

LOWLY SERVICE NO. 2829

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 3, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1886.

“This is the service of the families, the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, its covering, and the covering of the badgers’ skin that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the door, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve.”
Numbers 4:24-26.

THIS is the gist of the whole matter—“This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: and they shall bear . . . so shall they serve.” The Gershonites were part of the tribe of Levi which God selected, instead of the first-born of all Israel, to serve Him in a very special manner. They were to act as the representatives and substitutes for all the first-born, who were set apart, as the Lord’s in a very peculiar sense. The Levites were, therefore, to be regarded as the first-born—a name which is applied by the Apostle Paul to all the regenerate when he speaks of “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” Jesus Christ is the true First-Born and all Believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Him who is “the First-Born among many brethren.”

The chapter we read tells us how the Levites were to be consecrated to their service. They were to be sprinkled with the water of separation and both their bodies and their clothes were to be washed with water. “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord,” is an injunction that is still binding upon Believers. We need to have both the water and the blood applied to us to prepare us for our solemn life-service as the consecrated Levites of God. “You are God’s clergy,” says the Apostle, according to the original. All who believe in Jesus, all the twice-born, all who are washed in His precious blood, all who are set apart by the Holy Spirit, are God’s clerics, dedicated to His service even as the Levites were of old.

Besides this, the Levites had all the hair of their bodies shaved off, as if to show us that in the day when we are consecrated to God, even our external life becomes changed. That which appertained to our old flesh is taken away and if there is to be, in the future, any beauty or ornament to our manliness, it must be a new growth, springing out of that body

which has been dedicated unto God—but all our old comeliness is turned to corruption and that wherein we once gloried is altogether removed.

Judge you, my Brothers and Sisters, how far you are true Levites unto God! This is what you should be and this is what you are, unless, indeed, you are reprobates.

It is worthy of note that these Levites, although they were all equally consecrated, had not all exactly the same work to perform. God is not the God of uniformity. There is a wondrous unity of plan and design in all that He does, but there is also an equally marvelous variety. He did not command all these sons of Levi to carry one particular vessel, or order them to bear one special curtain or board belonging to the tabernacle—He divided unto every man his own work—one had to do this and another had to do something else.

There are some of the Lord's servants whom He raises up to teach, preach, exhort and guide. These may, for the moment, be compared, in a certain fashion, to the sons of Aaron, though the type must not be pressed too far. But the Lord has also a large number of His own dear children who do not open their mouths to speak for Him in public and who could not fulfill the duties of leaders in His Church. Shall they be left without any service? They have but one talent—they have a shoulder which is strong enough to bear burdens of the Lord—though they have not much power in their head to think, or a fluent tongue with which to speak. Is there no office for them to fill? Shall all the body be a mouth? If so, what a vacuum there will be! Surely there must be, in a well-ordered body, eyes, feet, hands, shoulders, as well as the open mouth and the speaking tongue. So God has appointed to many of His servants a position and a work like that of the Gershonites—"They shall bear: so shall they serve." I must not, however, forget to remind you that all the servants of our King are burden-bearers! None of us may hope to go to Heaven unless we are willing to take His yoke upon us and to learn of Him. But there are some who are not called to speak or preach, but whose special function it is to patiently bear the burdens of life, the burdens of the sanctuary, the burdens of the Church of God and so to be accepted of Him as a living sacrifice in that particular way. I am now going to try to speak *of* such and *to* such burden-bearers.

I. My first remark is that MANY OF THE LORD'S OWN PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY BURDEN-BEARERS, like these Gershonites.

Let none of them be discouraged or dissatisfied because that is all they are, for the Lord still needs burden-bearers, even as, in the days of His flesh, He sent word to the owner of the ass on which He wished to ride through Jerusalem, "The Lord has need of him." If the tabernacle is to be moved through the wilderness, all the holy vessels and furniture must also be moved. There must be somebody to carry them—and happy and blessed is that man who willingly yields his back to bear the burdens of the House of the Lord and counts it an honor that he is allowed to do so!

Well now, among the burden-bearers of the Lord, *the burdens are very various*. There are some of His servants who are called to bear the bur-

den of a very laborious life. I am sorry for some of my Brothers and Sisters, when I get an opportunity to speak with them, because the hours of their toil are so long and the strain of their service appears to be bringing them to a state of extreme feebleness of body. And sometimes they also get to feel despondency of spirit by reason of the excessive weariness which their almost incessant toil entails. I know some beloved Brethren, to whom the Master would not say a single angry word if He even saw them asleep in the Tabernacle. I have often thought of what He said when His disciples slept, not when He was preaching, but when He was doing even more than that—when, in Gethsemane He was praying even unto a bloody sweat. He did say, “What, could you not watch with Me one hour?” Yet, in His amazing pity, He added, “The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.” It is still so. It is a pity that our present-day society, adapting itself more and more to a killing pace, works many men far too much as a general rule and, upon some of them, the stress of labor comes so heavily as almost to amount to actual slavery.

Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, albeit we would sympathize with you to the great degree, if, in the order of Providence, you are called to bear that burden, you will find it to be the part of wisdom to accept it as a burden from the Lord. I know it may sometimes be looked upon, and justly so, as the oppression of men—and in that light it is crushing—but if you can see at the back of that oppression, the eternal purpose of God, it will greatly tend to lighten your heavy load, or it will strengthen you to bear it. The poor Christian slave, in the olden times, although He might long to be a free man, yet often found, in his little hut at night, no small comfort by saying, “If, in the Providence of God, I am a slave, and cannot escape. I will bear even this as being permitted by my Heavenly Father and seek to glorify God even as a slave.” So, you see, there are some who have to bear the burden of labor. They might, perhaps, escape from it if they did wrong—but they dare not do wrong, they scorn to do it—and so their burden becomes a burden from the Lord.

How many others there are who have to bear the daily burden of pain! Oh, how many daughters of pain do I know, and sons of affliction—perhaps even from their birth the subjects of some grievous infirmity which has cast a shadow over their whole lives! There lies, at Dundee, at this present moment, a man who has been confined to his bed, I think it is now 56 years. I have his photograph at home and the friend who sent it to me wrote, “I send you the likeness of the happiest man in Dundee and one of the most useful, too, for he is a great soul-winner though he cannot raise himself from a constantly prostrate position.” He talks so sweetly of Christ and of the upholding power of Divine Grace that he leads many to put their trust in Jesus Christ. All over this land there are bed-ridden men and women who are the saintliest among the saints! It is an atrocious lie that some have uttered when they have said that the sickness is a consequence of the sufferer’s sin. I could not select, out of Heaven, choicer spirits than some whom I know who have not for 20 years left their bed—they have lived nearer to God than any of us—and have brought Him more glory than any of us!

Although we deeply sympathize with them, we might almost covet their suffering because God is so greatly glorified in them. All over the world there is a brave band of these burden-bearers. I think, sometimes, that they are like soldiers who are on night duty. The sentinels must not sleep, lest the enemy should attack the camp unawares. The altar must never lose the glow and heat of its holy fire and the lamp of the sanctuary must never be permitted to go out, so these sufferers, as they lie, night after night, watching the long and weary hours, keep the lamp of prayer brightly burning and the incense of intercession perpetually ascending to the Most High. And so the earth is never without the sweetening influence of saintly supplication. Their main business, like that of the Gershonites, is to serve God by bearing burdens.

Need I describe all the burdens that the saints on earth have to carry? There are some who bear the burden of poverty. A very large proportion of the excellent of the earth can be found among the poor of the earth—poor in spirit as well as poor in pocket and, “theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” It is their constant portion to struggle and to toil hard to provide things honest in the sight of all men, but it does seem, with some, as if they could never rise out of a condition of bitter, grinding poverty. Well, if it must be so, let them feel and say, “As it has happened thus unto us, we are like the families of the Gershonites whose service was to bear burdens.”

Some children of God are called to bear the very heavy burden of reproach. They have done no wrong and yet they are the subject of the jest and jeers of the ungodly. They have been faithful to Christ and their own conscience, but they are misunderstood and misrepresented. Their little peculiarities, which are scarcely faults, are exaggerated into crimes. A word which fell from their lips, perhaps too hastily, is caught up and echoed and re-echoed against them a thousand times. Men make them offenders for a word, and eat them up, as David says, “as they eat bread.” I have known godly wives suffer thus from ungodly husbands and, oftentimes, a dear girl who is brought to the Savior finds herself as a speckled bird in the family. All that can be said against Christians and all that can be said against hypocrites who are, unhappily, too often found in Christian Churches, will be contemptuously cast at her—and she has to bear it all, patiently enduring reproach for Christ’s sake.

If this is God’s will concerning us, we ought not to endeavor to avoid it, but say, “Well, it is so. If somebody must be struck for Christ’s sake, here is my cheek ready for the striking. If there is a handful of mud that is meant for a Christian, let it fall upon me. If the saints of God are to be scoffed at and scorned, why should I be allowed to escape the insults?” There was a king of the Crusaders, who, when they wanted to crown him in Jerusalem, spurned the golden coronet which they set upon his brow, for he said, “Why should I wear a crown of gold where my Lord and Master wore one of thorns?” Happy will you be if He shall enable you to say, as you look up to Him—

***“If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,***

If You remember me.”

There are some who have to bear this burden, so they had better bear it without wincing, for this is the service of the families of the Gershonites—to serve by bearing burdens.

I believe that some of God’s people have to bear the burdens of this wicked world. In the order of Providence, their lot is cast in the midst of the ungodly. Even in their own home they can scarcely eat a meal without hearing blasphemy. And if they go down the court or street in which they live, especially in the evening, they cannot help being vexed with the sight and sounds of sin. There are some of us who can be very glad and merry, for we have naturally great elasticity of spirit, yet we are bowed down, day after day, by the apostasy of the professing church of this present age, and by the way in which everything is followed except Christ! Every kind of false doctrine is popular nowadays, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ is derided as old-fashioned and out of date and I know not what. Sometimes, the very bread we eat seems bitter, and the air we breathe is contaminated because of the sin that is everywhere around us. Well, dear Friends, whenever you feel depressed and burdened on this account, so that you go like one who misses the light of the sun, say to yourself, “It must be so. This is what must happen to those who are of an earnest, burning spirit. They must be consumed with grief by reason of the iniquities of the times, for it is appointed unto the families of the Gershonites that they shall serve by bearing burdens—and this is *our* burden.”

I might say much more upon this head, but I will not, for you all know that the burdens which God puts upon His children, or allows others to lay upon them are very many and very varied. But this is the comfort of it, *their burdens are all for the Lord*. If they are in a right state of heart, this burden-bearing is true service for the Lord. Remember how Peter wrote, “For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called.” If the buffeting comes upon you for Christ’s sake, you are, in some sense, made partakers of His sufferings and you shall also be partakers of His Glory. A true child of God lives wholly for God. He is not merely a Christian when he goes up to the place of worship and sings the praise of the Lord, but he seeks to live for God as soon as he opens his eyes in the morning and until he closes them again at night. It is for God that he eats and drinks and for God that he buys, and sells, and works, and gives, or saves, or does whatever it is right for him to do. The Levite of old had no business to do in the world but the business of God—and the true Christian is in the same condition for, though he keeps a shop, or plows the fields—he keeps shop for Jesus and plows the fields for Jesus. He is not his own master, but he is the servant of Another, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is his joy to labor faithfully as a steward and a servant on behalf of his Master!

I wish all Christians realized this Truth of God. We have far too many professors who make their religion into a kind of off-hand farm. They cultivate it a little during the odds and ends of their time, but their chief

business lies with the world. Brothers and Sisters, there is no good to be gained by a religion of that kind! If you give God only the apple peeling of your life, He will give you simply the parings of religion, and they are generally very sour. But he who gives the whole fruit of his life to God shall receive from God the wines on the lees well refined, the choicest juice of the richest clusters of Eshcol shall be set to his happy lips. Blessed is the man whose very heart is in the ways of the Lord, and who has God's ways within his heart. May each one of us be such a man, for he is a happy man—a burden-bearer, but all his burdens are for his Lord.

And notice further, under this head, that *the burdens which are borne for the Lord educate the bearer*. I should suppose that the man who carried the golden candlestick knew more about that candlestick than anybody else did—at least it ought to have been a hint to him to study its typical meaning. As he bore that precious burden, it should have been his desire that his brethren should know what it was that he was bearing and, also, what was its spiritual significance. And in the service of God, this I know, whatever may have been the case in the typical instance before us, it is a fact that whenever God puts a burden upon the shoulders of any of His children, it is an educational process. We always learn much more by our griefs and woes than by anything else. God has often produced in us much richer and sweeter fruit by pruning than by any other process of His Divine husbandry. Take care, you that bear the vessels of the Lord and the burdens of the Lord, that you cry unto Him, “Teach us, Lord, by this affliction! Make this pain or this poverty to be a means of instruction to us. Make this burden to be the means of our growth in Grace, part of our spiritual training for a better world.”

II. There is much more that might be said upon this point, but I must pass on to the second head, which is that THE LORD HAS MADE APPOINTMENTS CONCERNING THESE BURDEN-BEARERS.

First, *He thought upon them*, though they were but burden-bearers. Here is a whole chapter about them and there are other chapters about these Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites. The Lord directed Moses to write all this about them. Possibly you have been thinking that the Lord only remembers Apostles and great leaders in His Church, but it is not so. He remembers the burden-bearers—the rank and file are dear to Him. “The Lord knows them that are His,” whatever position they may occupy. And though some of you may have to go from this service to a very poor home and though others of you have only crept out from your bed for a little while, and will soon have to be back there to endure new pains. And though you feel as if all that you had to do was to lie and suffer—well, the Lord knows all about it. He is thinking of you burden-bearers who are so much like His Son, the great Burden-Bearer! If He could forget all others, He would not forget you. You have to take up your cross daily, as your Lord took up His Cross, and God takes delight in you, for you are very dear to His heart. Do not think that it can be otherwise, but comfort yourself with these words. The Lord remembered them.

More than that, *the Lord had appointed each of these burden bearers.* You take up an odd coin and you read on it, "George IV, by the Grace of God, king of Great Britain." Well, I really do not think that the Grace of God had much to do with that appointment, but, if any of you Christians sweep a crossing, you might say, "Thomas Jones, by the Grace of God, crossing-sweeper." Or if the poorest Christian woman goes out washing, she might say, "Sarah Smith, by the Grace of God, washerwoman," for, if you are in your right position and bearing the burden which God has allotted to you, then you are in your place by Divine appointment! It makes a person wonderfully happy if he knows that his occupation is according to Divine appointment. It has been well said that if there were two angels in Heaven and God had two works to be performed by them and He said to one of them, "You go down to earth and rule a kingdom," and to the other, "You go down and sweep a crossing," the angels would be equally pleased to do their Master's will, for it is their delight to, "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

If any of you think that a very prominent position—a place of great usefulness and responsibility—is much to be desired, well, I would not recommend you to covet mine. I am satisfied to occupy it, for I believe the Lord has called me to this position, but sometimes when I go home with a very heavy heart through the many crushing cares of this great church, I cry unto God, "Woe is me that ever I should have been called to such a post," yet rejoicing all the while that I can say, with the Apostle Paul, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" If you, my Brother, have a little company of about a hundred people to deal with, be perfectly satisfied. Or if, my Sister, you have a class of ten or a dozen girls to teach, be content with that number and do the best you can to glorify God in your own proper place. Depend upon it, if you exchanged your burden for mine, you would not be able to bear it—and if I had yours, I dare say it would not fit my back so well as my own does!

Not only did the Lord appoint the man who was to bear the burden, but He also appointed the burden for each man to bear. In the 27th verse, we read, "At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and you shall appoint unto their charge all their burdens." They had not to choose for themselves what they would carry. One might have said, "I will carry the golden candlestick," whereas it might have been his part to carry some of the curtains or hangings. At all events they had nothing to do with that matter. They had simply to do what they were told. One word that the Christian Church needs to spell, in these days, for she is very apt to forget it, is the word, "*subjection.*" Be you Brothers and Sisters, *subject* to one another and be you all *subject* unto Christ.

But we do like to pick our work and choose our burdens. One says, "I like to do my work in my own way. I do not intend to drop into any kind of order and regulation." I do not know that I am speaking personally of anybody here. As far as I am concerned, I am quite satisfied with you, but I know that in many places, Mrs. So-and-So won't do this—she would have been quite willing to do something else. And Brother So-and-

So is hurt because he is not called upon to do that. Now, if Brother So-and-So would only be eager to take the lowest place, we could readily accommodate him, but his great ambition is to be over all the rest of his brethren and he is not at all qualified for such a position as that! Let us all ask the Lord to cast out that evil spirit and then to tell us what He would have us carry. "Lord, what will You have me do?" Down goes my shoulder ready to bear the God-appointed burden. "Send me to the top of the mountains, or to the bottom of the sea, only say what Your will is. It is all Your work and I will gladly do it. My cry is, "Here am I, send me, before I know where I am to go, or what I am to do! If I am but fitted for Your service, Lord, send me." Oh, that we all had more and more of this spirit!

Beside the Divine appointment of the man and the Divine appointment of the burden for him to bear, there was also *the Divine appointment of the time of each man's service*. These Gershonites were to be numbered "from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old." I am not going to say to any of you, "Wait till you are 30 years of age before you begin to serve the Lord." No, no, no! Let us hope you can do a great deal of good work long before you are thirty, and long after you are fifty! But this is the lesson for you—you have only to carry your burden for a certain length of time. The God who appointed you to bear it also determined when you were to begin to bear it, and when you are to leave off bearing it! When God says you are only to have 10 troubles, the devil cannot make 11 of them and *you* cannot reduce them to nine. Every particle of bitterness that is to go into your cup is dropped with all the care of a qualified dispenser—and there will not be one drop more of bitterness in your cup than the Lord knew was necessary to make the medicine just what it should be. I delight in this Truth of God, and I hope that you also do. It is an old-fashioned doctrine and this is an old-fashioned verse—

***"Though plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids, I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."***

Everything is appointed and determined, not by blind fate, but by an all-wise predestination! The wheels of Providence do not crush the Believer, for they are full of eyes so that as they revolve, they work our lasting good and never do us harm. I hope all the burden-bearers here will believe this blessed fact, that the Lord has appointed to all His burden-bearers the burdens they are to bear and the time they are to bear them.

