near to penury and spiritual bankruptcy, draw near in the spirit of love to Christ, who is as certainly present in this place with us as he was with them in that chamber where the twelve were gathered. Draw nigh in spirit and in truth to him, and your souls shall be enriched to your own profit and to the glory of God. And now I have a few words to say about: —

II. THE SERVANT.

Thomas, struck with the Master's knowledge of what had been going on in his heart. and overwhelmed with the manifestation of the Master's presence and his power, exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." These five words are full of meaning. Let me endeavor to interpret them to you. First, they were an expression of faith. Thomas now avows the faith which a foretime he had disclaimed. "I will not believe," said he, "except-except-except." Now he believes a great deal more than some of the other Apostles did; so he openly avows it. He was the first divine who ever taught the Deity of Christ from his wounds. Nor has every divine since then been able to see the Deity of Christ in his wounded humanity risen from the dead. This Thomas did. He declared the proper humanity of Christ when he touched him, and he declared his proper Deity when he avowed him to be both Lord and God. Thomas was slow in arriving at facts, but he had a comprehensive mind, and when he did arrive at a conviction he grasped it thoroughly in all its bearings. Peter would be impetuous, and leap to a result, but Thomas must consider the circumstances, weigh the testimony, try, judge, and prove the evidences before he acknowledged a truth. When his judgment did yield assent he was firm; there was no shaking, he understood the truth he adhered to better than others. Delightful in the ear of Christ, my brethren, is the expression of our faith. Let none of us hesitate to go over in our minds our avowal of faith in him "who liveth and was dead, and is alive, for evermore." It well becomes us sometimes to perform what the Catholics call "acts of faith." I mean in holy contemplation and quiet meditation, to declare before the Lord that we believe in the facts that are made known to us, and the doctrines that have been delivered to us. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God — for ever he his name adored; that he is self-existent,

and full of power and glory; we believe that he laid aside that glory, and became a man in the likeness of sinful flesh; that he did not; disdain to sleep upon his virgin mother's breast. He lived a life of holiness, and died a death of scorn and ignominy; he slept in the tomb, and the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, he sitteth at the right hand of God, even the Father; he reigneth over all things for his people, having power over all flesh that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him; he shall shortly come to judge the quick and the dead; amongst the sons of men he shall reign; he shall sit upon the throne of his Father David; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.

The short but expressive avowal of faith which Thomas made suggests to me this word of counsel. We should frequently make before God a declaration of our faith in the Deity of our Lord Christ, and in all the glories which surround his character. Let this be done vocally when you can — or otherwise mentally — for the exercise is profitable. But these words. "My Lord and my God," sound a little different to me from a simple avowal of faith. It was, as someone has said, like the cry of a dove that at last had found its mate. Poor Thomas. He doubted his Master, but he wanted him, and could not be happy without him. Now he has come flying back, and he has found him, and he seems to put his head, as it were, into the bosom of his Master, and to begin to weep and sigh like a poor child that has lost its mother in the streets of London, and, when it is brought back again, cannot say anything else but "My mother, and my mother, and my mother," and feels so happy to think it has found again the dear bosom on which to rest. So Thomas seems to say! "I have found thee, my Master, my Lord, and my God." He seems to humble himself, as though he would say, "How could I doubt thee? Where have I been? What have I been thinking of? What has my obstinate mind driven me to? What did I say? What did I ask? How could I be so impertinent? My Lord and my God! Thou hast forgiven it all, and in thy presence I seem to moan it out in those few words. Thy silly servant, thy foolish servant, but thou, my blessed Master, my condescending Master, "my Lord and my God!" Well now, beloved, there is something very sweet in this. Though I called it moaning, yet there is much music in it. Come now, you that have wandered, come and tell Christ at the table about it. Come and tell him that you are grieved, and that you are not so grieved as you ought to be. Tell him you are sorry

that you should not have lived with him day by day. Your self-reproach may well be keen.

***“Wretch that I am to wander thus
In search of vain delights.”***

Penitently bewail before him that you should have been so bewitched as to cleave to things below, and let your God, your Savior, go. Intense feeling commonly finds expression in few words. Silence is sometimes more thrilling than speech. “My Lord and my God” is the breathing of a contrite heart relieved in having found the grace it needs.

The ejaculation, however “My Lord and my God,” is the outcome of more than one emotion. If it involved a pang, it included an intense pleasure. Was it not a joyous astonishment which begot those words? It was so sweet to Thomas that he hardly thought his fellow-disciples would be able to appreciate so great a wonder. It was too much for himself, so he addresses himself to the Master, as if be alone, being the greatest marvel, could sympathise with him. “I marvel!” he seemed to say. “I could not have believed it. I saw the traitor kiss thy cheek. I saw thee dragged off with staves and lanterns to that lion’s den. I saw thee when thou wast in Pilate’s hall, tried and mocked. I saw thee when thou wast fastened to the tree; I stood there, and I saw thee bleed and die. I saw thy body taken down and wrapped in spices; and is it the same, the very same? Oh! yes; I recognize thee. I know those hands. I took those loaves from them when the thousands were fed in Galilee. I know that face; full many a time have I looked with beaming eye on that loving countenance of thine. I know that side; it is the same side I saw the soldier pierce, and I know it. It is the same; it is thyself, thyself, thyself, the risen Christ! Oh! wonder of wonders! I can say no less; I can say no more. “My Lord and my God.” Well now, holy wonder, beloved, is no mean kind of worship; it is, perhaps, no mean part of the worship of heaven. I like that verse we sing:

***“Then let me mount the starry way,
To the bright worlds of endless day;
And sing with rapture and surprise,
Thy loving-kindness in the skies.”***

Will it not be a surprise when we get there? Though, indeed, we shall see nothing in heaven but what we have been told of on earth for it will be just such a heaven as God has told us of, yet we shall say that the half was not

told us because we did not understand what we heard, and could not enter into the meaning of deep spiritual revelations. Oh! what astonishment might seize upon us now if we could really grip the thought, and I hope we shall! “Jesus hath loved, and lived, and died for me, and now he lives and pleads for me.” Oh! believer, get to see Christ now with the optics of your mind; see him now exalted in the highest heavens, though once rejected of men, and as with astonishment you behold the ineffable splendor of that starry throne, surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand of the chariots of God, and cohorts of messengers of fire, all waiting to obey his sovereign will; as you see the Man whose head was once crowned with thorns, from the highest seat that heaven affords claiming eternal sovereignty, bow your head in devout astonishment, fall at his feet, and, giving tongue to your rapture, exclaim, “My Lord and my God.”

And did not Thomas, by such an exclamation as this, renew his personal Alliance to Christ, and his positive consecration to his service? “My Lord,” saith he, “thou art, and I am thy servant; my God, henceforth Thou art, and I am thy worshipper as long as I live.” Beloved, years ago; some of us were first espoused to Christ spiritually. Fain would I remember those blessed hours when my young heart went out after him, and his blessed heart of love was revealed to me. We ought not to forget those times, for he does not forget them. He saith to Israel, “I remember thee the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals.” With what enthusiasm we sung: —

*“’Tis done — the great transaction’s done,
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on
Glad to obey the voice Divine.”*

Perhaps many years have passed over you since then, but whether they have been many or few, I am sure we have not been invariably true to those vows and resolutions; our memory of him has not been equal to his mindfulness of us. Now, if the Lord should come to you afresh, and give you a choice season of fellowship with him, would it not be a most suitable response to give yourself up to him afresh? Should we not often do this? Would not the freshness of close fellowship be peculiarly suitable for the renewal of our covenant with our Lord, and of our consecration of ourselves to his service? On that night you were baptised, you could sing sincerely:

*“High heaven which heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

Oh! that God’s Holy Spirit would enable you now to say in your soul, “Jesus, the despised of men, whom the great ones of this world know not, in whose blessed Person and redemptive work they will not believe, I take thee, my Master; I acknowledge thee to be my Lord; thy people shall be my people; thy God and Father shall be my God; thy blood shall be my confidence, and thy law my rule; thy love shall constrain my love; thy life shall be my example; thy glory shall be the one object for which I strive; thou, O Christ, art ‘my Lord and my God.’” So shall your faith abound and all your graces flourish.

Do I hear some timid voice from this congregation whispering a complaint? “Ah! there is nothing for me; he is speaking to the disciples. When the doors are shut, I am shut outside as a stranger. There is nothing for me; I am a sinner.” Oh! but I tell you, if you will but knock, Jesus Christ will come outside to you. The doors are not shut to keep out poor sinners from the presence of the Savior. Dost thou want Jesus to reveal himself to thee? Exalted in the highest heavens, he looks down upon thee now. His voice is calling thee, “Come unto me, and I will give thee rest.” Oh! poor sinner, if thou canst not put thy finger into the print of the nails, yet believe that Jesus died; then trust him and rely upon his merits. Cast thyself flat at his feet. Stay thyself upon his passion and atonement, and thou shalt be saved — saved now — saved without a moment’s delay. So shall all these other joys be thine, for thou, too, shalt be numbered with the family, and thou shalt feast upon the children’s meat, and be partakers of all the privileges of the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

John 20:18-31

Verse 18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

She was a true woman — one whom they had known well enough to be quite able to trust her, and her witness ought to have been believed, but there were some that doubted.

19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.

How he came there we do not knew, but doors cannot shut him out. Is there any door between my soul and Christ to-night then? Have I shut myself up in the chamber of doubt, despondency, unbelief? He can come to me. While the doors are yet shut, he can appear within my spirit, and say, “Peace be to you. “Oh! that he would do so! Do we not cry to him to come and breathe peace upon us?

20. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side.

That they might be sure it was he — the same who had died by crucifixion — that they might see how intimate he was with them — familiar — that his scarcely healed wounds should be seen by them.

20. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

Oh! for such a sight! There is a depth of gladness in a risen Christ. Those wounds preach peace and joy.

21-23. Then said Jesus to them again. Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Thus did Jesus Christ support and make for ever true the probing of his word. Do we declare that the sins of penitents are remitted? They are remitted. Are we, in his name, bidden to declare that “he that believeth not shall be condemned”? So shall it be. He will make the word which is uttered to be true. We shall not speak without our Master making the utterance of his word to be readier of fact.

24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

Perhaps he lived a long way off, or else, being rather slow, he had stopped about, doubting, and fearing, and questioning, and he had not got there in time; anyhow, he was not there. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is," for it will be a loss to you, as it was to him.

25. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Dogged, obstinate unbelief. Some have said he was a large-hearted man, who investigated truth. I do not see it. He had not gone to the tomb, like Peter and John, to look at the grave-clothes, and to discover that Christ was not there. He does not appear to have investigated the testimony of Mary Magdalene and of the others. He was just as narrow-minded as he very well could be, as I believe modern doubters are with all their boast of their wonderful thoughtfulness and liberality. We have only their own opinion, I am sure, upon that matter; and when a man sounds his own trumpet, there is not much in it.

26, 27. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then said he to Thomas.

For our Lord has a way of making personal application of his word. He looks after the sheep that is sick, and severs it from the flock, that he may deal with it in his wisdom. "Then saith he to Thomas."

27, 28. Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

And whether Thomas did put his finger into the print of his nails or not, we cannot tell. Everyone may think as he likes about that. He may have done so, or he may not, but this one thing happened, that he "answered and said unto him, 'My Lord and my God.'" He made a splendid leap from the depths of doubt to the firm rock of confidence. With two blessed "mys" he seems to grasp Christ with both hands, and in two grand words he pictures him, "My Lord and my God."

29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

That is the faith — the true faith — that wants no buttressing and props, but believes the testimony of God.

30, 31. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these have written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God: and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

God grant that the object of writing the New Testament may be answered in each one of us.

A PRECIOUS PROMISE FOR A PURE PEOPLE.

NO. 3542

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14TH, 1916

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” — Isaiah 33:17.

No doubt these words originally had a timely and strictly literal meaning for the people of Jerusalem. When the city was besieged by Sennacherib, the inhabitants saw Hezekiah in garb of mourning. How had he rent his clothes in sorrow! but the day would come, according to prophecy, when Sennacherib must fall. Those who counted the resources and estimated the strength or the weakness of the city would be far away; and then there would be times of liberty. The people would be able to travel to the utmost ends of Palestine, so they would see the land that is very far off. Hezekiah himself would come out in his robes of excellency and majesty on a joyful occasion to praise the Lord, and thus would the people's eyes see the king in his beauty. The passage, however, has been frequently used with quite another import, and that properly enough if it be thoroughly understood that it is by way of accommodation we take it, and that it is typically we trace it out. Have we not by faith seen our King in his robes of mourning? Have we not seen Jesus in the sorrowful weeds of affliction and humiliation while here below? Our faith has gazed upon him in the rent garments of his passion. We have beheld him in his agony and bloody sweat, in his crucifixion and his death. Well, now, another and a brighter view awaits us. Our eyes shall one day see the King in a more glorious array. We shall behold him as John saw him on Patmos. We shall behold the King in his beauty, and then we shall enter and enjoy the land which is at present very far off.

I think it meet and right to take such a word as this to-night when there are so many in our midst who are seeking and finding the Savior; because it is very certain that not long after their conversion they will have to encounter some of the difficulties of the way. Sometimes within a few hours of their starting on pilgrimage they are met by some of the dragons, or they fall into some Slough of Despond, or they are surprised by some Hill Difficulty; therefore, they ought to be stimulated with encouragements; they need to be cheered and consoled by the prospect which lies before them. You will recollect how Christian is represented by Bunyan in his famous allegory to be reading in his book as he went along concerning the blessed country, the celestial land where their eyes should behold the King in his beauty, and this beguiled the roughness of the road, and made the pilgrim hasten on with more alacrity and less weariness. Now I am going to turn over one of the elementary pages of this book. I want to show the young convert a vision pleasing and profitable for all Christians, young or old, the glory that awaiteth him, the rest which is secured by the promise of God to every pilgrim who continues in the blessed road, and holds on, and holds out to the end. Your eyes, beloved, you who have lately been converted to God, if by divine grace your conversion prove genuine, your eyes shall one day behold the King in his beauty. This may well inspire you with courage, and dispose you to endure with patience all the difficulties of the way. When God brought his servant Abraham into the separated position of a stranger in a strange land, it was not long before he said to him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look to the north, and to the south, and to the east, and to the west, for all this land will I give to thee and to thy seed for ever," as if to solace and cheer him in the place of his sojourn by the picture and the promise that greeted him. In like manner, ye children of faithful Abraham, you who have left all for Christ's sake, look upon your future heritage from the spot of your present exile, and your hearts will exceedingly rejoice.

We shall notice, first, the object to be seen — the King in his beauty! Then, secondly, the nature of this vision, for our eyes shall see the admirable spectacle; and, thirdly, we shall draw your attention to those to whom this favor will be granted. The context will help us to discover of whom it is the Lord speaks when he says, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Not all eyes, but thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty. What is this vision which is here promised to God's people? They are to see the King. They are to see: —

I. THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

THE King — a sweet title which belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ as his exclusive prerogative, crowned with the thorn crown once, but now wearing the diadem of universal monarchy. Other kings there are, but theirs is only a temporary title to temporal precedence among the sons of men. I had almost said theirs was a mimic sovereignty. He is the real King — the King of kings — the King that reigneth for ever and for ever. He is King, for he is God. Jehovah reigns. The Maker of the earth must be her King. He in whose hands are the deep places of the earth, and the strength of the hills; he by whom all things exist and all things consist; he must of necessity reign. The government shall be upon his shoulders. His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God. From the very fact that he is the Son of God, the express image of his Father's glory, he must be King. Because he condescended to veil himself in our flesh, he derives a second title to the kingdom — he is King now by his merits. Wherefore 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. For the suffering of death, he was made for a little while lower than the angels; but now, seeing he has been obedient even unto death, even the death of the cross, he has obtained a more excellent name than the angels, and he is crowned with glory and honor. He is Head over all things now. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. We rejoice to reflect upon him as King by nature, and then as King by due desert over a kingdom which he has inherited by right divine. He is King at this time by virtue of the conquests he has made, having spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness. In this world he fought the battle, and so bravely did he fight it out that he could say, "It is finished." He made an end of sin; he made reconciliation for iniquity; he trampled death and hell beneath his feet, and now he is King by force of arms. He entered into the strong man's house, wrestled with him, and vanquished him, for he is stronger than he; he hath led captivity captive, and he hath ascended upon high — King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns supremely, moreover, in some of our hearts. We have yielded to the sway of his love. We rejoice to crown him. We never feel happier than when our hearts and tongues are singing: —

*"Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all."*

I trust there are many more among you who have not yet yielded that yet yield your hearts to his power. Fresh provinces shall be added to his empire; new cities of Mansoul will open their gates that the Prince Emanuel may ride in, and may sit in triumph there. Oh! that it may be so, for a multitude that no man can number shall cheerfully, joyfully own his sway, and kiss the Son lest he be angry. But mark, the limit of his power is not according to the will of man, for where he does not reign by the joyful consent of his people and the mighty conquest of his love, he still exercises absolute dominion. Even the wicked are his servants. They shall be made in some way or other to subserve his glory, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The King is anointed upon God's holy hill of Zion. King he is. He has a bit in the mouth of his most violent adversaries, and he turneth them about according to his own will. What though with mingled cruelty and rage men attack the gospel of Christ, they strive in vain to thwart the divine decree. In ways mysterious and unknown to us, the Lord asserts his own supremacy. He reigneth even where the rulers conspire, and the people rebel against him.

Beloved, the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ, to which he is entitled by inheritance, is due to him for his merits, and in the equitable claim of his conquests — this reign of Christ extends over all things. He is the universal Lord. In this world he is Regent everywhere. By him all things exist and consist. When I think of him, it seems to me that the sea roars to his praise, and the trees of the wood rejoice in his presence. There is not a dewdrop that twinkles on the flower at sunrise but reflects his bounty; there is not an avalanche that falls from its Alp with thundering crash but resounds with tokens of his power. The Great Shepherd reigns. The Lord is King. As Joseph was made ruler over all the land of Egypt, even so, according unto the word of Jesus, all the people are ruled. He hath all things put under his feet; for it was of him the prophet sang of old, "Thou hast made him a little" — (or as the margin has it, a little while) — "lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." Though we see not yet all things put under man, yet we see Jesus, who, for the suffering of death was made, for a little while, lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. At this hour he rules on earth. Death and hell are under his scepter. Satan, and the spirits that have

followed his leadership, bite their iron bonds while they confess the power of the Lord Divine to be paramount. He can crush his enemies and break them with a rod of iron as a potter's vessel. His mighty power is felt and feared. But, oh! yonder, up in heaven, where the full beams of his glory are unveiled, he reigns in matchless splendor. The angels worshipped him when he was brought forth as the Only Begotten into the world. So spake the oracle, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Seraphim and cherubim, are they not his messengers? He maketh them like flames of fire. The redeemed by blood, what could they do? What is their joy, their occupation, their delight, but to sing for ever, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor, and glory, and dominion, and power"? Oh! tell us not of emperors; there is but One Imperial brow. Tell us not of monarchs, for the crown belongs to the blessed and only Potentate. He alone is King. As such, we think of him, and long for his appearing, when we shall hail him the King in his beauty. I love to see his courtiers. That is a happy hour in which I can talk with one who has my Master's ear. I love to see the skirts of his garment as I come in fellowship with him to his table. I love to tread his courts; I love to hear his voice, even though I cannot yet see the face of him that speaketh with me. But to see the King — to see the King himself! Oh! joy unspeakable! It is worth worlds even to have a good hope of beholding a sight so resplendent with glory.

Note well the promise, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Does not this suggest to us that the King has been seen, though not in his beauty? He was seen on earth as the prophet foretold, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And as seen then, we are told there is no beauty that we should desire him. There was a time when many were astonished at him. His visage was more marred than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; that was in the day of his humiliation.

But we are yet to see the King in his beauty, and I know, beloved, that in part that vision doth beam, even now, upon spirits before the throne. I would not exactly say that they have eyes, for they have left these organs of sense behind them. They have not received the fullness of this promise, yet in a measure they see the beauty of the King, that beauty which his Father has put upon him now that he has ascended up on high, and returned to the Father, having obeyed all his precepts, and fulfilled all his will. His father has already rewarded him. He sits enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high; he is adored and worshipped. It is no small

sight for our spirits to behold him and adore. But remember the spirits in disimprisoned heaven, without us, cannot be made perfect, so says the Apostle. They are waiting for the adoption — to wit, the redemption of the body — waiting for the trumpet of resurrection. It is then, methinks, that this blessed hope will be fully verified, “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” As Job puts it, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” Our bodies shall be raised from the dead.