III. Lastly, and but briefly, EACH BURDEN-BEARER MUST FEEL THE SACREDNESS OF HIS OFFICE.

All these Gershonites, though only bearers of burdens, were ordained by God. There is a great deal of fuss made nowadays about "ordaining" a minister. I was never "ordained" by mortal men, for I did not believe in having their empty hands laid on my head. If they had, any of them, any spiritual gift to impart to me, I would have been glad to receive it, but, as they had nothing to give me, I could not accept it. I believe that every true Christian is ordained of God to his particular work and, in the strength of that Divine ordination, let him not bother his head about

merely human forms and ceremonies, but just keep to his proper work and shoulder his own burden.

But they were all to feel that this ordination by God made their service a very solemn thing. He who carried a pot, or a pair of snuffers, or a flesh-hook, was to feel that what he carried was sacred and that he was carrying it in the name of God and, therefore, that he was to do it in a solemn manner. So the first command to the burden-bearers was, "*Be you clean.*" They were to wash themselves and to wash their clothes. O Sirs, if you mean to be foul, go and serve the devil! If you want to behave dishonestly, or lewdly, or selfishly, or unkindly, be a servant of Satan, because you will not do him any discredit! But do not pretend to serve God with those dirty hands of yours! What have you to do with touching that which is "all of blue" when you are all black? What right have you to drink out of the holy vessels of the sanctuary when your lips are leprous with iniquity? This is the most horrible thing about the Church of God—that there should ever be in it unworthy men! I have thanked God for Judas Iscariot many and many a time. I am glad he got in among the Apostles because we would have given up all our church life if we had not seen that even with Christ for the Pastor, and with His 12 Apostles around Him, one of them was a devil! It will always be so, but, oh, I do beseech you who are burden-bearers for Christ, be you clean! Go again every day to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and wash there, and may the great Master take the basin and the ewer, as He did for His disciples, and wash your feet, that you may be "clean every whit"!

They were not only to be clean, but they were also to be *very reverent in their service*. It was not to be a kind of happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss service—they must never lift up a corner of the covering to look curiously at anything that they carried—nor must they, even by their actions, seem to say, "We can carry these things anyway." Oh, no, but there must be real reverence about all their service. One man must take one part and another, another, with many a prayer and a continual looking up to that God whose holy vessels they were to carry on the behalf of His people through the wilderness. God still desires to have reverent servants—may He deliver us from a flippant Christianity! Oh, that He would save us, not from holy mirth, but from the careless handling of Divine things! It is an awfully solemn thing to be a servant of the Lord of Hosts. Jacob said, "How dreadful (how awe-full) is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." He felt that the Presence of Jehovah was something that filled him with awe—and for us to stand before the God who is a consuming fire, is no subject for trifling.

At the same time, although their service was to be reverent, *they were always to be ready for it*. They could never tell when they would have to take up their burdens and march. Sometimes at break of day the trumpet sounded, "Up, and away," for the cloudy-fiery pillar was moving! At other times they may have been sitting at their noon meal and, as they looked up, they perceived that the pillar of cloud had begun to move, so, as soon as the priests had taken down the coverings, they must pick up their burdens and then, each man in his appointed place, the load was to

be carried till the cloud stopped. The special thing for us to remember is that they were always to be ready. Our friends over at the Southwark fire station, some of whom are members of this Church, tell me that they are always ready to go off to any fire that may break out. I have asked them, "When are you off duty?" and they have replied, "Never. If we come to the Tabernacle, or go anywhere else, we are always to be on the watch for the signal that would tell us that a fire is raging. No matter what we are doing, at dead of night, or in the dawning of morning, eating our bread, or even if we are asleep, we must be up in a moment as soon as the call is given."

I have heard of a certain parson who was out hunting, one day, and someone said to him, "It does not look right for a servant of Christ to be wearing a red jacket like yours." "Oh," he said, "you see, I was off duty at the time." But when is a Christian minister off duty? When is *any* Christian off duty? We are never off duty and we are to count it a high privilege that we are always to be ready, at the summons of our Master, to take up our burden and bear it wherever He pleases.

Finally, *they were to do it cheerfully*. It is not recorded, in God's Word that any one of these sons of Gershon ever complained that his load was too heavy. I do not even read that one of them said, "Look, Moses, I am a full-grown man, yet Ithamar has bid me carry only a tent-pin. I think I ought to be allowed, at the very least, to carry one of the boards of the tabernacle." There is no record that any one of them ever talked like that. Their load was neither too heavy nor too light. In like manner, Brothers and Sisters, let us drop into our proper places. He who has redeemed us with His precious blood and made us to be the first-born among men, calls us to this service or to that. It is not our place to reason why, or to make reply, but to obey our Master's orders at once—and to do for Him anything, great or small—which He may command us.

I greatly fear that some of you are not the servants of my Master. Then you are serving another lord and his burdens, though they may seem little or nothing to you now, will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow until they sink you into the bottomless Pit forever! Have you never heard of the man who served a tyrant master? The tyrant called at the man's smithy and said to him, "Make me a chain. Find your own iron and out of it make a chain for me." "How long shall I make it, your majesty?" "Make it as long as you like and keep on at it till I come here again." He worked for 12 months and forged a long, long chain. When the tyrant came, he gave him nothing for what he had done, but he said, "Make it as long again." So the poor man had to go on hammering away at the chain. And when he had finished it, what do you think was the payment he received? The tyrant said, "Bind him, hand and foot, with this chain, and hurl him down into the abyss, bound by the very chain that he has, himself, forged." That is what the black prince of Hell will do with you who serve him! Therefore, flee from him while you may.

"I will think about it," says one. You will never get away from him if you act like that. The only way to escape from the devil is to run away from him without giving him any notice. Just as you are, at this moment,

escape for your lives! Look not behind you, for the only hope for you is to flee at once from the wrath to come. Do as the prodigal son did—say, “I will arise and go to my father.” And then, like he, rise up at once and go! He who deliberates about such a matter as this is lost. It is now or never with you! “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” The Lord help us all to escape, this very hour, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 8:5-22.**

Verses 5, 6. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them.* These men were to be the servants of God. They are the type of God’s elect—a people set apart unto Divine service, to be zealous for good works. “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them.” That is just the way that God the Holy Spirit takes Christians out of the mass of mankind and cleanses them.

7, 8. *And thus shall you do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his grain offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shall you take for a sin offering.* There are still, typically, these three things in the cleansing of God’s people—the blood, the water and the razor. There is blood, the emblem of the putting away of sin by Christ’s atoning Sacrifice. The water, typical of the Holy Spirit, by whom the power of sin is overcome. And then that razor, cutting off that which grows of the flesh—that which was their beauty and their glory is all taken away from them. There are some of God’s people who have not felt much of that razor, but if they are to serve God perfectly, it must be used. “Let them shave all their flesh.”

9-12. *And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation and you shall gather the whole congregation of the children of Israel together: and you shall bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and you shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.* There is no true way of serving God without the Atonement. Leave that out and you have left out the vital part of the whole. What service can we render to the Most High if we begin by disloyalty to Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin, even His dear Son?

13, 14. *And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shall you separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.* We are to offer up to God our spirit, soul and body, which is our

reasonable service. And if we are, indeed, God's children, we are to feel that, henceforth, we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. We belong wholly to God—all that we are and all that we have is to be His through life and in death—and throughout eternity.

15. *And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and you shall cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.* An offering must be presented for us before we can offer ourselves as an offering unto God.

16. *For they are wholly given unto Me from among the children of Israel.* Listen to this, you who trust that you are made like unto the elder Brother and the First-Born from among the creatures of God—

16-18. *Instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto Me. For all the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast: on the day that I struck every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel.* God's people are the elect—they have escaped from death. In that day when the sword of the Lord was drawn, they were shielded by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the lintel and on the two side posts and, henceforth, because they have been thus preserved, they belong to the Lord.

19-22. *And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near unto the sanctuary. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD, and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.* How instructive all this is to us! We are not to begin blunderingly to serve God while we are yet in our sins—before we have been sprinkled with the blood—before we have been washed in the water which flowed with the blood—before we have felt that razor that takes away from us all our own pride and glory! No, but when all that is done, then there is to be no delay—“After that went the Levites in to do their service.”

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE NUMBERED PEOPLE

1457B

WRITTEN AT MENTONE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

***“According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, everyone according to his service and according to his burden: thus were they numbered by him, as the Lord commanded Moses.”
Numbers 4:49.***

ISRAEL in the wilderness is admitted, in some respects, to have been a type of the Church in its present condition. The tribe of Levi was, in a peculiar and inner sense, the type of that peculiar people who under the great High Priest are set apart for the service of the Lord and His Church. To them the transport of the holy vessels from place to place was committed, each family of the tribe being made responsible for the safe and reverent transport of a certain part of the sacred furniture. Since nothing in the service of the God of order may be left to hazard, but everything is in order, those persons who in hackneyed phrase cry out against, “system,” ought to be told that the Lord has *always* had a system, not only in Nature and Providence, but also in His own courts.

There is an admirable “economy” in the palace of the great King—whatever of disorder, waste and riot there may be surrounding other monarchs—nothing of the kind will be found beneath the shadow of the Divine Throne. He who counts the stars and calls them all by their names, leaves nothing unarranged in His own service. His Church, therefore, should exhibit the discipline of an army and all His warriors should know how to keep rank. Though we are not under the Law, we are not without Law to Christ, nor do we wish to be, for His commandments are not grievous. At this season, when our Church is making a most earnest effort to glorify the Lord by seeking conversions, we would muster all the servants of our Master and summon each one to take his appointed place and service.

The work of the Lord is to be done, done well and done by us all most cheerfully and heartily. Gather, therefore, together and let each redeemed one take up his burden and bear it before the Lord in due order! To this end, like Moses, we would call you out, one by one, and give you a charge as from the Lord. Our text contains *authority for the muster roll, appointment for the individuals and account of the actual execution of the command.* Upon each of these, an *absent officer* of your company will try to say a little as the Holy Spirit may enable him.

I. Here is, first, **AUTHORITY FOR THE MUSTER ROLL.** “According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered.” It was not left to Moses to number the people without Divine sanction, else the deed might have been as evil in the sight of the Lord as that of David when he made a census of the nation. Neither may any man at this day number the saints of the Lord, at his own discretion, to enterprises for which they were never set apart. The armies of Israel are none of ours to lead where we will, nor

even to reckon up that the number may be told to our own honor. The counting of Apostles and disciples is lawful enough, for it was frequently done in the best days of the Church, but statistics may be taken in such a spirit as to be the occasion of sin.

In no such manner would we now number the host unto the battle, but would summon the chosen of the Lord to the Lord's work and in the Lord's name. Believers in Christ Jesus, you are now called forth to do suit and service, because, like the tribe of Levi, *you are the Lord's*. He views you as the Church of the firstborn, as the redeemed from among men and as His peculiar portion and inheritance and, therefore above all other men you are under His special rule and governance. The Lord said unto Moses, "The Levites shall be Mine: I am the Lord," and He has made the same declaration concerning all those that fear the Lord and that think upon His name—"They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

Upon whom shall we call to perform the work of the Lord but upon those who are His own? To these belong a devout care for the interest of true religion and an earnest zeal for the Glory of God. Obligations as powerful as they are, are honorable upon them. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Do you feel a shrinking from being numbered and called out for active service? Is not this an evil and unworthy sensation? Should you not far rather account it your *glory* to be called out with the dedicated ones?

Brothers and Sisters, you are further called because *this is a charge laid upon you of the Lord*, to whom you specially belong. The Levites (Num. 4:3) were ordained "to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation." They were not numbered with the rest of the nation, for their vocation was altogether different and their whole business was "about holy things." You see in this, your calling, Brethren, for you are also ordained that you may live unto the Lord alone. To whom does the work of God belong but to His children? Who should serve the Lord Christ and gather in His wanderers but those whom He has called to that office? If you refuse the honorable yoke, how will the work of mercy be done? Can it be left to hirelings, or will the spiritually dead perform the service of the living God? No, it is your charge and you must do it.

Again, Brethren, the Lord may well call you to this service, seeing *He has given you to His Son*, even as He gave the Levites to Aaron, as it is written (Num. 3:9), "They are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel." The Lord had also said, "Bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him." They were happy, thus, to serve the head of their own tribe and more happy, still, are we to serve the Lord Christ who is the Firstborn among many Brethren. Because you belong to Christ, therefore, hide not yourselves from His service, but come forward with joy!

Once more, *the Lord has constituted you the servants of all His people*, even as He said of the Levites that they were to "do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation." We are debtors to all our Brethren and we are their servants to the full extent of our power. The greater we are in the Church, the more are we the servants of all! It is

ours to fulfill this service, or else we are untrue to the position of Christians who are all called in love to serve one another. Here are a few of the claims which the Lord has upon you—will you not acknowledge the supreme authority which calls you to active service?

II. Under our second head we shall notice the APPOINTMENT OF THE INDIVIDUALS—“Everyone according to his service and according to his burden.” By our varied gifts, positions, offices and opportunities, we are as much set apart to special services as were the sons of Kohath, Gershon and Merari. One family bore the ark and the other the holy vessels; another had charge of the sacred hangings and a third carried the boards and the pillars and framework of the tabernacle. But supreme authority had set each family its own special service and burden. Even thus is it among ourselves and so let us see to it that we observe the Divine appointment.

“Having, then, gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether ministry let us wait on our ministry, or he that teaches, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation: he that gives, let him do it with simplicity. He that rules, with diligence; he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” Great evils arise out of persons mistaking their calling and undertaking things of which they are not capable. And, on the other hand, the success of Christian work, in a large measure, arises out of places of usefulness being filled by the right men. In the march through the wilderness the sons of Merari never interfered with the burdens of the sons of Kohath, or the arrangements would have been sadly disturbed—each one took up his allotted load and went on his way rejoicing, no one jostling his fellow.

If we could bring all our workers into the same order, how like an army with banners would the Church become and how beautiful would be her battle array! “A place for everyone and every one in his place” should be the practical slogan of our congregations and the people should be numbered, not according to worldly rank or self-estimate, but, “everyone according to his service.” It is to be noticed, here, that the Levites only rendered this service, “from thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old.”

We rejoice that it is not so among us under the Gospel, for there is work for the young people and also for the aged! Little children and young men and maidens may take their places among the servitors of the Prince of Peace! And he who leans upon his staff for very age shall not find himself dismissed from his Master’s beloved service. No women are mentioned as bearers of the tabernacle and its holy furniture. It was a work for which they were scarcely fitted and an economy under which they were seldom employed. Here, too, we have a great change, for there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus—and in their own way, the Sisters are our fellow servants, even as they are our fellow heirs. Never can women be forgotten in any enumeration of the forces of the Church! What could we do without them?

Let it not be forgotten, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, calls out *all* His redeemed to His service and that He lays upon each one a burden which no one else can carry. It should be the joy of each Believer to know what it is that his shoulders are permitted to

bear and then he or she should gladly take up the ennobling load. There can be no exemption unless a man will dare to claim that he is his own and was never bought with a price. Each one throughout life must be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

III. Thirdly, our text is the summary of the chapter in which we have an ACCOUNT OF THE ACTUAL FULFILLMENT OF THE LORD’S COMMAND BY MOSES. He numbered each family and cast up the total of the tribe, at the same time mentioning in detail the peculiar service of each. We would imitate him at this important moment and take the census of those who are consecrated to the Lord’s own service. Where are you, then, who can bear the heavier service of the sanctuary, carrying its pillars and the boards and the sockets? You are now needed to speak in the meetings, to lead the people in prayer, to order the assemblies and to take the heavier work of this holy business!

The Lord Jesus should have able men to speak for Him—He deserves the best of the best. Now is the hour, where is the man? Let no diffidence or love of ease keep one back who might make known the Gospel and win a soul for Jesus! By the curse of Meroz when they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty, we would charge all Christians of influence and ability to hasten to the field! But where are you who can only carry the pins and the cords? Your burden is lighter, but probably your strength is also less—and lighter though your load may be, the matters which you carry are quite as essential as the pillars and the boards! Where are you?

You who can say a few words to lonely enquiring ones; you who can do no more than pray, where are you? At your posts, or idling? Answer and answer quickly, for time and need are pressing! If the load which you can carry is so very small, be all the more ready to bear it. Are you a lover of the Lord Jesus and do you wish to be omitted from the roll call? If so, let it be known to yourself and stated plainly to your conscience—do not pretend to be a laborer and remain a loiterer—but openly avow to your soul that you stand all the day idle and feel fully justified in so doing! Deny your Lord His due, but do it to His face! Tell Him openly that you do not mean to spend your days in glorifying His name!

Do you shrink from this honest refusal of service? You need not do so because it is at all unusual, for as Nabal said, “there are many servants, nowadays, that break away, every man from his master.” It is plain, however, that you have no stomach for so clear a rejection of your Lord. Come, then, and take your place among those who are striving together to honor their Lord! At this time your help will be precious. Seek a new anointing and then hasten to the work. Is not the Holy Spirit in you? Does He not prompt you to seek the salvation of others? Is not the Lord Jesus the Model to which Grace conforms you? How can this be if you have little or no love for the souls of your neighbors?

Your pastor calls you, though far away! By all our mutual love he beseeches you to fulfill your ministry, every one according to his service and according to his burden. But, far above this, your God, your Savior, your Comforter call you with one voice! Can you refuse the heavenly vocation?

THE BLESSING OF THE HIGH PRIEST

NO. 2170

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons saying, On this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”
Numbers 6:22-27.

THE Lord has blessed His people and He would have them know it. He has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—and it is His wish that they should experience the fullness of this blessing. Are any of the Lord's people without a sense of His blessing? It is not the will of God that you should continue in this low condition! If you are cast down, He has said to His Prophets, “Comfort you, comfort you My people. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.” Have you sinned and wandered into the darkness? The Lord bids you return and encourages you to pray, “Turn us again, O God, and cause Your face to shine and we shall be saved.” The happy God would have you happy in the enjoyment of His blessing.