*“These eyes shall see him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say —
Lord, who is like to thee?”*

From the dark chambers of the grave we shall come forth with all the blood-bought company of the faithful. Then we shall see the King in his beauty. What beauty that will be! We steadfastly look for his appearing when he shall come the second time. This personal manifestation must be welcome to the saints. To see him then must be to see his beauty. Our senses, relieved of infirmity, will be endowed with full capacity, our graces being increased and our spirits lively and vigorous to appreciate his wonderful person. As God and Man we do now believe in him; but how little can our faith anticipate the vision! We acknowledge the mystery which is as yet unveiled. How little are we affected by the wonderful information which must astonish angels — that the infinite can be joined with the finite, that the Godhead can be in perfect union with the manhood, the bush of the, manhood burning with the glow of the Godhead, yet not thereby consumed. ‘Tis matchless that the Eternal should link himself with finite flesh; that he should hang upon his mother’s breast, who bears up the columns of the universe. Strange conjunction! Till we wake up in his likeness we shall never thoroughly understand it. Oh! how amazement will resolve itself into admiration as we gaze upon him who has a nature that we have been familiar with, the proper divinity which no man hath seen or can see! What grandeur to behold! What rapture to experience when our eyes see the King in his beauty! The sight will overwhelm us. But in other respects than that which is essential to his Kingly dignity, the spectacle will be illustrious. In the hour of conquest he will take possession of a throne which no rival dare dispute. Judas will be there, but he will not think of

betraying him. Pilate will be there, but he will not think of questioning him. The Jews will be there, but they will not cry, "Crucify him." The Romans will be there, but they will not think of hauling him away to execution. His enemies in that day shall lick the dust. They shall be like chaff before the whirlwind in the day of his coming. And what will be the splendor of his glory when he shall be proclaimed King of kings in his beauty, with all the insignia of his royal power!

He will have the beauty of state pageant too, for he will assume once as Judge of quick and dead. Then will the trumpet sound, and all the solemn pomp of the great assize will encircle him round about. The vivid lightning will flash through the universe, and the roar of his thunder shall awake the dead, while an irresistible summons shall compel them to appear before his dread tribunal. From his searching gaze no creature shall be hid, and every eye shall see him. They also that pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth, shall weep and wail because of him. But to us that awful pomp will not be appalling, but a fit accessory on which his royal beauty is displayed. We shall admire the hand that holds the scepter, for we shall recognize it as the same hand that was once pierced for us. We shall admire the voice that condemns the wicked, and bids them "Depart!" for that voice shall pronounce our welcome, saying,

"Come, ye blessed." We shall admire the Shepherd's crook with which he shall separate the sheep and the goats, for it will apportion us to eternal bliss, though it shall dismiss the goats to their eternal doom. Thrice happy and most blessed shall we be in that day. Terror and trouble shall be the lot of the world; trust and triumph shall then be the portion of the saints. He shall be admired in all them that believed; and when that final judgment shall have fulfilled its destined purpose, he shall be in his beauty seen as the Conqueror of all evil, the Conqueror of sin, of death, and hell. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. How shall we see him in his beauty when death itself shall die! I cannot attempt to describe that beauty. It is far too dazzling for me to picture. I have dreamed of it sometimes in sacred soliloquies. My faith has tried to realize the facts which are revealed unto us by his Spirit. Still the tongue cannot tell so much as the heart hath conceived. There are unspeakable words which greet us in seasons of rapture which it is not lawful to utter. Whenever we are caught up to the third heaven in rapturous meditation we have but small news to tell to men. But how inconceivable to us now is the glory of Christ as it shall be when all his people are present with him in heaven! I have not touched upon the

millennial age or the latter-day glory. Your thoughts can fill up the vacancy. But what will be the beauty of Christ in heaven in that day “when he shall make up his jewels”? What are the jewels of our King but his redeemed people? What will be the ornaments of his state but those for whom he shed his blood? And when they are all there, then we shall see the King in his beauty with all his jewels. Beauty! A shepherd’s beauty lies much in his simple garb; a mother’s beauty — very much of it is to be seen as she appears in the center of a happy and lovely family. So, beyond all doubt, the beauty of Christ will be most conspicuous when all his saints are with him. I was in company with some good people lately, who were discussing the question whether we should see the saints in heaven. I do not know whether they settled the question to their satisfaction, but I settled it very well to mine. I expect to see and know all the saints, to recognize them, and rejoice with them, and that without the slightest prejudice to my being wholly absorbed in the sight of my Lord. Let me explain to you how this can be. When I went the other day into a friend’s drawing-room, I observed that on all sides there were mirrors. The whole of the walls were covered with glass, and everywhere I looked I kept seeing my friend. It was not necessary that I should fix my eyes upon him, for all the mirrors reflected him. Thus, brethren, it seems to me that every saint in heaven will be a mirror of Christ, and that as we look upon all the loved ones, gazing round upon them all, we shall see Christ in every one of them, so we shall still be seeing the Master in the servants, seeing the head in all the members. It is I in them, and they in me. Is it not so? It will be all the Master. This is the sum total of heaven. “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,” and they shall see the beauty of the King in all his people. Nor does it appear that the manifestation shall be ever withdrawn, or that we shall ever leave off seeing the beauty of our King. There is the mercy. “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty,” on and on, and on still, and on, for ever on, discerning more and more of the beauty, the inexhaustible beauty and splendor of the Sun of Righteousness world without end. The theme grows upon us. We must curb ourselves. We can but skim the surface as the swallow does the brook. Now, as to: —

II. THE NATURE OF THIS VISION, we know it is in the future. “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” You poor sinners must be content with seeing the King in his majesty. Happy souls who come to see Jesus on the cross! Oh! it is joy for them to look unto him and be saved. Behold the Lamb of God behold the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Boor sin-sick soul, are you looking to Jesus to be saved? If it be so in the present, then in the future you shall see him in his beauty. It will be a vision for all. Their natural sense shall discern the real Savior, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." It is not merely thy spiritual perception, but thy natural eyes. Does not Job express this conviction "whom mine eyes shall see"? Oh! yes, not as it now is with this flesh and blood, but still with this body! I call thee a vile body sometimes, my poor flesh and blood, and so thou art. Yet in thine origin there was something good, and in thy destiny there is something better, "Bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh." Born of a woman as thou wast, and fed on bread as thou must be, and though the worms devour thee, yet shalt thou rise again. Oh! body, thou art even now the temple of God. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? These eyes shall see him. They may be weeping eyes, aching eyes, weary eyes, and sleepy eyes, ay, or even blind eyes, or your failing eyes on which the curtain is being drawn about you your eyes shall see the King. When heaven is in sight there will be no need for glasses to assist your vision. Your eyes all strengthened to bear the light, as the eagle's eye, when the sun shineth in his strength — "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." It will be a personal vision. "Whom mine eyes shall see, and not another." It shall not be somebody else repeating another's testimony, "Yes, I see him." I like to hear what John saw, but I like better to have John's privilege; we shall be like John, and shall ourselves behold him. Can you realize it? You recollect in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* how Mercy laughed in her sleep, and Christiana asked her what made her laugh so. Mercy replied that she had seen a beautiful vision. Is it not enough to make us laugh in our sleep, to think that "thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty"? To think that this head shall wear a crown; that these hands shall grasp the palms; that these feet shall stand on the transfigured globe; that these ears shall hear the symphonies of eternity; and that this tongue shall help to swell the everlasting chorus. Oh! who would not rejoice? This is the wine which, as it goeth down, makes the lips of him who drinks to speak. Oh! that we may all have a personal sight of the King in his beauty!

And it will be a near sight, because it will be clear and distinct. "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." This does not imply a distant view of a remote object; a dim vision of the dazzling splendor; but you shall behold him in such close proximity that you can discern every feature of his person, every phase of his comeliness. You shall discern all the insignia of

his offices, his conquests, his titles, his dominion, and his glory. Now you only see a picture of him reflected as in a glass darkly, then you shall see him face to face. Oh! that the curtain might be drawn up, the veil rent, the vision unfolded! It will be a delightful sight. When he shall appear in his beauty, we cannot wear the vestments of our mourning and sorrow. As he is, so are we in this world. As he shall be revealed, so shall we be also in that world. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Thus we shall be beautiful when we shall see him in his beauty. He shall say to us, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is not a spot in thee." Oh! the delight, the pure unclouded joy, reflective as the light of heaven. What an introduction to eternal felicity this will be when thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty! There is no period, no finale, no end put to it. This is no transient spectacle. His beauty never fades. Our festival can never terminate. Long as he appears in his beauty we shall see him, and be enamoured of his loveliness. Is it not written, "Because I live, ye shall live also"? Without his people, without the complement of his saints with him, he would not be a full Christ at any time. "Know ye not that the Church is the fullness of him who filleth all in all?" So all his disciples must be for ever with him, and they must for ever see his face, and be partakers of his glory.

We find a remarkably full description of these people. Read the 15th verse. Their ordinary gait distinguishes them. "He that walketh righteously." "The pure in heart shall see God"; but if your deportment disgraces you, how deep will be your dishonor. Unholy creatures will never see a holy God. It is not possible Oh! sinners, what think you of this? You must be changed; you must be cleansed; you must be converted; the Holy Ghost must regenerate you; otherwise, you cannot walk uprightly or stand in the presence of the King in his beauty.

Next to this they are known by their tongues, "and speaketh uprightly." No liar shall enter into heaven. Those who talk lasciviously, those who swear profanely, the singers of idle songs, those who lend their lips to slander, backbite their neighbors, and circulate evil reports in malice — these and such as these can have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. Oh! may the Lord wash your tongues, rinse your mouths, and make them sweet and clean; else you will never sing the songs of heaven. "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly" is so far approved. But let him take heed to his commercial character; for it is further said, "He that despiseth

the gain of oppressions,” or, as the margin has it, of deceit. A man that gets money by squeezing others, by oppressing the poor by hard bargains, shall not enjoy the beatific vision. If you buy and sell, and get gain by lying, by false presences, by tricks of trade — ay, even by the customs that are commonly allowed, though they would look fraudulent if thoroughly exposed, you shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. How can you be gracious when you are not honest? He that is not able to hold the scales lightly, measure out an even yard, or make out a bill equitably, may well tremble at being poised in the balances of the sanctuary. When such as these are weighed, they will be found wanting. Thorough integrity must stand the test of disinterestedness. “He that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes.” Some men cannot help preferring coin to conscience. This is the way of bribery. Palm oil was largely used when Isaiah wrote. It is much in vogue still; perhaps not so much in this country as in others; but there are plenty of ways of receiving bribes besides selling one’s vote at the polling booth. How many men are bribed by a smile or a crown — bribed to Sabbath-breaking — bribed to the follies of the world — bribed to I know not what of error! But drop a shilling into a conscientious man’s hand, and he shakes it from his hand; he does not like the touch of it; he is like Paul, who shook off the viper into the fire. So the man who is to see the King in his beauty shaketh his hand from holding bribes. Moreover, “he stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood.” He does not like to hear of cruelty, of outrage, or wantonly causing pain. He stops his ears, he will not listen to any proposal either to gratify a resentment or to seek a personal advantage whereby his neighbor would be injured. In this wicked world it is often wise to stop one’s ears. A deaf ear is a great blessing when there is base conversation in the neighborhood.

The good man who thus keeps guard over his hands and his feet, his tongue and his ears, is likewise known by his eyes. “He shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.” He shuns the temptations to which a vain curiosity would expose him. Oh! if our mother Eve had shut her eyes when the serpent pointed out yon rosy apple on the tree! Oh! that she had shut her eyes to it! Oh! that he had said, “No, I will not even look at it.” Looking leads to longing, and longing leads to sin. Do you say, “There can be no harm in looking, just to see for yourself; are we not told to prove all things?” “Just come here, young man,” says the tempter; “you do not know what life is; one evening will suffice to show you a little gaiety, and let you see how the frolic is carried on. You need not share in it, you know. You

may learn a thing or two you never dreamed of before. Surely a man is not to go through the world a baby. Just come for an hour or two and look on." "Ah! no," says the man, whose eyes are to see the King in his beauty, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil never brought any man good yet, so please let me alone. I shut my eyes from the sight of it. I do not want to participate, even as a spectator. I do not care to look upon that which God will not look upon without abhorrence. I know that his love has put my sins behind his back; what, then, he puts behind his back shall I put before my face. That were ingratitude indeed! "Perhaps you say, "Well, if this is the character of such as shall see the King in his beauty, I shall never come up to the standard." "Nay, but you must, else you will never enjoy the beatific vision." "But I cannot convert myself after this fashion." I know you cannot, but there is One who can. Has not Jesus Christ come into the world to make us new creatures? It is his object and intent. "Behold, I make all things new." He changes a man, gives him new desires, new longings, and new hopes. And he can change you. Let me ask you, have you ever seen, by faith, the King? Have you ever looked to Jesus on the cross, and did you ever recognize that Jesus Christ, if he is to be your Savior, must be your King. You say you have believed in Jesus. Yes; but did you take him to be your King? Did you mean to obey him as well as to trust him? Did you intend to serve him as well as to lean upon him? Remember you cannot have a half of Christ. You cannot have him as your Redeemer, but not as your Ruler. You must take him as he is. He is a Savior, but he saves his people from their sins. Now, if you have ever seen Christ as your Savior, you have seen beauty in him; he is lovely in your eyes, for the loveliest sight in the world to a sinner is his Savior. "What is the latest news," said a certain squire to a companion, accustomed to hunt with him, who had come up to the Metropolis — "what is the latest news you have heard in London?" "The latest news, and the best news I have ever heard," was the quick reply, "is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "Tom," says he, "I think you are mad." "William," said Tom, "I know you are. I only wish you were cured of your insanity as, by the grace of God, I have been." Oh! that we did but all of us know Jesus Christ in his beauty, and could, every one of us, rejoice in him, as those do that are charmed by the sight. If you have not your eyes opened, you cannot see the King in his beauty. But if they are opened now, so that you greet Jesus as your King, and see beauty in him, then, whatever your former life may have been, its sins are forgiven — they are blotted out. Thy Savior's sacrifice, that offered such satisfaction to God for your sins, shall

give sweet solace to your conscience. By the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, you shall start a fresh career, and begin a new life. Be it so; and you will henceforth shut your eyes from seeing, stop your ears from hearing, shake your hands from all iniquity, and turn aside your feet from it, to live the life you live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, to his honor and glory. So shall thine eyes, poor sinner weeping, sorrowing, mournful eyes as they may now be — thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty. The Lord grant that we, all of us, may have a present earnest and a future fruition of this delightful promise, for his name's sake. Amen.

SPEAKING ON GOD'S BEHALF

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I have yet to speak on God's behalf.” — Job. 36:2.

So said Elihu. And verily many of us might make the like resolve. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious. When first we came to him laden with guilt and full of woes, we found him ready to pardon — a God with whom there is plenteous redemption.

*“Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen.”*

Still, we have the same tale to tell. God has been faithful to us under all circumstances. He has passed by our backslidings, he has been patient with all of our shortcomings, and he has borne with our waywardness. To this day his kindness has not abated, his promise has not been forfeited, and his covenant is unbroken; it has never failed us. In bounden duty, yet with cheerful gratitude, we are constrained to say that the Lord is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. On God's behalf, then, we will speak. Much reason have we to do so. While the world is scoffing or despising, while some are doubting and others are blaspheming, while idolatry and infidelity have their respective champions, we will offer our personal testimony of all the Lord's adversaries. Blessed be his name, he is a faithful and true God, and if all the dwellers on earth should belie and forsake him, his love binds us fast. We cannot, neither will we, let our trust in him be displaced or our witness to him be silenced. It seems to me that the chief business of a Christian while here below is to speak on God's behalf. Why is he placed here? Lower ends or meaner objects do not appear to me to resolve that question. Merely to work, to toil, to fulfill his days as a hireling, in common with the rest of his fellow-creatures, were a poor account to give

of a pilgrim to the heavenly city bound. Is he not suffered to tarry here that he may glorify his God by speaking on his behalf? Are we not, each one of us, appointed to linger in these lowlands, that we may personally bear witness to what we have heard and seen, tasted and handled, tested and proved to be true of the good Word of Life? This sacred obligation may be very heart-searching to some of you. I am afraid there are dumb tongues that do not speak on God's behalf; and which of us can escape a sharp rebuke on this score? for those of us who do speak, speak not as we should; we are not always giving such evidence, and bearing such witness as well becomes us on God's behalf.

I purpose this evening to mention some of the occasions on which we have yet to speak on God's behalf: some prevalent excuses for silence; some imperative reasons for bearing testimony; and some pointed suggestions to those who feel constrained to open their mouth boldly for the honor of God. To my mind, it seems obvious that: —

I. THERE ARE CERTAIN OCCASIONS WHEN EVERY SAVED ONE SHOULD SPEAK ON GOD'S BEHALF.

Is it not peculiarly incumbent upon us immediately after we have found peace by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ? He that believeth with his heart is bound, according to the gospel rule, to confess also with his mouth. Hast thou heard the good tidings, the way of salvation thyself, and believed it, and received the fullness of its blessing? Then thou art forbidden to hide thy light under a bushel; thou art admonished to let it be seen by all that are in the house. Thou art not, as a coward, to conceal thine allegiance to thy Lord, but thou art, as a warrior, to put on the King's livery, enter the ranks, and join with the rest of his people. Is not this the message we are told to circulate, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"? Should you not, therefore, avow your faith and confess your Lord in baptism; then, having believed his Word and obeyed his precept, take up his cross as one who is dead and buried with him in the outward type and symbol, to follow henceforth wherever he leads. This seems to me, as I read the Word of God, to have been the course with all the early Christians. They believed and were baptised. They did not postpone or procrastinate, but no sooner were they Christians than they confessed their Christianity in baptism. And why is it not so now? Would God that his people would come back to the simple methods of the early churches, and feel that, being saved, their next business is to give the answer of a good

conscience toward God, speaking thus on his behalf, and avowing themselves to be the Lord's people.

This is but a fitting preface to a life of testimony. The whole of a Christian's career should be vocal with spiritual power. By the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost within him, he should ring out, as it were, in silver notes, through all his conversation, both in the Church and in the world, a goodly, gracious, grateful testimony — "I have yet to speak on God's behalf. Even if I have spoken for the last twenty years, it becomes me yet to speak on God's behalf. "I may be gray-headed, I may lean upon my staff, I may come near the bounds of man's short span on this poor stage, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Even when pillows stay up my aching head, and when my flesh and my heart are failing, until the pulse of life shall flag, and the power of speech shall fail, our witness to the sons of men must never falter, much less must it come to an ignoble end. "I have yet to speak." When first I knew him I was constrained to speak. Would that every converted man was moved instantly to avow his Lord. But if we have aught to regret in the past, let us not be hesitant now. Say it, resolve it, ay, vow it. I have and I shall have yet to speak on God's behalf till speech shall fail me, till, dying, "I clasp my Savior in my arms, the antidote of death."

And oh! how specially bound the Christian is to speak on God's behalf when he is cast among ungodly men and women! There may be in the house where you live no lover of Jesus except yourself. Take care that your conversation makes the rest know that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of him. There is no other candle in the house; oh! put not the extinguisher on that one. You only are the salt; take care that you be sprinkled over the mass. Let the savor of your walk and conversation be diffused among your associates. At times the name of Christ will be blasphemed, perhaps, in your presence, or, it may be, unholy and even lewd conversation will assail your ears. It is for you to express your displeasure at anything which is displeasing to him you serve. You must put in a word, though you do but feebly thrust it in edgeways, for the Christ whom ungodly tongues are slandering. You may not sit still and hear your best friend evil spoken of; that were ungrateful in the extreme. Well might he say, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Should you smile, they will think you are amused, but if you laugh with them over an unholy jest, they would say you enjoyed it. "Thou also want as one of them" was a charge made against a professor. Oh! let it never be laid against any of us. If we see our

neighbor sin, and rebuke him not when the opportunity offers, we become partakers in his sin. Remember this: on such occasions it is our bounden duty to speak on God's behalf.

Yet again, we meet with brethren in affliction. They are mourning and bemoaning themselves and their hardships. God's own people commonly find that in all their trials they are beset with temptations. How apt they are to speak unadvisedly because they think untowardly of the order of God's providence and the manner of his love! I wish this ill-condition of the heart and this bad habit of the lips were less prevalent than unhappily it is. They talk as if they served a hard Master, and they murmur as if his providence were peculiarly severe towards them. I beseech you, seize the propitious moment to speak on God's behalf. Daughter of poverty! you who have known the pinch of want, tell of the faithfulness of God that supported you. Child of pain! thou who hast tossed so long upon a bed of affliction, changing your posture o'er and o'er, till your bones began to peep through your skin, tell, ye patient sufferers — and there are many of you whose pangs are smart, whose wounds are incurable — tell how God has succoured you. Be not silent, ye who have gone through fire and water, the furnace and the flood. Testify, you fathers in the Church, and you mothers in Israel speak on God's behalf of the goodness, the guidance, and the grace you have proved. Do not let the young recruits entertain hard thoughts of your Lord and Master. Tell them that the battle of life, stern though it be, does not baffle his counsel or his care. He who has upheld you will bear them through ten thousand billows, keep them alive in the midst of afflictions fiery as a furnace seven times heated, and even to the end will prove that he is their gracious God. You have yet to speak on God's behalf.