To bring this blessing constantly to the remembrance of His chosen, the Lord appointed a representative of Himself who should publicly pronounce His blessing upon the people. He chose Aaron and He bade Moses instruct him. Aaron was not only to offer sacrifice and to make intercession, but he was to take a higher stand and bestow blessings, in the name of God, upon the assembled people. Those who are old may fitly pronounce a blessing upon their children, as Jacob did upon his 12 sons. And the minister of Christ may, in God's name, pronounce a benediction upon the people. This was the custom in early times—the congregation was dismissed with the gracious words—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.”

Our God has appointed One above all others to bless His people, even our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the antitype of Aaron and his sons and in the exercise of His high office continually blesses His people. He began His ministry with the Sermon on the Mount and the word, “Blessed.” His whole life was a stream of blessing, for “He went about doing good.” When He rose to Heaven, having completed His ministry, it was as “He lifted up His hands and blessed them.” He “shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven,” bringing

blessings with Him, even gifts for men. In the name of the triune God, the Lord Jesus, from the highest Glory, effectually blesses us today.

Let not your hearts be troubled as though you were beneath the storm cloud of the curse. Know you not that the curse is altogether turned away from us, for He was “made a curse for us”? The blessing, alone, remains and Jesus Himself remains to repeat it. Remember with solemn awe and heart-searching that this blessing was for the children of Israel and for them, only. Aaron was not appointed to bless the *nations* who were without God, but to bless the children of Israel. The great blessing which our Lord Jesus Christ pronounces is for His people, even for those to whom He gives eternal life.

Ask yourselves whether you are Believers, as Jacob was. Are you pleaders with God, as Jacob was? It was through his triumphant wrestling with God that he won the princely name of Israel—have you ever prevailed in prayer? If so, though you may feel very feeble and halt as you come from the scene of conflict, yet to you, even to you, as being spiritually of the seed of Israel, the Lord Christ, the “High Priest of our profession,” has given the blessing. But if any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ there is no blessing for him since that awful text thunders at him—“Let him be Anathema Maranatha”—accursed at His coming. The Lord grant that such a curse may lie on none of us, but may we, as we hear the priestly benediction, be able by faith to receive it as our own!

In handling my text, I shall first dwell for a few minutes upon *the general character of this benediction*. Much is to be gathered here. Secondly, we shall review *the blessing itself*, weighing its three clauses and gathering instruction from each word. Thirdly, we will hearken to *the Divine amen*, which is at the close of it—“And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” May the Holy Spirit aid us in this meditation!

I. First, then, consider THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THIS BLESSING. It was a blessing, in the first place, *given through a priest*. Not every man might take upon himself to bless the people. It was Aaron—God’s high priest, who offered sacrifice for the people—who was called to bless the tribes. The hands which had been stained with the blood of the victim were outstretched in blessing. Once in the year the Lord’s high priest went in unto God for the people, not without blood, and when his solemn duties within the veil had been duly done, he came forth and put on those glorious garments which for a while he had laid aside—and he blessed the people as he was authorized to do.

From which I gather that we can get no blessing from God except through the priesthood of Christ. There must be the Sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood before the music of the blessing can sound in our ears. God bestows all spiritual blessings upon us in and through the Lord Jesus who died for us and is ordained to be the one Mediator between God and man. Christ, as the great High Priest who offered Himself without spot unto God, is the Divine channel of blessing. Do we know the Lord’s

Anointed? Are we resting in the Sacrifice which He has presented, even His own blood? Without Christ no blessing can come to us.

O my Hearers, do not remain without the precious blood, if that is your present condition, but may the good Spirit of God lead you to hear the voice of love which cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"! Jesus says, "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." You cannot know the Father as a God of infinite blessedness except through the Son, who is the Priest with the one effectual Sacrifice. It is a *priestly* benediction, sealed with sacrificial blood—and it can only be bestowed by the hand of our glorious Priest.

Next, *this benediction is of the nature of intercession*. There lies within these words a prayer. "The Lord bless you, and keep you" is the cry of the man of God to Jehovah that He would bless and keep His people. The priest's office was to make intercession for the people and we have in our Lord Jesus a High Priest who pleads evermore for His chosen. We have a High Priest through whom all that come to God will be accepted, "seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Never forget that "He made intercession for the transgressors."

He has, moreover, a special pleading for Believers. Concerning them there is a peculiar exercise of intercession, for He says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me." The high priest had a peculiar office in reference to the seed of Israel and our Lord makes special intercession for His saints. He is exercising that office now. How much we owe to His intercession no tongue can tell. Try to learn a little of it from these words, "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." "I have prayed for you"—here is our safety!

Believe, my Brothers and Sisters, that our Lord has prayed for us, is praying for us still! With His quick eye of love He has perceived our danger long before we have dreamed of it. And with His eloquent tongue of earnestness He has pleaded the causes of our soul at the Throne of Grace before we were aware of our peril. "Your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him," and even so your heavenly High Priest perceives what you have need of, and asks for it long before you think of presenting such a petition! Blessed be the name of Him who is the Advocate with the Father on our behalf!—

***"He ever lives to intercede
Before His Father's face:
Give Him, my Soul, your cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father's Grace."***

But next, *this benediction is yet of a higher order than intercession*. Every man in the camp might have prayed, "The Lord bless and keep His people and lift up His Countenance upon them." But no man in all the camp would have dared to say, in the same authoritative style as Aaron did—"The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace." Here is not only faith pleading, but faith

receiving and bestowing! “Without doubt,” says Paul, “the less is blessed of the greater” and thus Aaron was greater than the people, being set apart to a high and honorable office into which none else might intrude. He was God’s representative and so he spoke with the authority of his office.

Today our Savior’s intercession in the heavenly places rises far higher in power and glory than that of any ordinary intercessor. He blesses in *fact*, while the greatest saints on earth and in Heaven can only bless in *desire*—

**“With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below;
But with authority He asks
Enthroned in Glory now.”**

This benediction wears the form of a fiat as well as of a prayer. The Priest here speaks the blessing for which He asks. Turning to the Father, our Lord Jesus cries, “Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me.” Turning to us He says, “The Lord bless you, and keep you.” What He prays for of God He distributes among men by an authority vested in Him by the Father. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” My heart delights to think of the Lord Jesus Christ at this hour, not as a Gethsemane pleader with groans, agony and bloody sweat—but as One who has finished His work and who now reigns in the Glory of the Father, having all power in Heaven and in earth! He sends the blessing to those to whom it comes. His prayer is so infinitely effectual that He practically gives the blessing Himself. Has He not said, “If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it”?

Notice, in the next place, that *this blessing is sure*. Aaron did not bless the people of his own will. He did not utter good words of his own composing—but there went forth a Divine power which made the form of blessing to be a blessing, indeed. There was power in the priestly benediction! First, because Aaron was appointed by God Himself to bless the people—and when he pronounced the benediction over the assembled multitude it was not Aaron’s blessing, but the blessing of Jehovah who had sent him! The God who set him apart to bless the people in the Divine name was, by that very act and deed, engaged to make good His servant’s words.

Even so our blessed High Priest took not this office upon Himself, but He was called to it and His call is abundantly certified, “For Him has God the Father sealed.” What our Lord says must stand, for He is commissioned of the Father and anointed of the Spirit as the Ambassador of Peace. God is in Christ Jesus and the Godhead stands at the back of every word of mercy, every syllable of blessing which is uttered by the ever-blessed Son. I delight to think of my Lord as no amateur intercessor, taking up a work on His own responsibility without heavenly sanction—but He was appointed before all worlds to bless us and God will confirm every benediction which His Son pronounces upon us.

But there is another reason for being certain that the benediction is sure to all the seed. Not only was the person chosen to bless the people,

but the very words which he should use were put into his mouth. "On this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them." Here we have a fixed form of benediction to which Aaron was to restrict himself. Forms of prayer are not in themselves sinful—in some instances forms are given in the Word of God, as in the Book of Psalms and elsewhere. Free prayer is most useful and it will ordinarily consort best with the movements of the free Spirit. But in the case of a benediction it is well that it was dictated to the man of God.

The children of Israel might miss a blessing through the ignorance, or forgetfulness, or unbelief of Aaron—and therefore it was not left to him—he had to learn by heart each word and sentence. In this wise, and in no other, was he to bless the people. I like this, for if God Himself puts the very words into the mouth of His priest, then they are God's Words. God Himself arranged the three wonderful stanzas of blessing and commanded Aaron to say so much and no more. Not according to his own mind, or wish, or tenderness, or narrowness does Aaron bless—but according to God's own mind must the fixed and predetermined benediction be given forth. Blessed be the name of God, the benediction is thus assured to us, for the words are His own!

Even so the Lord has put into the Savior's mouth the words of blessing for us. Jesus said, "I speak not My own words, but the words of Him that sent Me." Every glorious proclamation of Divine Grace from the mouth of our Lord Jesus is a word given Him by the great God Himself! How our souls delight in this! I have heard people talk about the limitation of Christ's Nature while He was here and I fear their next step will be Socinianism. Beloved, every word that our Lord Jesus uttered was Infallible! He fell into no errors of any sort. If He did err and you find it out, it is clear that you know more than your Master—and that sounds very much like blasphemy. Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God—in the wisdom of God there can be no mistake—and in the power of God not one word shall fall to the ground.

Therefore, Beloved, concerning this blessing and every other that you find in God's Word, be certain that it is true. Rest in quiet assurance, for if God Himself has appointed the Priest to bless and has given the very words which He is to utter, the Lord would compromise His own honor and glory if He were to run back from them. God Himself in Christ Jesus declares that He will bless His people! Yes, and they shall be blessed! While dwelling upon the form of this benediction, observe that *it was to be continued*. It was not dependent upon the life of one man, for Moses was to speak unto Aaron "and to his sons." Aaron could not continue forever by reason of death—in due time he must be stripped of his official garments and die like the rest of men. But then his son came in his place and the perpetual oblation and benediction were maintained.

The blessing was not to cease from generation to generation. This was always to be one of the glorious offices of the high priest—that he should bless the people. Here I would dwell with pleasure upon my subject—the blessing of the Lord our God was upon His ancient people, but it is also

upon us on whom the ends of the world are come! That blessing fell upon us in the beginning, when we were converted, and it has never ceased! The blessing of the Lord falls on us now as a refreshing dew, or as the golden rain when the corn is springing. The saints are forever the blessed of the Lord. He blesses us today.

There was a day when you felt very near to the Lord your God and you remember the Hermons and the Hill Mizars with regretful fondness. You enjoyed the Divine blessing more, that day, than perhaps you do this morning. But, in very truth, the blessing is always the same. The sun's light is always the same—only our mists and fogs come in to hide his face. Our great Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, shines evermore with fullness of favor upon His people, but our doubts and fears, our worldliness and sin come in like mists and hide His brightness. God towards His people is of one mind and who can turn Him? He blesses ever—He curses never. You can never say of the Lord that towards His chosen, “out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing.” No bitter waters are intermixed with the sweet streams of His Grace.

I would add that *this blessing came frequently*. We do not know how often Aaron uttered this blessing upon the people. In this passage it is left without any determination as to times and seasons. It is something like our Savior's Memorial Feast—we are nowhere told *when* and how often we are to celebrate the Supper of the Lord. Although it seems to me to have been the practice in Apostolic times to break bread on the first day of the week, there is no law laid down. It is put thus—“This do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” So Aaron is not told that on such a day and at such an hour he shall bless the people—but he may do as his heart dictates.

On the Day of Atonement, when the high priest came out from the secret place, he put on his robes of beauty and blessed the people. I do not find that he was commanded to do so every day, but the Jews say that Aaron always blessed the people after the offering of the morning sacrifice, when the lamb had been slain and consumed upon the altar. This was not repeated in the evening. Of this we know nothing beyond the tradition and I mention it mainly because the older divines were apt to say that Aaron gave a blessing in the morning, that is, in the first part of time, for then the ceremonial law stood, but that he can give no blessing in the evening, for now Christ Himself has come in the end of days and we have no need of a blessing from the Aaronic priesthood, seeing the great Melchizedek has come.

There may be something in that tradition and there may be nothing—but this I know, that Aaron did often bless the people—and this is, to my mind, much comfort. The Lord Jesus is ready, still, to bless us. Have you few blessings? You limit them yourselves! You are not straitened in Him. You are straitened in yourself. There is for you a blessing every morning—seek it when you wake. There is for you a blessing every evening—rest not till you feel it. There is a blessing for you at midnight when you keep the

watches wearily. And there is a blessing for you at midday when you bear the noontide heat of care and toil.

“Your blessing is upon Your people.” That is to say, it is always upon them! Our great High Priest does not now and then, bless the people—from His lips Divine Grace distils as dew and drops as rain, without ceasing. Our Lord is always blessing and we are always blessed! Oh, for Grace to know this and to glorify the God of our blessings!

II. We will now consider THE BLESSING ITSELF. Oh, for renewed help from the Holy Spirit! Notice, carefully, that this benediction *passes from the priest to God*. It is not, “I, Aaron, ordained of God, bless you and like a shepherd I will keep you and smile upon you and give you peace.” Oh, no! The blessing falls from Aaron’s lips, but it comes originally from the Lord’s heart and hand! It runs thus—“*The Lord* bless you, and keep you: *the Lord* make His face shine upon you: *the Lord* lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

Every blessing must come directly from God! What an honor was put on Aaron, to be made the mouthpiece of God! What an honor is put upon the preacher when he becomes the instrument, in God’s hand, for cheering His people! What an honor is put upon you, when, in talking with your children, or with your friends, you are privileged to be as a golden conduit through which the holy oil of salvation flows to them! I pray you, seek much of this honor! Put yourselves in God’s way, that you may be vessels for His use. Ask Him to give you Grace to seize upon every opportunity to speak what He would have you say.

But, I pray you, never rest in the blessing of a man. No, if you were sure that such a man were sent of God and he should, with all earnestness, invoke the best blessing upon you, be not content with the man, but press on to the Master. Seek to have blessings first-hand from Heaven. Covet a good man’s blessing and count it a treasure—but value it only because God speaks through the man. *This fact makes the blessing exceedingly precious.* “THE LORD bless you.” What a blessing the Lord gives! Have we not heard a mother say to her little child, “Bless you”? What a wealth of meaning she threw into it!

But when God says, “Bless you!” there are Infinity and Immutability in it! There can be no limit to the goodwill of the Infinite God. Our gifts are like a handful of pence. God’s gifts are so rich that I dare not liken them even to silver or gold. When Jehovah blesses, it is after the manner of His sovereign Almightyness. His benediction sheds joy and glory over our entire manhood. “The Lord bless you”—what an ocean of blessedness is in it! “And keep you”—what safe keeping is that! “The Lord make His face to shine upon you”—what a shine is that! “And be gracious unto you”—what Grace is that!—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. “The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you”—oh, to be countenanced of God! What fellowship that means! “And give you peace.” What a peace is that which God gives—the peace of God which passes all understanding!

It behooves us to interpret the words of our text in the largest possible manner and to look upon them as being not only waters up to the knees,

but waters to swim in! Here we may cry, “Oh, the depth!” The Lord blesses His people “according to the riches of His glory by Christ Jesus.” Do you know what His riches are? Can you measure the estate of God? Can you imagine what the riches of His Grace must be? Here you have the riches of His Glory—yes, and the greatest riches of His Glory—by Christ Jesus! The Lord blesses you according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus—what can be more? Dwell on that—I say no more.

I call your special attention, in looking over this benediction, to the fact that *the name of THE LORD, or Jehovah, is mentioned three times*. “Jehovah bless you, and keep you: Jehovah make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: Jehovah lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace.” It is the remark of scholars that each one of these names bears a different mark in the original Hebrew. I will not say that this teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, but I must say that, believing the doctrine of the Trinity, I understand the passage all the better. The shadow of the Triune God is on the sacred benediction in the name thrice repeated.

Yet is the Lord but One, for He says—“I will bless you.” Here we hear the voice of One, yet Three! We sang, this morning, a hymn beginning, “Holy, holy, holy,” for thus the heavenly worshippers salute the Divine Majesty. They cry, “Holy, holy, holy,” three times. Why not twice? Why not four times? Why not seven times? For this last there might be a reason since seven is the number of perfection. Threefold expressions are most frequent in Holy Scripture and what can this mean, but that the Lord who is one God forever and ever is also threefold in His existence and manifestation? We are to speak of Him as, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty”—and we may pronounce the blessing upon the people in the name of Jehovah Father, Son and Holy Spirit, still knowing that there is but One who has solemnly said at the close of the blessing, “They shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” Let the sacredness of that name and its being mentioned in this way confirm your belief of the inscrutable mystery of the Three in One.

What is this benediction, now before us, but an early form of the benediction used universally in the Church of Jesus Christ in all ages? “The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Taking the three sentences in the light now cast upon them, the first sentence, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” may be regarded as *the benediction of the Father*. It is the preservation of love. It is God who has up to now kept you from falling. We are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” “He will keep the feet of His saints.” “He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

To the Father’s tender care I would, at this hour, commend each one of you—“The Lord bless you and keep you.” May He do this when you are in great temptation, that you yield not! May He keep you from your own evil heart of unbelief, that you turn not aside! Contending with a sinful world, may He keep you from its snares! Marching through a region full of seductions to error, may He keep you from quitting the Truth of God, even as He keeps His own elect! The Lord bless you with all good and keep you

from all evil! They are well kept whom God keeps and none are kept besides. There is no keeping like Divine keeping!

He says, "I will be a wall of fire round about them." And again, "He kept him as the apple of His eye." And again, "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "The Lord is your keeper." "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul." We pray, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the Evil One" and the prayer is directed to, "Our Father in Heaven." I think you will find a depth of meaning in this first line of the holy hymn of blessing if you regard it as the benediction of the Father. Do not regard it so exclusively, for there is no clear line of demarcation—each of the three stanzas melts into the other two and the blessing is still one.