Now, brethren and sisters, some of you may not only have so to speak in the chambers where the afflicted are confined, and in the Sunday School where the little children come round your knee, and in your own families and workshops, but you may have a call to speak in the open streets, or in the pulpits of our sanctuaries. I pray you, then, if you have ability for such work in this day of blasphemy and rebuke, stand not back. I am persuaded that some of my brethren look for greater talents before they can speak for Christ than they have a right to expect at the first. If none are permitted to speak on God's behalf but those who have ten talents, surely the kingdom of God must be deeply indebted to the education and scholarship of learned men. But if I read this Word aright, it is not so. Rather has it pleased God

to take weak and foolish things to confound the mighty and the wise. Therefore, let not the brother of low degree keep back his testimony. If thou canst only say a few good words, say them. Who would withhold a few drops of moisture from the flowers in the garden because he had no plenteous streams at his command? Should every twinkling star cease its shining because it was not a sun, the night how dark! the firmament, how bereft of its beauty! Did each drop of rain refuse to fall because it was but a drop, we had lacked the goodly showers which cheer the thirsty soil! Do what you can if you cannot do what you would, for you, even you, have yet to speak on God's behalf. And, peradventure, you have more talent than you think; a little exercise might bring out your latent powers. Men grow not up to man's estate in a week or a year. Rome was not built in a day. How can you expect to be qualified to serve your God with much success unless you are trained with drill and discipline? If you begin to walk, or even to crawl on all fours, you may afterwards learn to run. Be content to use such powers as thou hast to the utmost of thy ability; for he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Do not reserve thy strength, but consecrate all thou hast, "for he giveth more grace"; diligently cultivate every faculty, knowing that he giveth grace upon grace. "I have yet to speak on Gods behalf."

I know not whether I am just now like the seraph who flew with a live coal, bearing it in the tongs, from off the altar, to touch some lips, to put it to anyone's mouth, and say, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." It may be so. Some child of God, hitherto dumb, may be called henceforth to speak for his Master. If you now hear a voice saying, "Who will go for us? Whom shall we send?" let your answer be, "Here am I; send me." Respond, in the words of our text, "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." Turn we now to:

II. THOSE ARGUMENTS WHICH READILY SUGGEST THEMSELVES TO SOME MINDS FOR KEEPING SILENCE.

Have I yet to speak on God's behalf? "Nay," says one, "pardon me, but speaking out for God cannot be accounted essential to salvation. Are there not some who come, like Nicodemus, by night? May there not be many believers in Jesus who have not the courage to speak out of the fullness of their heart? Why should not I be one of these secret believers, and yet enter into heaven?" You think to go to the celestial city by a by-road, unseen and unnoticed, hoping to be safe at the last. Suppose it true that to avow your

faith is not absolutely essential to salvation, I ask you if it is not absolutely essential to obedience, and I ask again if obedience is not essential to every believer as a vindication of his faith? Though you may tell me that there are many secret believers, I venture to affirm that you never knew one, or do you think you did; the secret must have been ill-kept if you knew it. Obviously, if it was a genuine secret, it must have been beyond your ken, or mine either, so we cannot fairly argue about it, and as we do not know that such a thing ever was, we have no fact to build upon. Surely to someone or other that gracious secret must have been made known; or what you tried to conceal someone would have found out. I should think, if your Christian character and conduct were not palpable, your Christianity could scarcely be sterling. Who can conceal fire in his bosom? Will it not sooner or later break out? The more wicked the persons by whom you are surrounded, the more readily will they discover the difference between a Christian and themselves. You can scarcely conceal the light; it must reveal itself. Why, therefore, should you attempt to hide it? Merely to do what is absolutely needful for salvation is a mean, selfish thing. To be always thinking about whether this or that is necessary to your being saved, is this how you would show your allegiance to the Savior? Should the self-denial of our blessed Lord and Master be requited with the selfishness of followers who are always muttering, "*Cui bono?*" What profit can I make of his service?" Oh! that we may be delivered from such an ungenerous disposition! knowing that Christ has done so much for us, and feeling the constraining power of love, may we rejoice to serve him, whether the service shall be grateful to our taste, or mortifying to our pride; so doing, we shall soon find that in keeping his commandments there is great reward.

"But do you happen to be of a very retiring disposition?" A beautiful disposition that is, I have no doubt, and rare enough in some select circles to claim admiration, but undesirable, indeed, on some particular fields at some critical junctures. For a soldier, when the battle is raging, to be of a retiring disposition would be neither patriotic nor praiseworthy. Had this dainty temper been the main virtue of the hosts from whence British heroes leapt forth, the trumpet of fame had long since ceased to resound the deeds of prowess of which every Englishman is proud. A soldier of Christ may well be modest in estimating himself, but he had need be mighty in serving his Lord. If he be too modest to avow his Master, this shameless modesty betrays a craven spirit, at which his comrades well might shudder.

*“Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No! when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.”*

Ashamed of Jesus! Really the words seem so harsh that they imply an insult. Yet this beautiful, retiring disposition, when translated out of the fine words in which you wrap it up, means nothing more nor less than a disloyalty which verges hard on treason. Ashamed of Jesus, who shed his blood for you! Ah! you must all confess that there is no violation of genuine modesty in avowing one's intense attachment and allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. This may be true retirement, after all, for you may renounce thereby the world's praises, repudiate her honors, bring upon yourself her loudest censure, and be requited with the cold shoulder by your companions when you take up your cross and follow him.

But have I not often heard persons say, “Why should I speak on God's behalf, when already some who do speak are hypocrites?”

This seems to me a reason why you should speak twice as much in order to counteract their false testimony, and why you should speak with all the more carefulness and integrity, making their example a beacon, lest you fall into the same condemnation. If a friend of mine has an enemy who is a snake in the grass, pretending kindness while he is plotting mischief, am I, therefore, to say, “I will forsake my friend, and not own him, because another is a traitor to him”? Such reasoning would refute itself; let us not, therefore, delude ourselves with its subtlety. The more hypocrites there are, the more need of honest men to grasp the banner of the cross. The more deceivers, the more cause why the faithful and the true, should come and fill up the ranks, and prevent the battle being turned over to the enemy.

Or do you hesitate to speak for God because you are afraid our testimony would be so very feeble? But why disquiet yourselves on this ground. Are not all great things the aggregate of little things? And may there not be something great involved in the motion of the little? A good word from your tongue may kindle a thought or a series of thoughts which may issue in the conversion of one whose eloquence shall shake the nation. You emit but a spark, but what a conflagration it may cause, heaven only knows. What though you seem tiny and insignificant as the coral insect; yet if you do your fair share of the work with your fellows, you may help to pile up an island that shall be abundant in fertility, and adorned with beauty. Thou

art not called upon to do aught that exceeds thy power or thy skill. Enough that ye do what ye can. God requireth not according to what a man hath not, but according to what a man hath. Therefore, let it be no excuse for thy silence that thou canst not speak with a voice of thunder.

“But,” saith one, “were I to open my mouth on God’s behalf, I should feel ever afterwards a weight of responsibility from which I could not escape. A man of God standing by that pool not many weeks ago said to me, “I dare not be baptised, though I believe it is a Scriptural ordinance, because I feel that it involves such a solemn profession. I should never be able to live up to it.” My reply to him was. “Is not that the very reason why you should yield up yourself to God at once; for the more we feel bound to holiness the better?” “Thy vows are upon me.” Should the profession of our faith in Christ become a restriction to us, it need not be regretted on that account. We want such restrictions. If we shall feel bound to be more precise, we serve a precise God, and if we feel bound to be more jealous, we serve a jealous God. I like to see men put upon their mettle. Members of this church, whenever the world picks holes in your coat and watches you, I am thankful to the world for so doing. It is good for our welfare to have an eagle eye upon us. What though Argus use all his eyes, let us only be what we should be, and we need not mind who criticized or carps at us. If we are not what we ought to be, but mere hypocrites, then, in truth, we may well wish to be hidden. Confess the name of Jesus, become a true follower in his blessed footsteps, and walk with all humility and carefulness, as his grace shall enable thee, worthy of thy high calling. Be bold to confess his name all the more? certainly none the less, because such confession will lay thee under solemn obligations to live nearer to him than before.

Still, I can imagine that there are many here who are urging some excuse or other, which they would not like to mention. They say they will wait a little; they will tarry awhile. Others say nothing, but are simply neglecting the duty. Well, I will not stay to argue with them, but I will rather pray that God the Holy Spirit may convince them, if they have been quickened from their spiritual death, and are this day heirs of God, to face their incumbent duty and their blessed privilege in all ways, and on all prudent opportunities to speak on God’s behalf. But there are: —

III. COGENT REASONS WHY WE SHOULD SPEAK ON GOD’S BEHALF, to which I will now draw your attention.

Surely it is demanded of all believers. We are bidden to confess with the mouth if we have believed with the heart. We have, moreover, the promise that “he that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth confesseth, shall be saved”; and this likewise, “He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven.” The alternative is fraught with judgment: “He that denieth me” — which signifies a non-confession — “he that denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.” If it be, then, the Lord’s will, it is at your peril that you forget or neglect it. “He that knoweth his Master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Hasten, then, thou backward Christian. Make haste, and delay not to keep this commandment; be convinced that thou hast yet to speak on God’s behalf.

Be assured that such testimony as you can and ought to bear would be a great comfort to the Lord’s people. You do not know, some of you saved ones who have never confessed your faith, what pleasure it would give the minister. I know of no joy comparable to that of hearing that one has been made the instrument of the conversion of a soul. It keeps our spirits up, and our Master knows that we have good need sometimes of some success to encourage us. He who thinks that the Christian ministry is an easy post, exempt from care and free and from trials, had better try it. ‘Twere better to be a galley-slave, chained to the oar, than to be a minister of the gospel, if it were not for the strong consolations which support us in the present, and for the divine reward which there will be at the last. He who diligently discharges this solemn vocation never knows rest or release from anxiety. His mind is always actively exercised in his Master’s service; his heart bears about a load which it cannot shake off. He dreams of some who walk disorderly, and wakes to sigh and cry over others who grow cold or lukewarm. He must plough the stony ground, and he can but regret the loss of his seed. He scatters the good seed on the way, and if it come not up by-and-bye, according to the promise, he crieth, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would the news be of your conversion. You saved ones ought, for that reason, to speak on God’s behalf.

And how encouraging it is to the entire Church! In the church assembly I am sure we often have simple music that is more thrilling than any of the anthems in your cathedrals. There is joyful melody in our hearts before the Lord when we hear of a brokenhearted penitent finding peace, of an outcast reclaimed from the wilds, an outrageous sinner led into paths of

obedience and holiness. Even the angels account this to be rare music mightily to be relished. I believe they strike their golden harps to nobler melody when they learn that prodigals have sought their Father's face. You have yet to speak on God's behalf for his Church's sake, that she may be encouraged.

Greatly, too, does it behove you to speak on God's behalf, for the sake of the undecided. Some of them would probably be fully persuaded if they saw your example. How many people there are in the world who are led by the influence that others exert over them! Thousands have been brought to Jesus just as those early disciples, of whom we read, that Andrew followed Jesus, and presently brought his own brother Simon to Jesus; or Philip, who, after being found of Jesus, finds Nathanael, and tells him and draws him to the Savior. We can all exert an influence of some kind; let us tell what God has wrought in us, and many a one who halteth between two opinions may, by divine grace, be induced to cast in his lot with the people of God.

Look on the great outlying world. What a mass of creatures whose lives must prove a blessing or a curse! Will you not speak on God's behalf for their sakes? Do you not feel constrained to bear your testimony against their neglect, their waywardness, and their wilful disobedience of the great Father? With habitual negligence and constant forgetfulness, they slight him who never forgets them, him who, with unslumbering eyes, watches for their good. Lay this to heart, my brethren, and come out, I pray you; be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing. You have your Father's promise that he will be a Father to you, and you shall be his children. You are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, why, then, should you seek to remain mingled with the world in name? Be distinct and separate; take up the cross daily, and follow your Master.

For your own sake, too, I would venture to press this upon any of you who are backward in avowing your faith. You cannot conceive what blessing it would bring you were you distinctly and persistently to speak for Jesus. That timidity which now embarrasses you would speedily cease to check your zeal. After you had once openly professed Christ, gifts that now slumber unconsciously to yourself would be developed by exercise. Rich comfort the service of God would then bring you. Were you ever to win a soul for Jesus, you would be happier than the merchantman when he found the goodly pearl. You would think that all the happiness you ever knew

before was less than nothing compared with the joy of saving a soul from death, and rescuing a sinner from going down into the pit. The bliss of speaking a word that should affect three worlds, making a change in heaven, and earth, and hell, as devils grind their teeth in wrath because one of their victims is snatched out of their jaws; as men on earth wonder and admire the change that grace has wrought; and as angels rejoice when they hear of sinners saved.

For the sake of him who bought you with his precious blood, seek out others who have been redeemed at the same inestimable price. For the sake of that blessed Spirit who brought you to Jesus, and who now moves in you that you may move others to come to Jesus, be up and doing, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. You have yet to speak on God's behalf, and these are the motives that ought to move you. And now let me close with: —

IV. ONE OR TWO SUGGESTIONS.

Should you feel, dear friends, that you ought to speak on God's behalf — and I hope you do feel it — whether brethren in public ministry, or sisters in the privacy of social circles, I would counsel you, before you begin to speak, to seek of God guidance as to how you shall speak on his behalf. There are better words spoken of by the ignorant when they wait upon God than by the wise when they speak out of their own heads. It is wonderful to read the answers which some of the martyrs gave to their accusers. Think of that woman, Anne Askew, how, after being racked and tortured, she nonplussed the priests. It is really marvellous to read how she overcame them. And there was my Lord Mayor of London — what a fool she made of him! He put to her this question: "Woman, if a mouse were to eat the blessed sacrament which contains the body and blood of Christ, what dost thou think would become of it?" "My lord," she answered, "that is a deep question; I had rather thou wouldest answer it thyself. My Lord Mayor, what dost thou think would become of the mouse that should do that," "I verily believe" said the Lord Mayor, whose ears must have been preternaturally long, "I verily believe the mouse would be damned!" And what said Anne Askew? Why, what could she reply better than this, "Alas! poor mouse." Often a few short words, three or four words, have met the case when the martyrs have waited upon God, and they have made their adversaries seem so ridiculous that methinks they might hear a laugh both

from heaven and hell at once at their foolery, for God's servants have convicted them of folly and put them to shame. Ask what thou shouldest say, particularly when men would wrest thy words, and when they would catch thee in the speech. Be like thy Master sometimes — stoop down and write on the ground; wait a while. Sometimes a question is best answered by another question. Ask your Master to teach you that rhetoric which confounds men who would catch you in your speech.

And if you seek the conversion of others, especially recollect that it is words from God's mouth rather than words from your mouth that will effect it; ask the Master, for he knows how to draw the bow when you cannot. You might draw it at a venture, but he can draw at a certainty, so that the arrows shall surely pierce between the joints of the armor. Here is a prayer for every man and woman that has to speak for Jesus: "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

And look to the Holy Ghost, that he would bless what he directs you to say. 'Twere better to speak five words by the promptings of the Holy Spirit than to utter whole volumes without his guidance. Better be filled with silent musings by the blessed Spirit of God than pour forth floods of words and sentences, however piquant, without his influence. There is an irresistible power about the man who hath an unction from the Holy One which Demosthenes or Pericles, Cicero or Socrates, never dreamed of. Put the man up to speak to his fellow-men who is endowed with this mysterious power, and he will make hearts of stone melt, and force a way for the truth of God through gates of brass and bars of triple steel. Where the Divine Witness attests the word spoken there is a majesty in the simplest utterances that carries conviction to the heart, while it makes Satan and all his myrmidons tremble. Seek for this might. Tarry at Jerusalem till thou art endowed with power from on high, and then speak boldly on God's behalf. Wherever thy calling may be, and whenever thy opportunity shall arise, speak as one whose heart has been enlarged, as one whose mouth has been opened, as one who is filled with the Spirit.

Very earnestly would I caution you young Christians not to put off or delay speaking, otherwise you will lack the facility you might quickly attain by habitually attending to it. An aptitude for speaking to people one by one is very desirable. I know some brethren in the ministry whom I greatly envy for the possession of a talent which I do not possess in the same proportion as they do. The genius of conversation so sanctified that one can be

personal and yet prudent; plain and pointed, yet withal pleasant; administering a rebuke without endangering a rebuff; winning a man's confidence while wounding his pride, and commending the gospel by the courtesousness with which it is stated — that is a power of utterance to be emulated by us all. We are too apt to be ambitious of speaking to the many, and oblivious of the talking power that can adroitly speak to a friend. Begin early, then, after your conversion to speak one by one with your kinsfolk and acquaintance. Keep up the practice. Should you find yourselves getting sluggish, so that it becomes irksome to you, seek unto the Lord, confess your sin before him. The tact of speaking to individuals is worth all the study and attention you can bestow upon it. Ask for wisdom and prudence to know when to speak, and how to speak. It is not every fisherman that can catch fish. There is a knack about it, and so there is about speaking for Christ. There is a suitable time, and there is a suitable way. Why, there are some people who, if they were to try to speak for Christ, would do mischief. They have got such forbidding faces, such ungainly manners, such a coarse way of expressing themselves, that in spite of good intentions, they rather hinder than help. They expect to catch their flies with vinegar, but they will never succeed or be able to do it. If they could learn to be kind and genial, affable and sympathetic, they would be far more likely to succeed. There are men who put the truth in such a shape that it looks like a lie. There are other men who do a good deal with so little delicacy that they affront those they intend to oblige. Do let us learn, when we speak for God, to speak in the best possible manner, exercising all the Christian graces. Of our blessed Lord it was said, "Never man spake like this man." Of us who are his humble followers may it be observed that we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him.

God grant you, believers all, grace to speak for God; and you unbelievers, may you be brought to trust the Master and to love them, and then speak for him; and his be the praise, though yours the profit. Amen.

THE ONLY ROAD.

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON THE LORD'S-DAY EVENING, 31ST MAR, 1872

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” — John 14:6.

JESUS had been speaking about the Father, about his going to the Father, about the Father's house, and about going there, and he was asked by Thomas this question, “We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” We are to understand this verse as being an answer to that question. He tells him where he was going, namely, to the Father, and also the way to the Father, namely, by himself. Now this verse has been read, and read, too, with a great deal of profit, without always being read correctly. For instance, suppose I were to divide my sermon into three parts to-night, and show that, first, Christ is the way; secondly, that he is the truth; and thirdly, that he is the life. I do not think I should be able to give you the meaning of the text, for you will observe that he is not speaking about three things — he does not say, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”; he is speaking about only one thing, namely, that he is the way, and then the two words, truth and the life, are put in to explain what he means by the way, so I think. Luther, taking the first meaning and putting in an and, for it is necessary to put one in to make it out, says Christ is the way; that is, through him men begin to be Christians; secondly, he is the truth, that is, through him they are instructed further in the faith; thirdly, he is the life, that is, through him they enter into eternal blessedness in the life to come. Now it is very true, but it is not the truth taught here; at least, we think not, certainly if we follow the strict analogy of the language.

Augustine read the passage this way, "I am the way, the true way, and the living way." But that is not quite it. There is truth in that, and it is more correct than Luther's reading, "I am the true way, and the living way"; but we cannot see the sense without some considerable violation to the language. It is true, but not the truth taught here, and what we want to do is not only to preach about the truth, but the truth that is in our text. It appears to us that this was our Lord's meaning, "I am the way to God." That is the great teaching — "No man comes to the Father but by me; and I am the way in this respect — that no man can come to know the truth with regard to the Father except he knows me as the truth; and, secondly, no man can possess the life by which he comes to the Father except he receives me as the life. I am the way to the Father in a double sense — of being the truth which teaches men about the Father, and being the life which enables men to come to the Father, and have practical communion." Believing that to be the meaning of the text, we will try and work it out.