The next clause is *the benediction of the Son*, or the joy of Divine Grace—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." "The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you"—this means the favor of God—may it be given to each one of you! You know where God's face is. We read of "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He that has seen Jesus has seen the Father! When our Lord smiles on us, we see the face of God. That face is not veiled with frowns, but bright with smiles—a face full of love and favor, a face which was once turned away—but is now turned towards us in peace. "The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you."

Dearly Beloved, is there any Grace conceivable like the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? And is there any light conceivable like the shining of the love of God? A few moments ago the fog surrounded this place and we seemed as if we were descending into pitch darkness. But, in an instant, light poured in through yonder windows and there was an immediate change! And now the sun is shining upon us—a thing to be noted in this rarely sun-lit land. In this I see a symbol of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come upon a period of gloom and deep depression and midnight lowers upon our day—and then a breath of the heavenly wind chases away the fog and the Sun of Righteousness rises and the scene is changed!

Let us have the favor of God and all our troubles are less than nothing—

***"In darkest shades if He appears
My dawning is begun."***

May we always walk in the light, as God is in the light—but that must be through the shining of His face. Through Jesus Christ we may enjoy an eternal sunshine. Even in Heaven, "The Lamb is the light thereof." There is no light for us except through Jesus Christ. May the Lord Jesus be gracious to you! He is full of Grace. To you that are in trouble today, may He be gracious with His consolations. To you that are fighting for Him, may He be gracious in covering your head in the day of battle. To you that labor, may He put underneath you the everlasting arms of Grace and so may you have Grace upon Grace and all the Graces that you need till you enter into Glory!

Surely this second benediction is as full as it is brief. It is a box wherein all compacted sweets lie. Given the love of God the Father and the Grace of God the Son, our bliss runs high. The third blessing is surely that of *the Holy Spirit*. “The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Here is the fellowship of peace. For God’s face to shine is one thing and a very precious thing—but for God to lift up His Countenance upon us is a still richer blessing! To feel that God is dealing graciously with me and shining upon me is very delicious—but to know that He approves me—that He supports me in my acts and is in fellowship with me—this is best of all.

Oh, to think that, looking upon me, the Lord says, “Yes, My child, you are doing right. I support you in what you are doing.” This is joy! Every servant has seen her mistress’s face fall, but she is glad when the same face is lifted up upon her because she has done well and has given pleasure. I do pray that the Holy Spirit may approve all of you who work for the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that you may say, “I have the approval of God. No one applauds me—I am obscure. Many criticize me and say that I am mistaken—others quibble and abuse. But, Lord, lift You up the light of Your Countenance upon me and it will more than suffice.” To be approved by God is better than being commended by princes!

Then follow the words, “And give you peace”—for when a man knows that God approves him, then he enters into peace. Why should he fret when God smiles? What matters though all the world should censure if Jehovah approves His servant? A look of approval from God creates a deep, delightful calm within the soul. Brothers and Sisters, may the Holy Comforter work this peace in you all!

But now, very briefly, notice that *this benediction is all along in the singular*. It is not, “The Lord bless you, and keep you,” but, “The Lord bless *you*, and keep *you*.” Why? Because the people of God are one and He views them as one—and so the blessing comes upon the entire Church as a whole. But, next, I think it is that every individual Believer may take the whole of this benediction home to himself. The high priest seems to say, not—“The Lord bless Ephraim and Manasseh, Judah and Benjamin,” but, as if he singled out each one of the assembly, he says, “The Lord bless *you*, and keep *you*.” Dear Brethren, I will not call you out by name, but I would say to each Brother and Sister, “The Lord bless you.”

I cannot, my Sisters, name you in public though you serve the Lord so well, but I will speak to you individually and say, “The Lord bless you, and keep you; and make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; and approve you, and give you peace.” The blessing is meant for the appropriation of each one. While it embraces the whole Church in one word, it yet distributes a full portion to each individual. We may each one take to himself the whole of this great benediction!

III. More I might have said upon this Old Testament benediction, but time fails me and so I must conclude, by a word or two, in the third place, upon THE DIVINE AMEN. The Divine Amen is in the last verse—“And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”

Only two or three words will suffice. Here is *the authority repeated*, by way of confirmation of what has been said—"They shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." The priest does his part and then the Lord makes the blessing effective. Christ is authorized of God to put the name of God upon His people. It is a delightful thing for the Lord to call us by our own name, as it is written, "I have called you by your name, you are Mine."

It is even more soul-enriching to have the Divine name put upon us so as to be called Sons of God, Joint Heirs with Jesus Christ. Herein is condescension on God's part and honor and security for us! When the Lord's name is named upon anything, He will guard His own dedicated things. The name of the Lord is a strong tower and within it we are safe. I think I see here a confirmation of those blessings which are pronounced by good men. "They shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

I loved to have my grandfather's blessing when I was preaching the Word in early days. He has now gone to Glory, but he blessed me and none can take away the name of God from me. Most of you will remember the blessings of good men who are now gone to Glory and God confirms those blessings. He allows His people, whom He has made priests and kings unto God, to put His name upon others and to pronounce blessings upon them. Their word shall stand and what they bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven. The blessing of your father and of your mother shall come upon you. The blessing of the angels of the Churches, whom the Lord holds as stars in His right hand, shall fall on faithful Believers and helpers as a dew from the Lord himself!

And then comes, best of all, *the blessing of our God most surely promised*—"And I will bless them." I will not attempt to preach from that little, great text—"I will bless them." I could enlarge upon it by the month! "I will bless them"—they shall have their troubles—but I will bless them through their troubles. When they have earthly goods, I will bless them and make them real comforts. I will bless their basket and their store. If those earthly comforts are taken away, I will give them compensation a thousand-fold in Myself. I, who *gave* the mercies, will allow no one but Myself to take them away—and this shall only be done in love, that I may bless them still more!

Brethren, the world may curse us, but if God blesses us, the curse will be as the whistling wind. Friends may become enemies, or may forget us, but if God blesses us, we can bear the wound. God blessed us when we were young. He kept us in the giddy paths of youth. He blessed us in our manhood and helped us when our family cares were upon us—and He will still sustain us now that we lean heavily on the staff and find the grasshopper to be a burden. He will bless us when sickness lays us low and when we come to die Jesus will bless us with dying Grace for dying moments—and hand us out our best things last.

We shall wake up in the likeness of Christ and then we shall be satisfied with His blessing, being transformed into the image of Him by whom

the blessing comes. The Judgment Day shall dawn, the earth shall pass away, but the Lord will bless us. God's "wills" have eternal range. When God says, "I will," all the devils in Hell cannot turn aside the blessing and all the ages of eternity cannot change the King's word! "I will bless them." How much He will bless them He does not say, but the great I AM who makes the promise blesses like a God! God Himself will bless His people, directly and personally. "I will bless them." Here is absolute certainty based on the faithfulness of the Lord—here is endless mercy certified by the Divine Immutability.

Do you whisper, "But the Lord sends us trials"? I answer, It is true. What son is he whom the Father chastens not? But in this is a Covenant blessing—for every twig of the rod shall bring forth to them the comfortable fruits of righteousness before many days are past. You do not need that I should say another word. Go home with this celestial music in your ears, "I will bless them."

But this blessed assurance does not belong to you all indiscriminately. We have no blessing for those who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. O Sinners, God make you conscious that you are outside of the blessing and may that terrible fact create in you an aching heart and a longing soul which nothing can ever rest but the blessing of the Lord God!

You that are resting in Jesus, hear these words which I have read you from the Inspired Book and may the Holy Spirit write them on your minds! Thus says Jehovah of His people, "I will bless them." The Lord has caused His servants to bless us by the testimony of the Gospel and now He Himself blesses us by His Spirit. He will Himself bring His precious things to our door. He will Himself feast us at His table, yes, He will Himself become our food, our bread, and our water! Come, let us bless the Lord! Since He has so blessed us, let us heartily bless Him! We will wind up our meditation by singing—

***"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!"***

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 80; Numbers 6:22-27.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 190, 433.

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TWO CHOICE BENEDICTIONS

NO. 3371

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1913.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1867.

“Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise you shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”
Numbers 6:23-27.

“The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.”
2 Corinthians 13:14.

IT seemed to me that as this was the last of the Thursday evenings of the dying year and I should no more meet some of you who only come here on Thursday evenings during this year, it would be well for us to close the year as our Master closed His life on earth, with a benediction—and, oh, it will be a rich enjoyment in the year to come if, by God’s Grace, we shall be able to grasp and make our very own the precious things which are here presented to the whole redeemed family of the living God! I shall begin, therefore, first of all with—

I. THE AARONIC BLESSING.

This was pronounced at the close of the public tabernacle service when the people were about to separate, the one from the others. It is said by the Rabbis to have been only spoken at the morning sacrifice, but not in the evening because, say some, the old faith of the few gave them the early blessing. But it remained for Christ to come in the eventide of the world, at the end of time, to give us the evening blessing, the blessing of the great, eternal, evening Sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that the word, Jehovah, which is put in capital letters in our English version, occurs three times—three blessings—and each time the word has a different accent in the original Hebrew. And the Rabbis, although they did not know the meaning of it, or pretended not to know, yet all agree that there is some significant mystery therein. The word would not be accented thus differently unless there were some dif-

ferent shade of meaning intended. I believe we have here the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “The Lord bless you and keep you.” Is that the blessing of the Father? “The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.” Is that the blessing of the Son? “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Is that the blessing of the great forgiving Holy Spirit? I think it is very likely. At any rate, this three-fold blessing from the Jehovah, whose name is mentioned three times, may direct our thoughts to the glorious Trinity, the Trinity in Unity, whom we cannot understand, but on whom our faith rests and in whom our love finds delight and repose!

Let us look at these three blessings. “*The Lord bless you and keep you.*” When we bless God there is nothing more than well-saying and well-wishing. But when God blesses us, it is well-doing! We cannot bless God in the sense of giving to Him so as to add to His riches or to His Glory, for He is the infinitely great, the inconceivably glorious and nothing that we can do can add to Him. We can only bless Him by expressing our thanks to Him, paying to Him our reverent love. “The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock.” “Blessed be the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.” But when God blesses us, I say, it is well-doing! He blesses us in our very creation and much more in our new creation. It is a blessed thing to be born, but a much more blessed thing to be born-again! He blesses us in our food—but much more in giving us Christ who is the Bread to keep alive and nourish our soul’s best life! We are blessed in being clothed, but infinitely more blessed in being wrapped about in the Righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is a blessing to be a member of a kind, loving, happy family—but it is an unspeakable blessing to be a member of the family of Christ and adopted into the family of God!

What a blessing it is, my Brothers and Sisters, to have sin pardoned, to have righteousness imputed, to have sanctification worked in us—in short, to enjoy all the privileges and benedictions of the New Covenant! Now, I think some of us can say, “God has blessed us, oh, how richly.” Blessed us sometimes when we did not perceive the blessing, for many of God’s mercies come, as it were, in at the back door of our house. We do not see the mercies, and when we do, we are too often ungrateful and forget them. What blessings we have received in trouble—in deliverance from trouble—in sustaining us in it! Oh, what blessings have we not had? Some of you, perhaps, have had very remarkable mercies during the year. Now, while the blessing is pronounced, “The Lord bless you,” let your reply be, “The Lord has blessed me!” This will encourage you to expect that He will continue to do the same. And what blessings, my dear Friends, may we hope will be in store for us during the coming year? Many troubles, I have no doubt, are in store for us. If we were to have a

telescope here this evening and we could look through it and see the future, those would be very foolish who looked! He would be the wise man who said—

***“This will set my heart at rest—
What my God appoints is best.”***

For if that telescope were here and you were trying to look through it, you would be sure to breathe on the glass with your hot breath—and in your anxiety you would see nothing but clouds and darkness—whereas, very likely, there would be nothing of the sort there. Leave that matter with your God! The future, though it may possibly have trial and trouble, will still be blessed if you are God’s servant. One thing there is of which you can be quite confident—He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Another thing will also be fulfilled, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” You are very poor, are you? Yet, at any rate, none can rob you of this assurance—“Your bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure.” If you are fearing many trials, this promise is your special fortifying—“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” You have God’s word for it, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” If, during the next year, it is appointed unto you to die, you may still say, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” “The Lord bless you.” As I say that to each Believer here, knowing that the Lord will so bless you, may your soul look forward, not with dread, but with hope! “The Lord bless you” was the wish of the priest under the old Law, and it is always the Nature of God to confirm what He bids His servants desire. “The Lord bless you.”

Now, observe the blessing which is said to spring out of that, “The Lord bless you, *and keep you.*” And no small mercy it is to be kept by God! Where would we be if He did not keep us in a moral and spiritual point of view, yes, and in a natural point of view, too? It is God that keeps our lives from death and our bodies from perishing. Perhaps, during the past year, some of you have been kept when in storms at sea, or when you have been upon a railway, or when you have passed through places infected with disease. It is no small privilege to hear the Lord say, “He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” The Lord has blessed us and kept us in that sense during the past year. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a privilege to be kept from falling into sin! He is ill-kept who is his own keeper! He is worse kept who has his brother for his keeper! But he is splendidly kept who has God to be his shield on his right hand, his glory and his defense.

During the past year we have seen some high professors put out like candles and the foul odor of their fall has filled the Church with nausea and depression. We have known some who were like bright stars who have turned out to be only meteors—and their once dazzling brilliance has suddenly died out in greater gloom. Why are we still kept? We have had enough temptation to cast us down! Enough tinder here, inside our hearts, to have made a great blaze! How is it we are still unburned and walking in the paths of righteousness?

Must we not say, “The Lord has blessed us and kept us”? Let us, then, without reserve, commit our souls to Him for the future. Let us not fancy that we shall not fall. Oh, that is a thought that is very apt to twine itself around us like a serpent! “I am not so giddy as some people! I am not at all likely to do what some young people have done and get into this sin, and that sin. I have had so much experience, I shall be able to stand!” That is the very man that is likely to fall! We are never so weak as when we think we are strong, and never so strong as when we know we are weak and look out of ourselves to our God! Distrust self, then. There would not be such a supplication as, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” if you did not need keeping. Trust in God for your help. If you fear temptation, let this be your prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” and if you trust in God, you will pray, “Deliver us from evil.” You will be tempted during the year that is soon coming, but He will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. He will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able to bear! You shall go through the wilderness leaning on your Beloved and you shall not slip, though the way is ever so smooth, nor trip, though the road is ever so rough. You shall be upheld, for God is able to hold up in perfect safety those who stay themselves upon Him. “The Lord bless you and keep you.” Holy Father, we breathe the prayer to You as we read this blessing! Pronounce it upon us now by the mouth of Your own dear Son, and let us now and until life’s latest hour be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Now, take the next blessing bestowed, through Aaron, upon the people. “*The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.*” I understand by the expression, “The Lord make His face to shine upon you,” His being completely reconciled to us. As they would say in the Hebrew, a man’s face frowned, his countenance fell, when he was at enmity or angry with another. But when he was his friend and genial towards him, then his face revealed it, it began to beam or shine! Now, this is the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is through Him that God’s face is made to shine upon us. The Lord would have no favorable regard towards a sinner as such while his sins still lay upon him because of impenitence and lack of faith. The Lord’s love might come to him as an elect

creature, but viewing him merely as a sinner, he would be the subject of Divine disapprobation!

But when the sinner is washed in the blood of Christ, when the sinner is justified through the righteousness of Jesus, then the Lord looks upon him with pleasure. That very man who was an heir of wrath becomes a child of love! and he who would have been driven from God's Presence with, "Depart, you cursed," is established in Christ's heart with "Come, you blessed." Now, dear Friends, I hope many of us have already received, during the past year, this great blessing, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." Don't you feel that you have, tonight, to look up to God and do not feel any fear? You know that He is not frowning upon you! He is reconciled unto you—you are reconciled unto Him. You may say, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed." And you are persuaded that as God looks upon Christ, and upon you in Christ, you are well-beloved in Him. Well now, as it has been, so it shall be, for if God once makes His face to shine in the sense of His favor, He never takes that favor away! You may not see it. You may think He is angry with you and, in another sense, He may be, but legally, and so far as concerns the Law and its power of condemnation, there is not a single thought of anger in the mind, or feeling of displeasure in the heart of God towards any one of those who rest in Jesus!

You are accepted in the Beloved. God sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. As He looks upon them in His Son, He sees them without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"*The Lord make His face to shine upon you.*" Well, and what springs out of that? Why this, "*and be gracious unto you.*" Because God is thus favorable towards us through His dear Son, Divine Grace comes to us. And what a great, all-comprehending word is that! Grace! It has many meanings and includes a whole universe of blessing! Grace—it is the free and undeserved favor of God! Grace—it is the mighty operation of that favor, effectually working in them that believe! Grace—it is that which enlightens us to see our lost estate—that which leads us to see the All-Sufficiency of Christ! Grace—this works faith in us, gives us love to God! Grace creates our hope, carries on the work within our souls and completes it, too! Grace—it is a term so comprehensive that I would need the whole of this evening, yes, and longer, too, to enumerate the mighty catalog comprised and packed, as it were, in this golden casket of the word, Grace! "The Lord be gracious unto you." Well, now, Beloved, He has been gracious to us in the past. Oh, the Grace of God to me!—

***"Oh, to Grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!"***

Can you say the same? Look at what a sinner you have been and yet how favored! Look at your backslidings! Look at your ingratitude and yet His mercy does not cease—

“Oh, to Grace how great a debtor!”

Let your hearts say it, if your lips do not. And now, Beloved, He will be gracious to you in the future as He has been in the past. Every mercy received is a pledge of mercies yet to come! He knew what He was doing when He began with us and, therefore, He will not leave off. If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have shown us such things as these. The great Master Worker would not have built the house so far if He did not mean to finish it. All His previous Grace and glory will be wasted and evaporate if He should not complete His redeeming work. Therefore, I am sure that after advancing so far with His glorious purpose, He will finish it and, if necessary, in the teeth of men and devils! He has begun and His right arm, which always goes with His Grace, will surely carry it through to the end. “The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.”

But now, thirdly, *“The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”* Is this the voice of the Holy Spirit? Whether it is so or not, does not greatly matter to us tonight. “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you.” Does not this mean, “The Lord give you a conscious, a delightful sense of His favor”? Wishing to see a difference—I will not insist upon it—wishing to see a difference, I put the second blessing as meaning God’s being reconciled. But the third blessing as meaning God manifesting that reconciliation and giving His children the enjoyment of His favor. Now, God’s people do not always have this—it is not always sunshine. “The evening and the morning were the first day,” and there is evening as well as morning in the day of God’s people. God always loves His people, but His people do not always know it. Because of their sins, they do not always enjoy it. Oh, what a blessing it is when the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the soul—when we can say, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” When we get out of these mists and fogs and can see the sun once more shining clear and bright, Beloved, it is Heaven on earth! It is the true ante-past of Heaven above, when the Lord lifts up His countenance upon you! I have no doubt the original allusion is to a father whose child has done wrong and he says, “Now, Sir, get out of my sight, you have grieved and vexed me. You shall not see my face.” The child goes upstairs to bed—anywhere out of his father’s sight. And after a while, when the father hears he has been penitent and sees his tears, he smiles again upon him, gives him a kiss and presses him to his heart. May God the Holy Spirit give us just that! May everyone of us have it!

We have, some of us, had it during the past year. We grieve to confess that we did backslide, but when we returned again, we found Him just as willing to receive us as at the first and He lifted up His countenance upon us once again! We said, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation," and He did so! We asked Him to take away His wrath from us, and we found that "His anger is but for a moment." When weeping came to us for a night, joy appeared in the morning. It will be just the same with us during the next year. If we transgress and repent, and return to Him, we have an actual promise that He will forgive us. Now, what says the text? "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." There is no peace like the peace which we have with God, and no peace with God like that which comes from a sense of His assured love! And belief in Christ for the pardon of sin gives us the blessing of non-condemnation. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But this sense of non-condemnation may sometimes be destroyed through weakness of faith. We may be brought very low and our peace may be disturbed, but when we come back to the Cross, and look once more to Him who died there, He is our peace and we see in Him that our peace is made with God—and then our peace becomes like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea! I think it would be impossible for me to describe peace. You must feel it to know it. Peace with God is like that clear shining we sometimes see after a heavy shower of rain. With the thunder and lightning it seemed as if Heaven would be torn in pieces and all the earth shaken, and then, suddenly, it is all over and the sun shines forth! There is a rainbow with its many colors on the clouds, and all the flowers lift up their drooping heads, each one loaded with a gleaming benediction—and all the earth fragrant and smiling and seeming to steam forth the incense of gratitude! Now, after the storm of the conviction of sin, when the Spirit of God comes, it is as quiet and peaceful as that. And after a storm of trouble—and I know what that means—after a hurricane of trial, we can take all our distresses and cares and lay them down at God's feet and feel that we need not care about them anymore!

But if my Father did not undertake them, I would not, for I cannot. He has promised He will, if I cast my cares upon Him. You sometimes walk out of this place when God has blessed your soul and feel, "Now, I do not know what may happen, and really I do not care what does. My heart is resting on my God—I have left it all to Him and I am sure it will be right, whatever may come." Like Jonah, you may lose your gourd, but you cannot lose your God! You may see dark weather before you, but still you can go to Him who cannot fail you—and there shall your soul have repose. Now, that is the peace of God which passes all understanding and,

therefore, it must surpass all expression. The peace of God which can only be known by the man who enjoys it—a peace which the world does not give and cannot destroy, but which Heaven, itself, can work in the soul! Now, may we have this blessing, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

If we stopped here tonight and went no further, provided we got these blessings and fed upon them, it would be quite enough. Let me just read that text again clearly. “The Lord bless”—now the next word is the very pith of it, and let it be read now to each one of you, my good Sisters and Brothers, you who are young in years and young in Divine Grace, never mind who it is, so long as you are resting upon Christ—Jesus, the great High Priest, speaks from the eternal Glory and He says, “The Lord bless *you*.” “Oh, but I do not deserve it!” Just so, but, “the Lord Bless *you*.” “I am so unworthy, I am so backsliding!” Yes, but the Lord Jesus Christ knows all, covers all. We will read it, then, “The Lord Bless *you—you*, and keep *you*: the Lord make His face to shine upon *you*, and be gracious unto *you*: the Lord lift up His countenance upon *you*, and give *you* peace.” Oh, have you got that worked into your very hearts? It will be like a bundle of myrrh that you may keep in your bosom and it will sweeten your soul the whole year round, making you to know that you are blessed in and of the Lord who made Heaven and earth!

Now, I shall ask your attention for a little while to the second blessing, that spoken in God’s name by the Apostle Paul, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” Here we have—

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT BENEDICTION.

This second blessing is precisely like the first as to its essence and substance. But there is some little difference as to the expression and circumstance. The first thing that strikes me in reading it through, as it almost always does when I pronounce it, is this—you notice *it begins with the Lord Jesus Christ*. The Lord Jesus is the Second Person of the blessed Divine Unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—but this benediction begins with the Son of God. Why is that? In the order of Doctrine and fact, all infinite blessings begin with the Father. He is the Fountainhead of Creation. He is the Fountain, Christ the channel and the Holy Spirit produces the grand results. Father first, Son next, Spirit third. But in the order of experience—the order in which the blessing comes—it is always the Son first. “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” Not the Father first, but the Son first! What a sinner learns to comfort him first is not that the Father loves Him. No. He learns first of all that Jesus Christ died for sinners because God loves Him—and so he puts his trust in Him. The first thing a poor Believer gets, then, is Grace through Jesus Christ. After

that, perhaps, he may sometimes think that God the Father has no love towards him, but as he begins to read his Bible and to experience more of Divine Grace in his heart, he finds that God the Father is full of love. So, then, he goes on and gets the love of God the Father. And when he knows this, perhaps he often wonders what communion may be of, and fellowship. And when he hears some of those delightful hymns which we sing at the Lord's Supper, he thinks he shall never get to them—to talk with God, to have communion with Christ—but, by-and-by, as the Lord leads him on, from being a babe, he grows to be a man and he gets into communion with the Holy Spirit. Babes in Grace know "the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." But as they grow they discover "the love of God our Father." And as they grow still more, they come to "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." The three things are put in the order of experience, not in the order of fact, nor the order of Doctrine.

Having noticed that, just observe the three blessings as they come. "*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich." You know His great poverty—you know His great Grace which brought Him from yonder starry heavens to lie in a manger, to live in obscurity for 30 years and to die upon the Cross in pains that cannot be told. Now, Grace comes to us through Christ and, therefore, it is said, "by His Grace." He is the golden pipe through which it all flows. Believing in Him, we receive the mercy of God! Coming through Him to the Mercy Seat, we obtain unnumbered favors by virtue of our union with Him. As the branch derives sap and then fruit from the vine, we derive Grace from Him. He is to us the channel of all the good gifts of our heavenly Father. "May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.*" Be with you all—it is not in the singular—it is not to each one. It is, "with you *all,*" because the genius of the Gospel is expansive. You notice the Redeemer's prayer. It is not *My* Father. No, but "*our* Father which are in Heaven " And the Gospel's benediction, though it is personal—blessed be God for that—yet it is also expansive—"be with you *all.*" We are to think of all our Brothers and Sisters. When we get a blessing, we are to look upon ourselves as part of the Divine family. When we come together to break bread, we do not come, each one alone—though it would be the Lord's Supper if only one man were there—but we come there in humble fellowship, one with the other! "Eat, drink you all, of this," said Christ. "Take, eat, this is My body." He would have all His disciples come there and partake. And so with this blessing of the Grace of Jesus Christ—may it be with you all!

Has it been with us all during the past year? There are not so many here tonight as usual. May I, therefore, put the question to each one per-

sonally? Has it been with you—and you—and you? Have you, my Hearers, known daily the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you stood by faith at the foot of the Cross and felt that you rested your all on Him? If so, I know you possess His Grace. He it is who has given you power to trust Him wholly and absolutely. All the Grace there is in His great heart and mind belongs to you!—

***“Plenteous Grace with Him is found,
Grace to cover all our sins.
May the healing streams abound,
Make and keep us pure within.”***

May it be with you all!

Next comes *“the love of the Father.”* It is from the love of God that everything blessed and blessing springs. We must not imagine that Jesus Christ died to induce His Father to love us—a very foolish and pernicious idea that! God the Eternal Father always loved His people and Christ has removed the sin which restrained the shinings of the most glorious manifestations of that love—but He loved before Christ died. You know you can boast—

***“’Twas not to make the Father’s love
Towards His people sure,
That Jesus came from realms above!
’Twas not the pangs He bore
That God’s eternal love procured,
For God was Love before.”***

That fountain sprung up eternally! It was a well that needed no digging. Oh, dear Friends, I trust we know what the love of God means. Has it not been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us? We shall know it in years to come, for where it once takes possession it never departs. Once in Christ, in Christ forever! In Christ’s love you have begun a banquet which will never end. “May the love of God be with you all,” is meant for all God’s people. But is that love present with all? If you have not tasted God’s love, you do not know what life, true life, means. The richest, the most celestial, the most transporting joy that mortal mind can know is a full assurance of the love of God! Dear Hearer, do you love Christ? Can you answer the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” Then, if you have love for Christ, pure and true love and trust, if it is the fruit of God’s love to you, then be of good cheer! May the love of the Father be with you all your days!

Then comes *“the communion of the Holy Ghost.”* A very ugly word that—“Ghost.” A better translation of the original Greek word would be, “Spirit.” “Holy Spirit,” and I sometimes wish that we always called Him by that name. It is far more expressive. The word, “ghost,” bears such a strange and weird meaning, now, that it were better in this connection entirely to abandon it! The word, “communion,” means not only the Holy

Spirit coming to us and having converse with us, but communion means copartnership. When the Churches in Macedonia made a collection for the poor Church in Judea, Paul called the collection, “communion,” because by means of giving money to the Church in Judea they had a fellowship, something like having all things common—that is the perfection of fellowship!

Now, the Holy Spirit, if I may use the expression, has all things common with God’s people. He gives to them all things. “He shall lead you into truth.” What the Spirit knows and teaches us, we are able to bear. He knows the mind of God. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. He gives us to participate in all that He possesses. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of peace. He gives us peace. He is the Spirit of holiness and sanctification—rather, He is the Spirit of light—He kindles light in our souls. He is a sacred fire. He baptized the Church in fire. Everything that the Holy Spirit is and has, He is and has for the Church of God and in common with the Church of God! Now, what an unspeakable blessing this is, to enter into a sacred copartnership with God the Holy Spirit! To talk with Him, to live with Him, to feast with Him, to have Him to be ours and for us to be His! Now, may such a communion as this be with us! I question whether we have ever got up to the fullness of this.

I think I told you the other evening the story of a good woman who was a little distressed in her mind and who, in reading the passage, “Your Maker is your Husband,” said, “Now, I won’t be distressed any longer. When my husband was alive, I took care to live up to my income and now I will take care to live up to my heavenly Husband’s income.” Oh, I wish to get hold of living up to God’s income, for all He has is given to His people! What rich lives we would have if we were to participate in all that He has! We would be continually feeling His power in our souls. Have we done this? May each one of you say, “Lord, give me to know the communion of the Holy Spirit all my days, until I shall be taken up to dwell where You reveal Yourself without a veil between!”

Now, in closing, you see the difference between the two benedictions is this—the second blessing is really *exhibited*, the first a little veiled—something like Moses, when his face was too bright for the people to look upon, he put a veil upon his face. So the blessing Aaron pronounced is not so distinct or clear as the Apostolic blessing. Note, again, that the blessings in the second benediction are *deeper*—they are traced up to their source in the Triune Godhead, “Grace, love and communion.” The one is a deep, the other a great deep. Note, yet again, that they are wider. The blessings of the Old Testament are individual and personal—to

“you.” The blessings in the New Testament are to the Corinthian Church and to all the Churches—“with you all.”

In the first case there was a confirmation and in the second case there is one also—“Amen,” which is the Divine confirmation of this benediction.

But I notice in the Apostolic benediction there is one thing which there is not in the first, namely, *the communion*, that is, the privilege—the privilege which comes to a child of God in this age of bliss when Christ is fully revealed. Did you ever notice that when John was born, an angel appeared to his father, Zacharias, to announce that Christ was come? No sooner did that bell begin to ring to tell that Christ was coming, than what happened? The greatest blessing was about to be pronounced and, therefore, the smaller blessing had to be silenced. When Zacharias came out, he was expected to bless the people, but what did he do? He could not speak a word—he was speechless and he beckoned with his hand—and that morning the assembly went home without the benediction! The priest could not pronounce it. Now, I dare say they said one to another, “What a strange thing it was. We always had that benediction before, ‘The Lord bless you, and keep you,’ but this morning the priest could not speak a word.” You and I know what that means. We must stop that one because there is a better coming! God seemed, as it were, to give notice to His people, “I am about to hush the voice of Aaron because Melchisedec is coming. I am about to stop the sound of the symbolic, because the real Priest is coming. I am about to hush the voice of Zacharias because the Son of God is now to appear and declare that the fullest blessing of Jehovah will rest upon His people.”

Now, let us go our separate ways tonight, guided home, I trust, safely and rightly. And let us feed upon and make our soul’s bread the two precious texts that have been before us. And I am not afraid but that you will be like those who went out to gather the manna—you shall each have enough! He who needs much shall have in abundance and he who requires little shall have no lack. Let us close by singing the blessing and go our way to turn all life into a song of gratitude for God’s rich benedictions! Amen.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

FEEDING ON A WHOLE CHRIST

NO. 2407

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY APRIL 7, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S DAY, EVENING, APRIL 3, 1887.

“The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.”
Numbers 9:11, 12.

IN great tenderness God permitted the Passover to be kept a second time, that those who had unavoidably been defiled at the first observance might not be shut out from the memorable and symbolical rite. But, although He altered the *date* of the Passover, He never changed the *form* of it—the Paschal feast was to be the same whenever it was celebrated and by whomever it was observed. Whether one family, or an Israelite who happened to be a stranger and visitor in the house, whoever it might be—kept the Passover—the same regulations were to be carefully followed. From this I gather, learning a lesson from the type, that, whatever may be the experiences through which we come to salvation, Christ is always the same and we must partake of Him in the same way. You who have been so defiled that you have, as it were, to eat of the second Passover, even at the 11th hour, long after others have been feeding on Christ—still there is the same Christ for you as there is for those who come at the right time—who seek the Lord early, and find Him while yet the dew of their youth is upon them.

There is none but Jesus for each one of us! There is no way for this man, peculiar to himself because of his righteous life, and no way for that person, peculiar to himself because of his ungodliness—but for the most moral and the most immoral there is the *same* Savior to be received by the same precious faith! Only by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus are we delivered from wrath and only by feeding upon Christ can our spiritual life be sustained. There are not two gospels, but only one Gospel. There are not two Christ's, but only one Christ! There are not two roads to Heaven but only one road to Heaven. Let us go together to the Cross, view the one great Sacrifice for sin and, by faith, find salvation in Him!

The subject for us to consider at this time will be just this—if we do receive Christ, that reception is beautifully expressed and represented by *feeding* upon Him. So, first, *we are to feed upon Jesus Christ*. The Paschal lamb was to be eaten. Secondly, we are *to receive Christ and feed*

upon Him as a whole Christ—“They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it.” Then, thirdly, *we are to receive Christ in union with others*. It is a very blessed thing when our personal reception of Christ, our personal feeding upon Christ, is not a solitary act, but is done in company, as when, of old, a whole household drew near to feed upon the Paschal lamb.

I. First, then, WE ARE TO FEED UPON JESUS CHRIST.

The true reception of Christ is very beautifully expressed by our feeding upon Him. The point a sinner longs to know, when he is really awakened and his conscience is thoroughly awakened, is first, this—“How can I be saved? I know that Christ is a Savior, but how can I make Him *my* Savior? I understand that He has provided an Atonement by which sin can be put away—how can that Atonement put *my* sin away?”

When the Paschal lamb was killed in the household of the Israelite, first the blood was sprinkled on the lintel and two side posts by the man who was the head of the household. And as soon as it was sprinkled, its virtue operated at once—that house was secure. Next, they must bring in this lamb which had been roasted with fire, they must gather around the table and all they had to do with it was to eat it. Now, eating is such a simple operation that I cannot explain it. I suppose that the best way of explaining how to eat would be by eating—and the best way of explaining how Christ is to be received is to receive Him! Yet, since I am seeking to help some poor troubled one, I must try, if I can, to explain what it was to eat the Paschal lamb and what it is to receive Christ. I say again, eating the Paschal lamb was a very simple process. Moses might have said to a Jew, “That lamb, roast with fire, is yours if you will eat it. There is no ceremony to be gone through, no incantation to be repeated, no genuflection to be performed. You stand at the table, you eat the lamb, and it is yours.”

Now, concerning feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the first thing to be done is *to receive Him by faith*. Receiving is the first part of eating. You are hungry, bread is set before you. You put the bread into your mouth, you receive it and it becomes yours. So receive the Lord Jesus Christ—faith is the mouth by which He is to be received. Believe Him—believe what is testified concerning Him in the Word of God. Say to yourself, “This record is true, Jesus is the Son of God. He came into the world as Man, He lived a holy life. He died a sacrificial death—‘the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.’ I believe all this. I accept it as true, as true to *me*, and I take it, not into my ears only as hearing it, but into my heart as believing it to be assuredly the Truth of God whereby, alone, souls can be saved.”

“But suppose I take Him and have no right to Him.” Ah, if you once take Him, you have Him, right or no right! Have I not often told you that if you have eaten a piece of bread, though you had no right to it, it will puzzle all the lawyers in the world to get it away from you? Possession, in such a case as that, is more than the proverbial nine points of the law!