First, then, Christ is the way to the Father as he is the truth; secondly, he is the way to the Father as he is the life; and, thirdly, taking the general statement with which the verse closes, he is altogether and in all respects the only way to the Father — "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." To begin, then: —

I. CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER SO FAR AS HE IS THE TRUTH.

He is so in this respect — nobody knows the Father until, first of all, he knows Jesus Christ. God the Father is to be seen in nature. He has painted every flower, and he it is that hangs every blade of grass with the glistening pearl of dew. But so dim is our eye, and, after all, so little of the more spiritual parts of his character could God reveal in mere materialism, that man does not behold God there. We are often told that we are to go from Nature up to Nature's God — just about as easy to go from the higher pinnacle of the Alps to the stars! The step is too long for human nature. Men have never taken it. Those men of old who ransacked nature — the old philosophers and teachers of the heathen — did not discover God. "The world, by wisdom, knew not God." Oh! what a maze of deities they had; what strange gods! What strange characters they gave to God! Our very children — in their classical learning in the schools, get their minds polluted by reading the deeds of beings that were called gods among the heathens; and still to this day. If a man does not form the same cross conception of God the ancient heathen did, it is partly to be accounted for

by the almost unconscious effect of Christianity upon men's minds. Men cannot form such ideals of God living in England as they could do living in Greece before the gospel had been preached there; yet every idea of God that is not drawn by men from revelation, and is not brought to men through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is sure to be a false one, a lop-sided one — an ideal of God in which some one virtue preponderates to the destruction of others. It is not God at all; it is a gross caricature of God; it is, in fact, no more God that men think out by reason than the golden calf was God which came out of the fire when Aaron had thrust the gold into it. They did not know God. You have only to take up the works of any of our great original thinkers who scorn to call themselves Christians, and though you will see that Christianity has moulded their thought, you will only see truth so far as it has done that, unconsciously to themselves. But where you get their real thoughts and reasonings, you will find that they have not come to the Father, because they have neglected the great truth which is in Christ, which is the way to the great truths which are in the Father, God.

Now while this is true with regard to the person of the Father himself, let me remind you, in the next place, that it is true with regard to everything about the Father. Now there is one doctrine in Scripture which is peculiar to the Father. It is the doctrine of election. The Father hath chosen us to be his people. Everywhere in Scripture it is put down as the work of the first person of the blessed Trinity — to choose a people to himself that shall show forth his praise. Now there are many persons who want to get at that doctrine. I have known many unconverted people want to understand it. I get letters frequently from persons troubled about it. They say that they should feel peace if they could understand that doctrine. But, beloved friends, if any such are here to-night, I will speak to them. You cannot get to election; you cannot get to the Father by a direct road from where you are. Just read that signpost. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Christ." If, then you want to understand election, begin with redemption. You will never understand the eternal choice till you begin at the cross. Begin with this, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Do not begin at the 9th of Romans. You had much better begin at the 3rd of John, "Like 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 everlasting life." You will be worrying yourself, and bothering your poor head, and tormenting your poor heart for many years, if you will try to get

to the Father first. Your business is to take God's law and rule, and go to the Son upon the cross first, and then to the Father upon his throne. It would be a strange thing if our children would insist upon going to the University before they went to the grammar school. They would never learn anything in that way, because the studies of the University are too severe for them till, first of all, they have gone to the preparatory school. It were an odd thing, indeed, if every man that took down his Bible should always begin it backwards and read first the Revelation, and if every man read the Lord's Prayer beginning at "Amen," and went backward to "Our Father"; yet some minds will persist in this. There is a charm to them about the mystery of sovereignty and election, and they must needs begin with that. Little children, why must you eat strong meat first? There is the milk for you — be satisfied with your milk. It will strengthen you. You shall have the strong meat by-and-bye, when by reason of use your senses have been exercised; but do listen to Christ's tender words, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." There is no way to election except through redemption.

And now another illustration of the same truth. Even the fatherhood of God is known only in Christ. This is what is mainly intended in this verse. It is not known as a truth till, first of all, we know the truth concerning Christ, and the truth concerning Jesus, the first-born and elder brother, is the way to learn the truth concerning the entire family. What a muddle there is made in this world about the fatherhood of God. According to some, we are all of us all alike his children, and he must be indeed a strange Father if his dealings with the sons of men are to be considered as the dealings of a Father. Indeed, we can very well understand why some have said, "How can we account for this pit of hell?" Would a father put his children there? Certainly he would not. And if God be a Father to all mankind alike, and in the same sense, then it would be utterly unaccountable that there should be any eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. But this fatherhood is a fiction, a sheer and clear fiction, an invention of modern times. There is another fatherhood in which God is the Father of the twice born, the Father of the regenerate. The God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and, next of all, those who are in Jesus Christ. And when you come to know Christ as the Son, and yourself as one with him, then you begin to know what the fatherhood of God means in its speciality to the elect, in its truth, and in its depth, and in its blessed outflow; that, being a Father, he chastens us, he loves us, feeds

us, guides us, trains us, educates us, and provides for us an inheritance which none shall ever be able to take from us. I venture to say it here again, that no man knows anything in truth about the fatherhood of God till he knows something about union with Christ — his own sonship by virtue of his brotherhood with Jesus. No man cometh to the Father but through the Son.

And now I shall take another point of the same great truth. It is commonly thought that anybody can understand the mercy of God — that, at any rate, we can get to that. But, beloved, an infinite deal of mischief has been created in this world, by a mistaken notion about mercy with regard to God — that God is not very particular about our sins, that he does not judge us too severely, that he knows we are a great deal tempted, and that we have strong passions, and that, therefore, he winks at it all, and notwithstanding that we are not what we ought to be, yet he will graciously overlook it and accept us. That is the common notion of God's mercy, but there is nothing whatever in Holy Scripture to support it — there is no grain of evidence that such mercy as that is in the heart of God at all. The Lord is angry with the wicked every day. He hates sin, even a single sin. He will by no means spare the wicked. He neither closes his eyes against sin, nor will he stay his hand from the punishment of sin. No man comes to the Father's mercy till he has learnt Christ, but when you come to Jesus Christ, and you understand that God took his Son from his bosom and put him to death in our room and stead that he might have mercy upon us without the violation of his justice; when we see how he made Christ to be our substitute, in order that he might freely and fully forgive — then we see what kind of mercy God's mercy is. It is not mercy to the sin — he punished that — it is mercy to the sinner. It is not mercy that thinks little of sin; for he put his Son to death when sin was laid upon him. It is not mercy that winks at sin, and treats it as though it were a trifle, for he made his Son cry out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a kind of mercy that is consistent with the fiercest wrath against every particle of iniquity. The Lord is a consuming fire, and will by no means spare the guilty. Every transgression shall have its recompense of reward. But yet he is a "God merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin," and this you can only know the meaning of when you know Christ as the truth that conducts you to the great truth of the mercy of God.

Equally the same remark might be made upon God's justice, but I shall not tarry upon that; I shall rather close these observations upon this first head

by saying that we do not know truly the power and dominion of God till we, first of all, know Christ. We may know God to be omnipotent, we may understand that he doeth as he will, but that truth in its real force never breaks upon the soul till it shines through the Mediator. I am alarmed to think of God's greatness; I am afraid when I think of his supremacy. That he can do as he wills I know, and yet I rebel; that he can punish me, that he can crush me, I do know, and I tremble in his presence; but I feel no love to him until I see his love to me in the person of his dear Son, and then in a moment I bless him, for he is omnipotent, for his omnipotence is all on my side. I bless him that he is the king. Let the children of Zion be joyful in the king. I thank him that he does as he will, I rejoice that he does; for he only wills to do that which is for the good of his own chosen.

You cannot love God in any one of his attributes, or know him aright and truly, unless it be through first knowing Jesus Christ.

Beloved, then let me say to you, gathering all up in one, you will do serious mischief to yourselves if you study any truth concerning God apart from Jesus Christ. Luther was quite right when he said, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God. I will not try to study him as God. I know that I cannot look at the sun; I must have a smoked glass to look though — I must have the person of the God-man to take away the blinding glory of the invisible God — invisible because too bright for my eyes to gaze upon. You must have God in Christ. I will not try to study anything else." Our preaching, if we do not preach Christ, is useless. We may preach what we like about the Father, what we like about portions of Scripture, but if there is no Christ there will be no good come of it. Somebody once said, "Why is it that the Methodists and others get people to hear them, and they have conversions, but you do not find crowds go to hear Unitarians, neither do you hear of conversions?" and somebody said, "There is no blood in the Unitarian religion, and the blood is the very life of it." Leave out the atoning sacrifice, and you have left out the marrow from the bones, and the bones from the body. The fabric becomes molluscous, soft, weak, powerless, yea, you have left out the very soul of the gospel if you leave out Christ the Mediator, Christ the surety, Christ the atonement, Christ suffering in our room and stead. As our preaching ought to be full of Christ, so let your studies of Scripture; be. Read everything in the light of Christ. Calvinism I believe in, but not Calvinism without Christ — it becomes fatalism then. I am thankful to hear the practical preacher who preaches the precepts, but I do not believe in his preaching without Christ.

He will get into legal bondage as sure as he is a man. The one thing that will keep preaching alive is to keep Christ in it, Christ at the top, Christ at the bottom, and Christ in the middle, and Christ all the way through. Many a man's theology is a very gold pot of ointment, but there is a nasty fly in it that will make it stink, and there is nothing that will get the stinking fly out of the ointment but Christ our perfume; he keeps our theology sweet and pure. We do not know Christ himself, nor anything about him to any saving and practical purpose, except in that way. The truth that is in Christ is the way by which we get to the truth concerning God. And now we shall pass on to the second point: —

II. CHRIST IS THE WAY TO THE FATHER AS HE IS THE LIFE.

We get life through him — then we come to God. But we are dead till we get Christ, and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. We are dead, I say, till we get Christ, and the place of the dead is in the earth, and not in heaven. Bury the dead out of my sight, corruption cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Now observe we never come to God till first we get life enough in Christ to have him as a hope of pardon. I never dared think of coming to God till, first of all, I saw that he had laid help upon one that is mighty, even upon Christ Jesus. When I understood that the only-begotten Son of God became man for the sinner's sake, and suffered in the sinner's stead, then I thought, "There is hope for me." And the next thought I had was, "I will arise and go unto my Father, and I will confess my sin, hoping that he will have mercy upon me." Is there one here that wants to be reconciled to God? Soul, thy only hope of ever being reconciled to him is on the cross; it is through Jesus, and through Jesus only, that thou canst have even half a hope that is worth having of ever being the friend of God. Oh! look thou there; go to his breeding wounds to get life, and thou wilt then begin to get to God. But it was further when that hope grew into possession and into faith — it was then that we came to God by Christ. Many of you recollect when you not only had a hope of being pardoned, but knew you were. Perhaps you remember the very day when all the load of your sin was rolled off your shoulder, and you felt light as air, though, before, your heart had been heavy as lead. You recollect that time. Did not you at the moment look at God, and bless God with all your heart? Did not you feel you loved him because he blotted out your sin? Did not you feel that day that you could talk to him, that you could praise him, that you could magnify him, that you could live for him, and die for him? I know I did. I knew I had come to God, because in Christ I had the full assurance

that my transgressions were forgiven me. The life that gives the assurance of pardon is the life which is the way by which we come unto God.