Yes, it is *all* the points of the law, and if you take Christ as yours, then you have Christ as yours! Oh, that you would grasp Him right now! “Well, but suppose it is not right for me to have Christ?” It was never wrong for a poor sinner to take Christ, so have Him now! If He is near you, seize Him now! “Lay hold on eternal life,” says the Apostle, and if you lay hold on Christ, God will never cry, “Hands off!” Be boldly daring for once and you shall not find yourself repulsed. The door of mercy is open, enter—and if you are repulsed—you will be the first that was ever rejected by Christ, whoever you may be! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

“I have done that,” says one. I am very glad if you have, but have you *really* done it? There is a way of believing and yet not truly believing. A man believes that such and such a thing is true—at least, he says that he does—and yet he may act in such a way as shall prove that he does *not* believe it. You are in your house, in bed and asleep. Someone wakes you up by crying out that your house is on fire—and you calmly turn over and go to sleep, again. I know, by your action, that you could not have believed the report that was brought to you! One looks you in the face and tells you that he can see, there, traces of a deadly disease, and that, within a short time, you will be dead unless you take a certain medicine. Do you tell me you believe that disease to be upon you and believe that medicine would heal you if you took it—and after telling me that—do you go home and think no more of it? Then I know that you have *not* spoken truly in saying that you believe, for true believing would move you to *action*—you would be seriously affected by these things if you believed them to be true.

Come, then, let me ask you a question. Is sin a reality to you? Do you accept the sinner’s position and confess that you need a Savior? Do you believe that the Son of God has appeared in human form on purpose that He might save such as you are? Can you advance one step further and say, “I believe in Christ as *my* Savior”? So far so good—the bread is in your mouth!

In eating, the next thing is that the food should undergo a process of digestion. It must lie in the body and be dissolved. So, in order to a full reception of Christ, there must be somewhat of *digestion by meditation*. The great Truths of God I have mentioned enter the soul—they are turned over in the heart and mind by meditation. We think of them, ponder them, consider them—they begin to influence us and our mind sets to work upon those Truths, pressing the very juice and essence out of them—making us to know their secret virtues and powers. O Sirs, there are some of you who will never be saved by Christ because you will not *think*! Unless the Lord Jesus should graciously meet with you and, all of a sudden, you should be caused to believe on Him—which I pray may be the case—I am afraid that you will certainly be lost!

Some of you are not in a condition to get any good out of hearing the Gospel because you do not think of what you hear. You do not lay up in

your hearts and turn over in your minds what is taught you on the Sabbath. Many let the Gospel have a clear thoroughfare, for they allow it to go in one ear and out the other and so, Sunday after Sunday, week after week, month after month, year after year, with them it is only hearing the Gospel and that is all! The Truth of God has no opportunity to become food to their spirits, for what they seem to take in, one minute, they cast out the next—and this is not feeding at all—it is but folly and mockery!

Well now, after food has entered the body and has been digested, there is a further process. I am not going into any physiological discussions, but there is, as you know, the process that is called assimilation. Certain vessels within the body perform their various functions and so, gradually, the food which has been taken is made to nourish the body and build it up. Thus the bread, which, a little while ago, was separate from me, becomes inseparable from me—it has been taken up into my system and has become part and parcel of myself. This is the best form of feeding upon Christ when, having believed the Truth about Him, and having thought it over till we have digested it, certain secret faculties within our nature take Him up and *assimilate Him into our spiritual life*.

Look, Sirs, I believe that Christ was the Incarnate Son of God. I do not merely believe that as a mere matter of fact, as I might believe that there is such a person as the Czar of Russia, but I look to be saved by Him who became Man in order that He might save me! Look further. I believe that this God Incarnate did bear my sins in His own body on the Cross. I look to be forgiven—no, I know that I *am* forgiven—because He took my sin away and ended it so far as I am concerned. That is assimilating the great Truth of God of the Atonement in the inmost part of my spirit. I do not need to explain the process any longer—I want you to put it into practice. Now, Beloved, you who have often fed upon Christ, feed on Him, again, at this moment! Think of Him as you know Him and try to know more of Him! But what you do know of Him, grasp it. Press out of these clusters their sacred juice. Draw out of these Truths the Divine support which they are intended to give to your spirit. Say, “These Truths of God are mine. I live on them, I could die on them, I need nothing better.”

If you really thus feed upon Christ, it will come to this—that Christ and you will be one—and none shall be able to separate you from Him, or to take Him from you. As the bread or the meat that you may eat becomes one with yourself, so will Christ, absorbed into your inmost heart by a childlike trust, become vitally and everlastingly part and parcel of your own self! And, because He lives, you must also live, for He has made you to live and He lives in you!

I am sure that if you have once learned to feed upon Christ in the way I have been describing, you will not object to the “bitter herbs” that were to be eaten with the Passover. Oh, no! Those bitter herbs seem to give a zest to the feast. I thought to myself, when I was trying to get into the soul of this text, “I have my dish of bitter herbs every day.” They come to

me in this form—Christian ministers, whom I have educated, forsaking the faith. Christian people, who I thought were converted, behaving in an unseemly and ungodly manner. And anxieties about many who do not seem to have so much care about their own souls as I have concerning them. O Christ, my blessed Master, Your service is very sweet because of You, but, in itself, woe is me that ever I was born to it! But the regulation is, “With bitter herbs shall you eat it,” therefore, let us go on with our work and take whatever of bitterness accompanies our service. Perhaps some of you get sneered at for your religion—that is your dish of bitter herbs. Or it may be that you are very poor, or, possibly, the more you know of Christ, the more you also know of your own unworthiness, and that knowledge is like eating bitter herbs. Very well, thank God that you have Christ, and say nothing about the bitter herbs—for if the Israelite who is hungry gets a Paschal lamb to feed upon, he may well be content to take the bitter herbs with it.

The Israelites were also to eat the Passover “with unleavened bread.” Leavened bread is usually considered by our poor fallen nature to be more agreeable to our taste, and there is a measure of self-denial implied in the putting away of the leaven. Well, we are called to deny ourselves for Christ’s sake and we would put away all forms of sin—everything that is leavened—that we may have our all in Him and find everything that delights the palate and charms the spirit in Christ alone! Yes, take away your leavened bread with all its sweetness, and bring in the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread, instead—we will be perfectly satisfied so long as the true Paschal Lamb is upon the table and our souls may feed upon Him!

I will say no more on this first part of my subject, but I pray you, in the silence of your spirits, to feed upon Christ Jesus.

II. This brings me to my second point, which is that WE ARE TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS A WHOLE. The Lord said, concerning the Passover, “They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it.” If we receive Christ, we must receive Him as a whole.

We must receive Christ *in the entirety of His Person*. There was Arias—he would receive Christ as a good man, but not as God. But you cannot have Christ at all unless you have Him as a *whole*. There were some who took the opposite side and were willing to receive Christ as God, but not as a bleeding, suffering Man. But you cannot receive Christ at all if you will not have Him altogether—you must have Him in the entirety of His Person—as God *and* Man, or else you cannot have Him at all, and cannot enjoy Him as the food of your soul.

We must also receive Christ *in the entirety of His offices*. He has come to be a Prophet, Priest and King. Be willing to be instructed by Him, to be cleansed by Him, to be ruled by Him—and mark you, you cannot have the Priest unless you will also have the Prophet, nor can He be your Prophet unless He also becomes your King! A whole Christ in undivided honor, accepted as being all that He professes to be—you must have Him

so or not at all! And you must have a whole Christ as to His work. He comes to put away your sin by the shedding of His blood and you say, "I will have Him." But listen, He comes to take away your sinfulness, and make you holy by the water which flowed with the blood from His side. You cannot take justification and omit *sanctification*—you must have both or neither! The Law concerning the Passover was, "They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it." You must have Christ as He is set forth in His Word in all parts of His saving work.

And we must have Christ *in all His teachings*. It will not do for us to say, "I shall believe Christ when He speaks in His Sermon on the Mount and teaches us the ethics of ordinary life. But I will not believe Him when He opens up the mysteries of His love as He addresses His disciples on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane." You cannot have Him at all unless you are willing to believe *all* that He taught as far as you know it, and to believe that what He spoke must be true, even though, as yet, you do not know it. You must take the Lord Jesus Christ to be absolutely Infallible to you—otherwise you cannot receive Him at all.

You must also take Christ *in all His warnings*. You must not turn your back when He says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," and think His language too severe. They who object to one word of Christ have really objected to Christ, Himself! As one leak will sink a boat, so will one objection to Christ destroy your loyal confidence in Him. No, take *every* Word He says and believe it! Hang your soul upon it, knowing that it must be true since the Christ has said it. You must leave nothing of this blessed Paschal Lamb—you must break no bone of Him!

So must it be as to Christ *in all His commands*. It is ours not to reason why, but ours to do what He bids us! And we must not say, "This is essential and that is non-essential." We must not say, "I will do this which He bids me, but I will not do that which He bids me." You are not disciples, but rebels, if you act so! You are not His friends, but His enemies, if you thus pick and choose which of His commands you will obey! How can he be a good soldier who will *sometimes* obey his captain, but will sometimes disobey? Such discipline as that, or rather, such lack of discipline, could be tolerated in no host, and it will not be endured in the armies of the living God! No, you must take a whole Christ in all His commands.

And it must be just the same as to *Christ and His spirit*. One says, "Christ is very loving and I will be loving, too." You are right in saying so, my Brother, but the Christ was very outspoken and very *uncompromising*—will you also be outspoken and uncompromising? If not, your loving spirit will go for little, for it will only be a kind of pandering to worldliness. The spirit of Christ is a perfect spirit and he that has it not is none of His! It is not for us to select one quality of His spirit and say, "I will imitate that." No, but as the Christ acted at all times, so do you act. As far as you are capable of following Him, put your feet down where He puts His feet down. Do what He did according to your measure and de-

gree. A whole Christ fully and faithfully imitated can alone produce a perfect character!

Well now, beloved Friends, you see what our orders are, here. We are, first, to feed upon Christ and then, next, we are to receive Him as a whole. But I regret that there are some persons who do not feed upon a whole Christ. Some, alas, will not do so through sheer willfulness. They will pick and choose and thus show their self-conceit and their rebellion. Do not do so! Do not do so, I beseech you, but feed on the whole Christ as the Israelites ate the whole of the Paschal lamb. Some are unable through ignorance to feed on a whole Christ. They do not know Him, or they would gladly receive Him. Let not ignorance hinder any of you from partaking of the sweetest things on the table of God's Grace—but say to yourself, "Little as I know, I feel that, if I knew more, I would only wish to know what Jesus would teach me. And I yield myself up to Him implicitly, even as a blind man yields himself up to his guide, and I say to Jesus, "What I know not, teach me." In that way you will at least be willing to eat the whole Paschal Lamb, even though, through ignorance, you do not fully understand what it is to receive Him.

There are some who, through timidity, fail to feed upon a whole Christ. They are afraid to take in some of the glorious doctrines which He teaches, some of the sweet things of His Everlasting Covenant, some of the strong meat of His eternal purposes, some of the fat things full of marrow, and the wine upon the lees, well refined. I pray you, shrink not back, but, since Christ gives Himself wholly to all His people, if there is a precious Covenant Word, feed upon it! If there is a rich promise, believe it and enjoy it! Christ denies nothing to His beloved. If you really come to His table and desire to have all that there is in Him, then take it, and be not afraid! He will never chide you. Therefore, come freely to Christ, Beloved. He, Himself, has given the invitation—"Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Take all of Christ into your soul according to your capacity, till you are filled with Him—come joyfully and partake cheerfully of all that He freely gives to you—and be not afraid.

I think that I need not say more than that upon this second point. Only I would to God that many here were willing to say, "I will have a whole Christ." If you are willing to have Him, He is yours! If you will but trust Him, He is yours! There is nothing for you to do but to take Him as your hope, to take your supper tonight. Receive Him into yourself to be the food of your spirit and He is yours forever!

III. I must say only just a few sentences on the last point. WE ARE TO RECEIVE CHRIST IN UNION WITH OTHERS.

The Passover was not a solitary meal. A man did not shut himself up and have the lamb roasted and set on the table, and try to eat it all himself. No, it was a *family* meal—all who were in the house, of the seed of Israel, master and servants, husband and wife and children—all came to that table and fed together. Oh, I like to enjoy Christ for myself, but if I may not speak for others, I will speak for myself, and I must say that I

always enjoy the things of God better with you than I do alone. There is so much zest about having friends to enjoy Christ with us. We can feast upon Him alone, blessed be His name—we know the sweetness of solitary fellowship with Christ—but we love, still more, to share the blessing with other Christians. I have no wish to go all the way to the Celestial City alone! I would much rather go with Christiana and Mercy, and all those little ones—the whole family of pilgrims—and Mr. Greatheart, and all the rest of them! They had such cheery talks together and when they met the giants, if one was a little cast down, another brightened him up and encouraged him to play the man.

What a fine thing it was for such a poor creature as Mr. Ready-to-Halt, who always went on his crutches, and for poor Little-Faith, and Mr. Despondency, and Miss Much Afraid, to get into such good company! It would have been a dreary journey to them if they had gone all the way to the Celestial City, each one, alone! But when they traveled in such good society, you know, they grew merry. You remember that they were so jubilant when Giant Despair's head was cut off that Mr. Ready-to-Halt, though he had never done such a thing before, danced without his crutches! It is wonderful what joy comes out of Christian communion and holy fellowship! So it is good that you eat the Passover together, and not alone. It is well that you rejoice in Christ in the company of others who are rejoicing in Him.

The first with whom we should receive Christ is our own family. Well, then, my Brother, what about the members of *your* family? Are they all converted yet? Are they all saved? If not, breathe a prayer that the Lord would bring the rest of them to the Paschal feast. Some of you will have to go away, directly, when we remain for the communion. Some of you husbands must leave your wives, here, and you will have to go home, or go sit up in the gallery among the spectators. Remember that there will be no spectators in Heaven! And in that last dividing day, it will be an awful thing to be separated eternally from those we love. Happiest will it be in Heaven, itself, if we shall all meet there—an unbroken family!

Still, when the Jew met with his family and ate the Paschal supper, that was not the greatest joy of it, for he recollected that everywhere else, wherever there was an Israelite family, they were all doing the same, and that *the whole of the chosen people of God* were one in keeping this commemorative feast! So are all the people of God one in Christ Jesus. I like to think that I have fellowship with all the saints. I do not object to have fellowship with those who differ from me in many respects. I think that there is a communion of saints that cannot be limited. If there is the Life of God in you, and there is the Life of God in me, you may be mistaken and I may be mistaken upon some points, but the one Life in us will make us have communion with Jesus!

Perhaps you do not obey all Christ's commands and I say to you, "Well, then, I will not commune with you." But I cannot help having communion with you if you are in the body of Christ! Communion is the

pulse of the body and unless I cut my finger off, I cannot help having fellowship with my finger! It may be very dirty. I may tie a bit of red tape round it and say, "There, I will cut you off from fellowship with the rest of my body," but it is no use. As long as the body lives, and the finger lives, the fellowship must be there—the life-blood must continue to flow through it! So, dear Brothers and Sisters, we see many saints of God, many whom we believe to be the children of God, who, no doubt, are mistaken, and have many faults—and who is there who is not mistaken and is without fault?—but if the life of God is in them, there is a fellowship beyond all rules and regulations! That is the fellowship of the life which is in the Head of the Church! It pulses through all the members and must do so evermore.

I hope to come to the Communion Table, tonight, then, enjoying fellowship with *all* the redeemed of the Lord, both on earth and in Heaven! Yes, and with those that have gone from earth hundreds of years ago and, by faith, also to enjoy something of fellowship even with generations yet unborn that, in the fullness of time, shall come to know the Lord.

Thank God, many of us do know what it is to commune with Christ as well as to commune with His people! Both as individuals and as a worshipping assembly, we have often proved the sweetness of fellowship with our Lord. Sometimes, at that Communion Table, He has been set forth manifestly crucified among us. Sometimes, on our bed at night, He has spoken with us. I have known what it is to sit up and try not to go to sleep lest I should lose the overflowing joy of His Divine Presence. I have been afraid, sometimes, to rise from my bed in the morning lest, in going downstairs, I should break the spell of conscious fellowship with Him! Our Lord Jesus is so near His people and there are times when we have such rapt communion with Him that we can truly say that it is eternal life! Then do we sing—

***"I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul.
I hear the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll!
But I am calm with You, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies
And to the heights on which I stand,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.
Oh, this is life! Oh, this is joy,
My God, to find You so!
Your face to see, Your voice to hear,
And all Your love to know."***

God grant us more of that blessed fellowship, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 9.**

Verses 1, 2. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season.* I should almost fear that they had omitted the keeping of the Passover for a year. There was a first celebration of it when they came out of Egypt, but then it was not so much a type as a matter of fact—it was the thing itself—not the remembrance of the coming out of Egypt, but the actual coming out, the exodus. One would gather from this command of the Lord that, on the first anniversary of that memorable season, the children of Israel had omitted its observance and, therefore, Jehovah said to Moses, “Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season.” If this conjecture is correct, it is very significant that a rite which belonged to the Law of God and was, therefore, to pass away, was so soon neglected—and certainly it was afterwards neglected for many, many years. Whereas, the great memorial ordinance of the Christian dispensation—the Lord’s Supper—was not neglected even when Christians were under fierce persecution from the Jews or other nations. When the observance of that rite among the heathen was pretty sure to bring death, yet Christians met together on the first day of the week and continually broke bread in remembrance of their Lord’s death, even as we do to this day. I suppose that the Supper, which is the memorial of Christ our Passover, has never been altogether neglected throughout the world, but has been a matter of constant observation in the Church of Christ and shall be “till He come.”