Since that, beloved, since we have come to God through complete pardon, we have often come to him in prayer, but I will ask you, Did you ever get to the Father in prayer except through the Son? Have you ever tried to pray and forgotten Christ? If you have, it has been a dead failure. Remember the Primitive Methodist prayer-meeting, where the brother got hampered in prayer and could not go on, and somebody in the meeting cried out, “Plead the blood, brother; plead the blood”; ay, and then the man began to pray again. You have always found it so I know — that you could not pray till you got to pleading the blood. I have many a time been with God in prayer, asking for a great blessing, and I have felt that I had not got it till I could come to such a text as this, “Do it, for thou hast promised it. Do it, for thou wilt glorify thy Son; do it for his sake, he deserves it, thou hast promised that he shall have the full reward for his soul’s travail; do it for his sake.” Then I have felt I have got it, for I had got the Father because I had pleaded the Son. The Son’s life within my soul had helped me to plead his precious merit, and the life that showed itself in the breath of prayer enabled me to get to the Father, God. You must have felt this, believers — you must have felt this, I know.

It is just the same when coming to God in praise. It is easy enough to sing a Psalm, pleasant enough to get a hymn and hum it over to yourself alone, but for real worship to God and thorough devout praise of him, you will never do it except you have been to the cross-foot first. There is no music that is sweet to God except Christ tunes the harp. If there be no blood on the harp, there will be no music such as God can accept. When the Lord touches the tongue, then it praises him aright — if he touches it with a drop of Jesus’ blood, not else. “Oh! let the redeemed of the Lord say so,” says the Psalmist — “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy” — as if he felt that nobody could praise God so well as those that had tasted of the redemption that was by Christ Jesus. The way for every chorister to come unto God with a sincere thank-offering in to come *via crucis* — by the way of the cross. Only in that way can he be accepted with his thank-offering.

But, beloveds I trust we know what it is to come to God as a matter of lifelong experience. It ought not to be by fits and starts that we come to the Father — like Enoch, we are to walk with God. It should be habitual with

us, to commune with the Most High. But, mark you, it can never be so unless it is habitual with us to rest upon the finished work of Christ. Lose your sense of acceptance in the beloved, and you will lose communion with God. Get away from the cross-foot, and you have got away from the foot of that ladder, the top whereof doth reach to heaven. There is no other ladder but Christ himself in his atonement. Get away from that, and you have taken away the bridge by which you can get to God at all. Fellowship with God must come through faith in Christ. The meeting-place under the law is the meeting-place under the gospel. Now, under the law the only meeting-place was the mercy-seat, the propitiatory that covered the law, that golden slab covered the law on stone. There God met with his people. And Jesus Christ covers God's law completely. Our sins are not seen, his righteousness, his propitiation, that is seen, and God will meet us there, but he will meet us nowhere else. We can only come, then, to communion with the Father by reckoning and resting upon the mediatorial work of the Son. And assuredly at the last we shall want to come to the Father through Christ when the veil that now separates us from the invisible world shall begin to be rent in twain. We shall long to be in the many mansions, and to hear our Father's welcome, but we shall have to die with Jesus, name upon our lips, in order to get there. We shall have to rise too; our spirit will have to mount with Jesus; he must give it the wing; and when our body rises, it must be in the image of Jesus and in the life of Jesus, or else we cannot come unto the Father for the glory entrance as well as the grace entrance. It is because Christ is the life that we are able to come. We have no way whatever, and no possibility of ever discovering a way by which in our life we can have fellowship with God, the God of our salvation, except by receiving life through Jesus Christ. Oh! men and women, I trust you desire to be at one with your Maker. I trust you wish to be friends with him who can crush you as a moth between his fingers. I hope there is a desire within your soul to have him for a friend whom nothing can endure to have for an enemy. If, then, you will come to God, there is the gate — that gate with the mark, with the blood mark; you must go through there — through the wounds of Jesus. You get to God's heart only in that way. He has shut every other gate of mercy, if there ever were another open, and this one stands open as the only one, but that is open night and day. You must come to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, who suffered, died, rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of his Father for ever.

Now we shall close our discourse by the third point, upon which briefly. The last sentence of the text takes a sort of sweep — a broad sweep. It does not state that Christ is the way because he is the truth, or because he is the life only, but it says without exception, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me,” by which I understand, first, that: —

III. CHRIST IS THE ONLY WAY THAT GOD HAS APPOINTED by which we can come to the Father.

The priest tells me that I must only get to the Father through him. He is a liar, and there is no other answer necessary to that; we need not enter into such a question to debate with him. I would as soon believe a cow, if it could speak thus and tell me that I was to come to God by it, as believe that I was to come to God through a sinner like myself. Nay, God does not come to me in that shape; he has better ways and modes. “There is one God,” says the Scripture, “and one Mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus.” In that way we do believe, but in the way of priestcraft we do not believe, and may God save us from it. This is the only one, the absolutely solitary way to God, for God never appointed another; that is to say, he has never appointed a way through ceremonies, nor a way through frames of feeling, nor a way through good works. What is the picture of the way to heaven by good works, Why, it is Mount Sinai all on a blaze, like Etna smoking and heaving like a great volcano. And where are the people that want to get to heaven by good works? There they are, down in the valley; there is a great ring set round the mountain. Why do not they come up in the first place, they do not want to come up, for the mountain is altogether on a smoke, and even Moses said, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” In the next place, they cannot come up, for there are bounds set about the mountain,” and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.” You cannot get nearer to God than that on the footing of works, for Mount Sinai is the symbol of works. Look to the flames that Moses saw, and shrink, and tremble, and despair. You cannot get to God that way. Calvary is the mountain. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill that God hath chosen the Calvary of the cross, the Golgotha of the tremendous sacrifice. There you can get to God; he has appointed that to be the place where you shall meet with him. Oh! do not try to find another way; be not so arrogant as to say, “This is my way,” but take God’s way and come humbly new to Jesus crucified, and you shall meet with God and find mercy and pardon to-night. It is the only one appointed way.

Next, it is the only actual way. You never did meet the man that did get to God except through Jesus Christ. I have known men who talked about worshipping the pure god of Nature. I knew one who never went to a place of worship, and when I spoke to him, he said, "I worship God in my own garden." I said, "Yes, I suppose that is a god made of wood. I think I heard you knocking him down the other morning," and I believe that is the true worship of nature. It does not go much beyond that sort of thing, and if you find out those who profess to find out God without coming to Jesus Christ, you will find their god is their belly, and that they worship pleasure, and they lie in their throat when they talk about coming to God apart from Jesus Christ. They do not come; no one ever did come; no one ever shall come — the majority of them do not want to come. He that casts off Christ casts off God with him, or he that says, "I would come to God, but will not come to Christ," contradicts himself. There is, deep down in his very soul, a hatred to God, to the very true God, or else there would be no hatred to the Christ of God. But Jesus Christ is the way, the only way, but, blessed be God's name, he is an open way. Whosoever desires to come to God the Father to-night may come through Jesus Christ. The way to God is open. There are no bolts nor bars, no bogs across the road to keep a sinner out. God's mercy is as free as the air we breathe to every soul that will take Christ and rest in Jesus Christ. This is the one condition — come to God by Christ, and thou mayest come. Come now; come with all thy sins about thee; come in all thy filth, and rags, and leprosy. Come, though the sentence of wrath hover over thee, and the black clouds of justice threaten to smite thee with the lightning of eternal wrath. Thou mayest come just now, and as thou art to-night, if thou wilt but come through Christ. We want a mediator between our souls and God, but we do not want any mediator between our souls and Christ. We need to get ready to come to God, but we need not get ready to come to Christ. You cannot come to God except you are washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, but you may come to Christ just as you are, waiting not to rid yourselves of one foul blot; just as you are, without any good thing whatsoever, without even enough goodness in you to be seen with a microscope, and with so much sin that scarce could eternity hold it. You may come to Christ, though you be almost as bad as a devil; though in some respects you be a very devil, yet may you come to God in Christ, but not to God out of Christ. You must come to Christ first, and rent the foot of the cross and look up to the atoning sacrifice. There is a way to God's heart for you, even you.

And this way is a most suitable one for all here present. You know if there is a ladder, it is no use to anybody if it does not go to the top. If I want to go up to the top of a house, and a ladder goes only half-way, it is no use. If I want to go to God, I want a way that reaches up to God. Now Christ is himself God. He will lead us right up to God through himself, if we get to him. But a ladder that went to the top would be no good to me if it did not go down to the bottom. Though it reached to the top of the house, yet if it only went half-way down, I could not get there. Christ is a man just like myself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born of a virgin, and was a sufferer of human infirmities, even as you are, and died as you will. He lived in suffering, as you may do. Oh! then, see the ladder has its foot in his humanity and, again, has its top in his deity. Climb it. He is a suitable Savior for you. What kind of man was Jesus Christ when he was here on earth? He was very holy, but was he very reserved? Was he distant? Did he turn his back when he saw a sinner? Did he get the other side of the street lest he should touch him, and so be defiled with the presence of a publican or a harlot? The Pharisees did that, but not the Master, for this man received sinners and ate with them, sat at the same table with them, and he was called the friend of publicans and sinners. Oh! sinner, what a Christ, Christ is! What a suitable Savior for you! Do not think to-day that he is the judge of sinners. To-day he is the friend of sinners. Do not look at him to-day as though he were the censurer of sinners, the critic and the cynic against sinners. No, but the lover of sinners' souls. Oh sinner, may his Spirit draw you to come to him to-night in these pews. Let this silent cry go up, "Jesus, Son of man and Son of God, bring me to thy Father; teach me thy Father by teaching me thyself; give me life before God by giving me life in thee. Thou art the way — thyself, in thine own person. I trust thee; be the way to me, to me, to me, unworthy though I am. Dear, dear Savior, glorify thy mercy by forgiving my sin, my great sin, and accept my unworthy person through thine infinite compassion, and reconcile me unto God." Oh! such a prayer as that will be heard. Have you prayed it? It is heard. If you do not feel it is heard, pray it again; keep on praying it but, above all, look to Christ upon the cross; count the purple drops as they distil from his dear wounds. Remember that he was God that died upon that cross. Sit and look, and look, and look, and look again. Look, I say, and look again, and if peace does not come with looking, keep on looking, and you will get peace there, and faith there, and life there. You will not take faith to Christ; you will get faith from Christ. Keep on looking; keep on looking. I heard a brother say the other day that what he saw he always

looked at, and that is a sensible thing to do with a great many things, but, above all, with Christ. If you see him, keep on looking at him. It does not merely say, “See Christ,” but “Look unto him, look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” God grant you that gracious life — look, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.