3-7. *in the fourteenth day of this month, at even, you shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall you keep it. And Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel. And there were certain seen, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: and those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: therefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? They were in a great difficulty. They were commanded to come to the Passover—they sinned if they did not come—but they had defiled themselves, either through accident or of necessity. And if they came, thus, to the Passover, they would be committing sin, so that either way they were in an ill case. There must be somebody to bury the dead. I suppose that these persons had fulfilled that necessary office, and there had not been time for them to purge themselves from the ceremonial defilement involved in the touching of the dead—so what were they to do?*

8. *And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.* Oh, how wisely we would give advice

if we would never decide till we had prayed about the matter! Possibly we think ourselves so experienced and so well acquainted with the mind of God, that we can answer off-hand. Or, perhaps, we think that we need not consult the Lord at all, but that our own opinion will be a sufficient guide. Moses was greater and wiser than we are—he said to these men—“Stand still, and I will hear what Jehovah will command concerning you.”

9-12. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.* So that provision was made for the holding of a second Passover, that persons who were defiled at the first observance might have the opportunity to keep the feast a month afterwards.

13. *But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and does not keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.* What a solemn sentence that is! Let me read it apart from its context—“Because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.” You see, the great offering of the Lord, the atoning Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way by which sin can be put away! And if any man will not bring that—in other words, if he will not believe in Jesus—then here is his certain doom, “that man shall bear his sin.” No more terrible judgment can be pronounced upon any one of us than this, “that man shall bear his sin.” “If you believe not that I am He,” said Christ, “you shall die in your sins.”

14. *And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the Passover, and adorning to the manner thereof, so shall he do. You shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.* Now comes another subject—

15, 16. *And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony and at even there was upon the tabernacle, as it were, the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.* This was the sign of the Presence of God in the midst of that vast canvas city! I suppose that the great cloud rose up from the most holy place and probably covered the whole camp of the tribes, so that it shielded them from the fierceness of the sun, while at night the entire region was lit up by this marvelous illumination! The chosen nation had the pillar of cloud by day for a shelter, and the pillar of fire by night for a light. God’s Presence acts upon us in much the same way as the cloudy fiery pillar acted upon Israel—

***“He has been my joy in woe,
Cheered my heart when it was low
And, with warnings softly sad,
Calmed my heart when it was glad.”***

We get shelter from the fierce heat of the world’s day and deliverance, also, from the darkness of the world’s night through our Lord’s gracious Presence!

17-20. *And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD, the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched. As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD, they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.* Happy people to be thus Divinely guided! They could never tell when they would have to be on the move. They had no abiding city. When their tents were pitched and they were just getting comfortably settled, perhaps that very morning the pillar of cloud moved and, at other times, when they desired to be marching, it stood still. They could never be certain of staying long in any one place. It is just so with you and with me—our Lord intends to keep us with a loose hold on all things here below. We cannot tell what changes may come to any one of us and, therefore, reckon on nothing that God has not plainly promised. Be certain of nothing but uncertainty and always expect the unexpected! You cannot tell between here and Heaven where your Guide may take you—happy will you be if you can truly say that you desire to always follow where the Lord leads.

21-23. *And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed. Whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. So may each one of us ever be Divinely guided!—*

***“Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.”***

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Come you with us, and we will do you good.”
Numbers 10:29.***

THESE ancient words, so simple, yet so sweet, fascinate us with a potent hallowed charm. They ring out their melody like a familiar air. The language of a heart full of kindness, inspired with faith, and inspirited with the enthusiasm of a hope so much Divine that the lapse of ages impairs not their force, or diminishes anything from their natural spontaneous freshness. This story of Hobab one can hardly read without remembering the Apostolic declaration that the Law was a “shadow of good things to come.” A truly instructive shadow it was. In this instance the shadow is so like the image, the type so like the antitype, that we can almost see the Christian Church, and the convert as he is invited to unite with it. And we may behold in metaphor the blessings of which he may expect to be a partaker in so doing.

“Come you with us, and we will do you good,” seems to be quite as suitable an address from the lips of a Christian pastor as from those of the Prophet of Horeb, who was king in Jeshurun. We do not feel in the least degree hesitant as if we were wrenching the words from their natural association, or even exercising the slightest ingenuity in accommodating them to our own circumstances, so suitable do they seem for our use. The people of Israel in the wilderness were a type of the Church of Christ. The invitation here given was such as may be given to those who are proper subjects for communion with the Christian Church.

We shall proceed accordingly, this evening, to talk to you upon four things. First, the nature of a true Church as it is depicted by Israel in the wilderness. Secondly, the obligation of such a Church to invite suitable persons to join it. Thirdly, the argument that the Church may use, and the inducements it will always have to offer in setting forth the benefits to be conferred on those who heartily respond. And fourthly, the scrupulous fidelity it behooves us, as members of the Church, to observe in keeping our pledge ever afterwards to seek the welfare of such as unite with our fellowship.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHURCH AS IT IS PICTURED BY ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS? We might prolong the answer to this question with many minute features, but it will be unnecessary, at present, to do more than give you a simple broad outline. The people in the wilderness were a redeemed people. They had been redeemed by blood and redeemed by power. The sprinkling of

the blood of the paschal lamb over their lintels and their doorposts had secured their safety when the first-born of Egypt was slain.

Thus they were redeemed by blood, while wonderful miracles were worked throughout the whole land. And at the last, when threatened and pursued by their oppressors, the whole of the pride and pomp of Egypt was destroyed in the Red Sea. They were, indeed, redeemed by power. So, all the true members of God's Church understand what the blood of sprinkling means. They have enjoyed a Passover through it. God has passed over them—passed over them in mercy. Justice has executed its warrant upon the Person of the Lamb, and they have escaped—they have been redeemed by blood.

And the Holy Spirit has entered into their hearts and made them hate their former sins. He has delivered them from the dominant power of their inward corruptions, has set them free and brought them out of the bondage of sin. Thus they have also been redeemed by power, and no one has any right to think himself a member of Christ's Church unless by faith he has seen himself redeemed by blood—and in his experience has also been redeemed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But, according to our text and the context, the Israelites were a people who were passing through a land where they found no rest, neither did they desire any, for they were journeying to another country, the promised land, the Canaan. Now, here is another description of the true Church of God. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. This is not their rest. Here they have no continuing city. Objects which may suit men who have no outlook beyond death would not be suitable to them. That which rejoices the heart of the mere worldling gives them but very slender solace. Their hope and their consolation lie beyond the river. They look for a city that has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God.

Judge then, my dear Hearer, whether you are a member of God's Church, of the Church of Jesus Christ. If you are, you are a stranger and a foreigner this night here below, however pleasant the tent of your pilgrimage may be. Your Father's house on High is your destination. You are an exile from your home, albeit to your faith's foreseeing eye its golden gates may never so clearly appear. You have not yet come to your rest, but there remains to you a rest, a rest to which you shall come in due time, though you have not yet reached it. May I entreat you to put these questions to your own hearts as they arise, and judge yourselves.

Israel in the wilderness, according to the text, again, was a people walking by faith as to the future. Remember, the words are, "They were going to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you." They had never seen it—no one had come from it to tell them of it. True, in after days some spies had returned—but they brought up an ill report of the land, so that the people required even more faith, then, than they did before. If anyone had said to them, "But, if there is a land that flows with milk and honey, how will you gain it? The inhabitants thereof are strong and mighty—how are you sure that you will ever obtain this goodly land?" the only reply would have been, "The Lord has spoken to us concerning it."

Every true Israelite had been instructed as to the Covenant God had made with Abraham when He said, "To you and to your seed will I give this land to possess it," and every true Israelite was expecting that His people should find a lodgment and a portion in that land evermore because of the Covenant which God had made with his fathers. They were walking, then, in that respect, by faith—looking for a country which they had not seen—traversing a desert in search of a land which as yet they had not known. And with only God's Word for their title deed and nothing more.

And such are God's people now. As for joys to come, they have not tasted them—but they are looking for them because God has promised them. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit," and the Spirit reveals them only to our faith. If you ask me, "How do you know that there is a Heaven?" I must answer you, I believe it on God's testimony. I have no other warrant for it. No man has returned from that fair land to testify that he has heard the everlasting song, or seen the blessed citizens as they stand in their bright array before the Everlasting Throne.

Nor want I that any such should return. God's Word is enough. Let that stand instead of the testimony of ten thousand angels, or of myriads of the white-robed host of spirits who might have returned to tell the tale. We walk by faith as Israel did of old. Are you walking by such a faith? Do you believe in the unseen future, and does the hope of an unseen reward make you despise the present rewards of sin? Are you willing to bear the reproach of Christ because you count it greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt? Are you willing, now, to take up with Christ's Cross because you believe in Christ's crown? Though you have not seen it, do you believe in it, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?

These people, also, as to their present circumstances were walking by faith. It was not merely faith which sang to them of Canaan, but it was faith that told them of the manna which fell day by day, and the water which flowed from the rock—which stream followed them in their journey. Why, they could not live in any other way in the wilderness but by faith in God, for from that arid strand there sprang nothing for their nourishment! Here and there a palm tree—now and then a cooling well. But for the most part, had it not been for the goodness of God, their way had been over a desert, cheerless, waste, and terrible. But He gladdened it for them, and made the place of His feet, and of their feet, too, right glorious, for His mercy and His loving kindness endure forever!

Now, in this world the Christian man has to live by faith upon God as to present things. As to temporal necessities he must cast all his care on Him who cares for us, but especially as to all *spiritual* supplies the Christian has no stock of Grace. He has no inner spring within himself in his old nature. He has to look for everything that can sustain his new life from God, even the Father, who has promised not to forsake him. Now surely, my dear Hearer, you know whether you are living by present faith

or not. If all your comfort is derived from that which you can handle, and hear, and see. And if your joys of life are only the outward things of the present—then you are no member of the Church of God.

Whether you may have been baptized, or confirmed—whatever profession you may have made, or whatever sign you may have received—you do not belong to Christ's people—nor can you belong to them. But if you live by faith, I care not of what Church you are a member. If you are exhibiting day by day a living faith upon a living but unseen God. If your trust is in His Providence. If you daily resort to Christ for help and succor. If you have that faith which is the mark of God's elect, you may depend upon it that you are one of His.

One other mark let us give among many more which might be mentioned. These people found, wherever they went, that they were surrounded by foes. In the wilderness the Amalekites were against them. When they crossed into the promised land all the inhabitants of Canaan were up in arms against them. So I think you will find it if you are a child of God. All places are full of snares. Events, prosperous or adverse, expose you to temptations. All things that happen to you, though God makes them work for good, in themselves would work for evil. Here on this earth the world is no friend to Divine Grace to help you on to God.

The bias of the current is not towards Heaven. Alas, it is the other way! "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "The whole world lies in the Wicked One, and you are of God, little children." Darkness prevails. It cannot minister to your safety or to your happiness. Neither can the sinful world minister light to the understanding, peace to the conscience, joy to the heart, or holiness to the life of the Believer. You will have to fight continually. The last step you take will be a conflict, and you will never be able to sheathe your sword until you are in the bosom of Christ. Thus must you maintain the godly warfare—

***"Till with yonder blood-bought crowd
You shall sing on Canaan's shore
Songs oft triumph, sweet and loud
War with Amalek no more."***

Here, then, are some of the marks of the Church of Christ. I hope that a part of that Church worships in this House of Prayer. A part of that Church will be found to worship in every House of Prayer where the disciples of our common Lord assemble, and the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ is acknowledged.

II. Let us pass on to the second word, which is this, that IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO INVITE SUITABLE PERSONS TO JOIN WITH IT. As you read—"Come you with us, and we will do you good"—are not these the terms in which any Church should invite a suitable pastor to unite with it? I have always felt that they have a better application to a pastor than they have to the people. For it is said of Hobab, "You know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you shall be unto us instead of eyes."

It was inviting a really efficient *helper*, who would be of great service to the Israelites, to come and cast in his lot with them. So should a Church expect to find in its pastor one who may guide them, because he knows how they are to encamp in the wilderness. One who may be to them, in some respects, instead of eyes. Their invitation should come in this way, not only, “Come you with us, that we may *get* good out of you”—that is one design—but it should also be, “Come you with us, that we may *do you* good. That we may hold up your hands, that we may sustain you by our prayers, that we may back you up by our efforts. That being led onward by you from one work of Christian activity to another, we may never fail you, never betray you, but may stand with you even to the last.”

I believe you will seldom get much good unless you are willing also to confer good. Those who are the nearest to the heart of the preacher, in all Christian service, will in all probability be most spiritually enriched under his ministry. I speak not of myself nor for myself, but I specially address myself now to those of you, my Hearers, who are members of other Churches. Do, I exhort you, love your ministers! Stand up for their character in all companies! Rally at their side in all their efforts—never let them have to regret your absence at the weeknight service, or at any other time, if you can help it.

Let them see that you appreciate the men whom you have chosen to be over you in the Lord, and that you have said in inviting them to come among you, “Come you with us, and we will do you good.” Not to linger on that view, however pertinent and seasonable, let us take the words as significant of the manner in which Churches should invite suitable persons to come among them as private members. Are there not those who go in and out merely as visitors worshipping with you, who have never joined hands with you in Covenant?

They meet with you as mere hearers, under the same ministry, but they have not identified themselves with the brotherhood to sit down and feast with you at the Table of the Lord. To such as these the proposal may be made, and the welcome proffered. The conditions, of course, need to be thoroughly understood on our part as well as on theirs. We dare not invite anyone to join the visible Church who has not first joined the *invisible* Church. We do not believe that a man has any right to be baptized in water unless he has first been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Nor that anyone has a right to eat of the Lord’s Supper, the outward signs of bread and wine, until he has eaten of the flesh and drank of the blood of the Son of Man, in a spiritual sense.

He must have the *essence* of the symbol before we dare give the symbol. So a man must be vitally united to the living Church of Christ before he has any right to be professionally united there. Therefore it would be a sin on the part of any child of God to say to anyone whom he knew to be an unconverted person, “Come and unite yourself with the Church.” No, that cannot be. First, dear Hearer, you must be one with Christ, reconciled to God, a Believer in the precious blood—and then afterwards you may come to the Church of God. But until then you have no part nor lot

in this matter, for you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

Moses did not thus invite any strangers or neighbors indiscriminately, saying, "Come you with us," but he invited Hobab as one whom he well knew, and of whose fitness he could no doubt feel. Was not Raguel his father, the priest of Midian, a servant of the Most High God? And was not Hobab also a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of Israel? "Come you with us," says he, "you are our kith and kin. Birds of a feather flock together. Come you with us and we will do you good. You are one of our Brethren, come and welcome, nothing shall stand in the way. Come you with us, and we will do you good."

Now, I have heard persons speak on this wise, "I believe that my child has been converted, but you must not think that I have pressed him, for I never spoke to my child about religion." I am heartily ashamed of a father who can say that! And I hope that he will be equally ashamed of himself. I quite agree, however, that no parent and no friend should press another to make a public profession of faith until he is as assured as he possibly can be that the fruits of the Spirit are put forth in that child, or that friend. But, once assured of that, there can be no credit in holding your tongue about a Christian duty. It is the duty of every child of God to be associated with the Christian Church, and surely it is part of our duty to instruct others to do what the Lord would approve of! Do not, therefore, hesitate to say to such as serve and fear the Lord, "How is it that you remain outside the pale of the visible Church? Come you with us, and we will do you good." So Moses did to Hobab.

As it is a very kind and tender word, "Come you with us," let it be spoken persuasively. Use such reasoning as you can to prove that it is at once their duty and their privilege. Observe, Moses does not *command*, but he *persuades*. Nor does he merely make a suggestion or give a formal invitation, but he uses an argument. He puts it attractively, "And we will do you good." So, look the matter up—study it—get your arguments ready. Seek out inducements from your own experience. Draw a reason, and there and then try to persuade your Christian friends.

Do it heartily. Observe how Moses puts it as from a very warm heart. "Come you with us. Give me your hand, my Brother. Come you with us, and we will do you good." There are no "ifs," "ands," or "buts." It is not, "Well, you may perhaps be welcome," but "Come you with us." Give a hearty, loving, warm invitation to those whom you believe to be your Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Do it repeatedly if once will not suffice. Observe in this case, Hobab said he thought he would depart to his own land and his kindred. But Moses returned to the charge, and says, "Leave us not, I pray you." How earnestly he puts it! He will have no put off. If at first it was a request, now it is a beseeching almost to entreaty—"Leave us not, I pray you." And how he repeats the old argument, but puts it in a better light—"If you go with us, yes, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto you."

I would, therefore, earnestly say to Christian Brothers and Sisters here, look for some among our congregation, such as you believe to be godly people, and put to them this matter. I am sure they are losing much benefit, and quite certain that they are standing in an irregular position. If it is right for any one Christian not to be a member of a Church it is right for all Christians not to be members of Churches—consequently it would be right for there to be no visible Church, and ordinances might be dispensed with—for all these things must either exist through the maintenance of sacred order or else collapse with the breach of godly discipline.

What is not the duty of one is not the duty of any—and what *is* the duty of one is the duty of all—for we all stand alike before God. If I may be innocent in abstaining from union with the people of God, so may all of you. Or if you may, so may I. There is no more obligation upon me to preach the Gospel than there is upon any one of you to make a profession of his faith. If you are a Christian, the same rule of love that prompts me to speak for my Lord should prompt you in your way to speak for your Lord. And if I should not be excusable if I remained silent, and refused to bear my testimony, neither will you be excusable, being a Christian, if you refuse to unite yourself with the people of God.

Remember our Master's word, "Whoever therefore, shall confess Me *before men*, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men," (which has the force there of not confessing), "him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven."

Before I leave this point let me call your attention to a certain sense in which Christian men may address this invitation to all that they meet with. "Come you with us, and we will do you good." Not, "come and join our Church," not, "come and be members," not, "come and put on a profession of faith." You cannot say that to any but to those in whom you see the fruits of the Spirit. But you *may* say, and you *ought* to say, to ALL persons of all classes on all sides, "Come away from the seed of evildoers. Cast in your lot with the people of God. Leave the world, come on pilgrimage to the better country. Forsake the pursuit of vanities—lay hold on eternal life. Waste not all your thoughts upon the bootless cares of time—think about the momentous matters of eternity.

"Why will you be companions of those who are upon the wrong side, and whose cause is the cause of evil? Why will you remain an enemy to God? Why will you be in an unreconciled state? We, by God's Grace, have cast in our lot with Christ and with His cause. We desire to live to His glory. Our ambition is to serve Him. If we could, we would live without sin, for we hate it and loathe it. If we could, we would be as the angels are, without a single fault. Come and cast in your lot with us—that is, believe. That is, trust a Savior slain. That is, put your soul into the custody of Christ the Intercessor. That is, press forward through a life of holiness on earth to a home of happiness in Heaven." "Come you with us, and we will do you good."

So, then, the exhortation of our text which, strictly speaking, seems most applicable to the *minister*, becomes next suitable to the child of God

who has not up to now cast in his lot with the company of our Lord's disciples. And after that, in a certain sense, it may be appropriately addressed to all who come under the sound of the Gospel. "Come you with us, and we will do you good."

III. But now, our third observation is that THE MAIN ARGUMENT—THE MOST POWERFUL INCENTIVE WE CAN EVER USE IS THAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL DO THOSE WHO ENTER INTO IT GOOD.

I am sure it will, for I speak from experience. And if I were to call upon many scores, and even hundreds, in this House of Prayer, they would all bear the same testimony—that union with the people of God has done them good. The Church of God may say this, first, because she can offer to those who join with her good company. In the Church of God are those who are called "the excellent of the earth," in Whom David said was all his delight. In the Church of God are the humble, meek, and lowly.

And, though in that Church there will come a traitorous Judas, yet there are not wanting the warm-spirited and loving John, the bold and daring Peter, the practical James, the well-instructed Paul in labors more abundant, and many of the precious sons of Zion and daughters of Jerusalem in like manner. Of whom, I might affirm, as the Apostle did of Priscilla and Aquila, they are my helpers in Christ Jesus, unto whom I not only give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles. Truly we can sing with heart-felt sincerity, Dr. Watts' paraphrase of David's Psalm —

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

Good company is ever a good thing, and the children of God may say to their Brethren who have not yet joined with them, "Come you with us, and we will do you good," for we will introduce you to the goodly fellowship of the saints. Come join a section of the general assembly and Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven, and whose work of faith, patience of hope, and labors of love are spread abroad throughout the world.

"Come with us," the Church of God may say, "and you shall have good instruction," for it is in the true Church of God that the doctrines of Grace are preached, that the Covenant of Grace is unfolded, that the Person of Christ is extolled, that the work of the Spirit is magnified. All the precious things, indeed, which make up the spiritual meat of God's servants are brought forth and put upon the table every Sunday. There the good stewards bring forth things both new and old. In the midst of the Church the Good Shepherd makes us to lie down in the green pastures, and leads us beside the still waters. Come you with us, and the teaching of the Church shall do you good—you shall hear those glorious doctrines which shall build you up in your most holy faith.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good," in the best sense, for you shall feel in our midst the good Presence of God. Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. And in the greater assemblies of His people, when the solemn hymn swells up

to Heaven and the fervent prayer rises like a cloud of sweet perfume, and the ministry of the Gospel is diffused like a sweet smelling savor of Christ unto God—there is God. There the Father is, receiving returning prodigals, accepting His dear children who feel the spirit of adoption.

There the Son is, manifesting Himself unto them as He does not unto the world. There the Spirit is, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and helping their infirmities as a Comforter and an Advocate. Have you not often felt the Presence of God, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in your assemblies as the people of God? Can you not, therefore, say with the recollections in your glowing hearts of the consolations you have received in association with each other, “Come you with us, and we will do you good”?

“Come with us again, for you shall participate in all the good offices of the Church.” That is to say, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, if you will cast in your lot with us, if there is prayer, you shall have your share in it. We will pray for you in your trouble, and trial, and anguish. If a Brother’s voice can intercede for you when your tongue is dumb with grief, you shall certainly have such help as they that can minister to you. Come you with us, for in the true Church of God there is sympathy. Genuine Believers are taught to “weep with those that weep,” and to “rejoice with those that rejoice.” They feel that they are members, one of another, and partakers of the same life with Jesus Christ.

If there is anything to be found in ordinances you shall have a share of that good thing. If the Lord reveals Himself in the breaking of bread, you shall not be shut out from the Table. Come you with us, and when we behold Him you shall see Him, too. Come you with us, and if our fellowship is with Christ, you shall have a share in it. And if our conversation of the things of God is sweet and pleasant, you, too, shall have your say and your good word, and we will rejoice to hear you. We invite you to a pure brotherly fellowship, not to one of name only, but in deed and in heart. “Come you with us, and we will do you good.”

But the good that Hobab was to get was not only on the road. He must have got a deal of good on the road, for he saw in the sacrifice what he had never seen before. While he walked among those tents of Judah he must have felt that God was remarkably present there as he had never felt it among the tents of Midian. He saw there every morning the pillar of cloud, and every night the pillar of fire. He heard the sound of the silver trumpets. He saw the uplifting of the sacred banners, and the marching of the chosen host of God, and he must have felt, “This is a place more marvelous than any I have ever trod before in that falling manna, in that miraculous stream. I see everywhere the marks of Omnipotence, love, and wisdom as I never have seen them in all my solitary musings or my long wanderings aforetime.”

So, in the Church of God there are the footprints of Deity, there are marks of the sublime Presence of the Christ of God who abides in the furnace with His afflicted people. Signs of God’s Presence such as all the world besides cannot exhibit. You shall get good on the road. But still, the

main good that Hobab got was this—he went into the promised land with God’s people. We read of his people, the Kenites dwelling in the land in aftertime. He seems to have become a partaker of the same Covenant with Israel, to have become part and parcel with them. So, the main blessing that you get from being united with the invisible Church of Christ through being part and parcel of the Body of Christ is reserved for the hereafter—

***“When God makes up His last account
Of natives in the Holy Mount;
‘Twill be an honor to appear
As one new born and nourished there.”***

Woe unto those who shall have no part with Israel in the day when the lots shall be divided and the portions shall be given! Woe unto such as shall be found among the Amalekites or Canaanites—strangers to the chosen seed! But happy shall all they be who have God to be their God, for their portion shall be bliss forever. Come you, therefore, with us, for whatever good the Lord shall do unto us you shall be a partaker in it.

IV. And now, lastly. All this being seriously pondered and clearly understood, the last point is a matter of very serious importance. Lest we should be found mere pretenders, LET ALL OF US WHO BELONG TO CHRIST’S CHURCH TAKE CARE TO MAKE THIS ARGUMENT TRUE.

I speak to many Brothers and Sisters here who have long been joined to the visible Church of God, and I put these questions to them—How have you carried out this silent compact which has been made with the friends of Christ? You have promised to do them good—have you fulfilled your pledges? I am afraid few of us have done good to our fellow Christians up to the measure that we might have done, or that we ought to have done. Some professors, I fear, have forgotten the compact altogether. They joined the Church, but the idea of doing good to the rest of the community has scarcely entered into their mind.

“Come you with us, and we will do you good.” You say this, then, to the poor members of the Church. Has God prospered you? Do them good. Say not to them, “Be you warmed and be you filled,” but as far as ever your ability can reach, minister to them that Christ may not have to say to you, “I was an hungered and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink.” Let your charity be wide as the world, for God makes it to rain on the just and the unjust—but remember—He has a peculiar people, and He would have us to be a peculiar people unto Himself. Let us do good unto all men, but specially to those who are of the household of faith. If you know a Brother in Christ whose need is pressing, own him as a Brother—open your hands wide unto him—do him good in this respect.

You that are old members of the Church, well established and instructed, you have virtually promised to do good to the young members—will you not try to do so? Some of them, perhaps, are not all you would like them to be. Mind you, you are not to condemn, but to reform them. Can you not gently prune the luxuriance of their branches that are a little too wild? Would it not be possible for you, in a loving and an affectionate manner, to assist them in the points in which they are weak? To lead

them in the matters in which they err? Do them good—do not clamor against them with reproach, censure, sneer, and jibe. Nor wish to bind them down to conformity with *your* rules, judging them by the somberness of your own disposition.

What if they are lively and cheerful—try to make them merry and wise. Let them be happy and rejoice—seek that their happiness may be in Christ, and their rejoicing in the Lord. Do them good. There are some of your fellow Christians who are faint-hearted—not pleasant people to talk to. They will never cheer you much. They always look on the black side. They have always some trouble. They are terribly dull company—do not shun them, do them good. Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of feeble heart, “Be strong. Fear not.” Do not forsake them, but you that are spiritual bear their burdens, and help to make them rejoice.

Some among your number will be backsliders—alas, that it should be so. Let not your coldness ever accelerate the pace at which they step aside—rather let your persevering care watch over them, that their first wandering may be soon checked. Little, alas, can be done to remedy backsliding when it goes far, but much may be done by nipping it in the bud. In the Church of God, *prevention* is infinitely better than *cure*. Watch over them, then. “If any man be overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

Some in the Church may be ignorant. There always were such. No standard of height is set up in the Word of God for all the recruits to be up to that level. No bylaw prescribes that none be received unless they are of a certain stature. If, therefore, some you meet with are very ignorant, do them good. Do not set about a report of any absurd remark that they may make, or any misapprehension they may have upon a point of Divinity. You were not always so wise as you are now—probably you are not so wise now as you think you are. But anyhow, I shall argue from the wisdom you possess your duty to impart. You have said, “Come you with us, and we will do you good.” It is not doing any man good to smile at him, to find fault with him for not knowing. But it is doing him good to hide his shortcomings and help his progress.

Once again—there may be some in your midst who are in a good deal of trouble. Have they no friends to sympathize and console them? Alas, friends in this world are often too much like swallows that are gone as soon as the first frost appears. Let it not be so with you—if you never owned him your friend before—be his friend now. Come to his aid if you possibly can. Let him have your countenance. Do not pass him because his black coat has a rusty hue. Do not get out of his way because you are afraid that he is short of cash. As far as ever you can, let him see, now he is in his trouble, that you did not value him for what he *had*, but for *himself*, for his character, for his attachment to Christ.

If anybody has spoken ill of him, do not be ready to jot down as true the slander that every fool or villain may please to hold forth against a

Christian man. Search for yourselves, and if you are obliged to believe it, yet say little about it. Carry it before God, as though it were your own sin, and sorrow over it. Talk to your Brother, if it is your lot to know him well, and get him to leave the evil into which he has fallen, and lead him back again. But do not forsake him. Or if he is the victim of slander and scandal, be you among the first to defend him. I do hope that there will always be among us a spirit of true Christian brotherhood so that those who love Christ and have thrown in their lot with us may find that we really desire to do them good.

I have thus spoken more particularly because I know that the number of Christians among us who are not making a profession is unusually large just now. I had far rather it should be so than that it should be the reverse—than that many should be making a profession without knowing or feeling the private virtue and public faith it demands. Better that you were outside the visible Church all your lives, and be in Christ, than make a profession and yet have no part nor lot with Him. All these outward things are nothing compared with the inward. “You must be born again.” There must be a living faith in Christ, a real change of heart—an indwelling of the Spirit of God to attest the verity of your godliness. Where these are, the rest ought not to be neglected.

These things ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone, but still, even if they are left undone, it shall not amount to a total shipwreck. But if there is no faith, you may build the vessel as you will, and you may think that you have loaded her with precious treasures—but sink she must—because that alone which would have kept her afloat has been neglected.

God grant us to be one with Christ, and to be one with His people in time and in eternity. There now—there now—there is Christ’s Church. And if I saw that she were in the stocks, and all were hooting her—if she stood in the pillory, and all were pelting her—yet it would be my desire to throw in my lot with her! Whatever she endured I would endure, because the day comes when those who were not on the side of Christ and His Church would give their eyes if they had been!

Yes, would wish themselves that they had never been born to think that they did not take up with the reproached people, and did not side with the reproached Savior. O be with Christ in His sorrows, that you may be with Him in His joy! Be with Him in His reproach, that you may be with Him in His glory! Amen.

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THE MARCH!

NO. 368

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 31, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You.”
Numbers 10:35.***

THE people of God in the wilderness were led instrumentally by the wisdom of Moses and his father-in-law Hobab. But really their guiding star was the visible Presence of God in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. I suppose that the possession of this pillar as a guide did not remove from them the duty and the necessity of using the judgment of Moses and Hobab as to the place where they should encamp. You will remember that Moses expressly said to his relative, “You know how to encamp in the wilderness and you shall be unto us instead of eyes.”

They had the guidance of God, yet they were not to neglect the wisdom which God had given to His servants and the judgment with which He had endowed them. We ought to learn from this, I think, that while we ever seek the guidance of God in Providence, yet we may frequently find direction and guidance in the use of our own common sense, our own discretion with which the Lord has endowed us. As long as the pillar of cloud tarried, the people always waited. However inconvenient the spot might be, if it rested one day, or twenty days, or a month, or a whole year, they stood still.

But the moment that the cloud moved, whether the fiery column marched through the darkness of the night or the cloudy pillar mellowed the brightness of the sun and screened them from its torrid heat, they removed at once. However excellent might be their quarters, they never dared to delay when once the Presence of God moved from above them. It was His to lead—it was theirs to follow. Yet, before they began the march, before the standard of Judah was uplifted and that tribe began to take up its tents to lead the van, the silver trumpet was always blown in the front.

It was heard through the entire encampment—the silver trumpet, which seemed to say, “Arise! Depart!—This is not your rest. Your God has removed and you must follow.” Then Moses himself came forward and stretching out his hands, he cried, “Arise, O God and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You.” When this was done, on marched the mighty host and when they came to their halting place again and the trumpet sounded for the rest of eventide, up came the

king in Jeshurun, the Prophet of Horeb and lifting up his hands, again he cried, "Return unto Your rest and unto the many thousands of Israel," and the pillar rested over the top of the great encampment and gave them a bright and flaming light by night, even as it gave them a glorious covering and protection by day.

To what use are we to put this prayer of Moses for no passage of Scripture is of private interpretation? No single text in the Word relates simply to the occasion on which it is spoken—but whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. The Word of God is a living Word—not a Word that had life in it in the day of Moses and is now dead—but a Word which is as living to us at this hour as when it first came from the Prophetic lips of the great Lawgiver. I think I shall be warranted in using the text, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You" in three ways this morning

We shall use it, first, as the watchword of God's Israel in every age. Secondly, we are warranted by the sixty-eighth Psalm in referring this text, typically and mystically, to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I think, also, the guidance of God's Spirit will warrant us, in the third place, in using this text personally, for ourselves as individuals and as a Church. And we would offer this prayer now that the ark of God in our midst is about to be removed, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered. And let them that hate You flee before You."

I. First, then, THIS HAS BEEN THE WATCHWORD OF THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ALL AGES.

The people of God in the wilderness were the picture of God's Church upon earth. We are strangers and foreigners upon the earth. We are pilgrims and sojourners as all our fathers were. I was struck last evening, on reading for my own instruction the 33rd chapter of the book of Numbers, with the constant occurrence of verses concerning the removal of the people. "And they removed from Ethan and turned again unto Pihahiroth." "And they journeyed in the wilderness of Ethan and pitched in Marah. And they removed from Marah and came unto Elim."

They went from the place of bitterness to the place of feasting. "And in Elim were twelve fountains of water and threescore and ten palm trees. And they pitched there. And they removed from Elim and encamped by the Red Sea. And they removed from the Red Sea and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin and encamped in Dophkah. And they departed from Dophkah and encamped in Alush. And they removed from Alush and encamped at Rephidim."

And so the whole chapter is a succession of removing and encamping till at last they ceased to dwell in tents and came to live in their own walled cities in the land of Canaan. Just such has been the history of the Church—it has always been removing its place and such has been the

condition of each individual. Here we have no abiding city. "We seek a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God." Here we have but an earthly house of our tabernacle which is soon to be dissolved and we are continually men of the weary foot who rest not but journey onward to the place of rest.

Albeit that they had no habitation except their tents yet it is true of Israel in the wilderness that they always had an habitation. Do you not remember the song of Moses—"Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Whatever they were, God was their dwelling place. As I have said before, by day they were covered with His cloud and they dwelt under the vast canopy like princes in a pavilion. By night they were covered with its fiery luster and they rested under it with a light that never made glad the earth by night save only to *their* eyes.

God's wings were always over them. He carried them all the days of old and they did really rest and dwell in Him. Today, in our Father's house there are many *mansions* and it was true of them yesterday that in their Father's house were many *tents*, in those tents they dwelt. But all of them dwelt in their Father's house. This, too, is true of the entire Church—always wandering, yet never far from home—unhoused yet always in palaces. Sometimes destitute, afflicted, tormented and yet always clothed, always rich, always feasting to the full. Deserted, yet not alone, forsaken, yet multiplied. Left, yet still abiding with Him that fills all in all.

We might carry the parallel out still further. But it is enough for us to remark this morning that in another point the people of God in the wilderness were the picture of the Church of Christ. Wherever they marched, when God went before them, they marched to victory. Lo, the Red Sea rolls in their way. The pillar of cloud moves. They follow. The frightened sea divides and the Red Sea itself is astonished. What ails you, O Sea, that you were driven back and your waters stood upright as a heap? It was before the Lord, before the presence of the mighty God of Jacob.

They march onward. The Amalekites attack them—they fall upon the Israelites on a sudden when they are unaware. But God fights for them. Moses' hands are upheld until the going down of the sun and Joshua smites the Amalekites and Jehovah Nissi is all glorious. Then Sihon, king of the Amorites, came out against them and Og, king of Bashan and the Moabites attack them. But the Lord is in the front of them and they suffer no ill. Their enemies melt before them as the fat of rams. Into smoke they are consumed.

Even so has it been with the Church of God in all ages. Her march has been that of one who is fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners. Let but her silvery trumpet sound and the echo shakes the vaults of Hell. Let but her warriors unsheathe their sword and their enemies fly before them like thin clouds before a Biscay gale. Her path is the pathway of a conqueror—her march has been a procession of

triumph. Wherever she has put her foot the Lord has given her that land to be her heritage forever and ever and as it was in the beginning it is now and ever shall be till this world shall end. Amen.

Now, having just touched upon the parallel, let me show how this war cry has really been heard of God and has been fulfilled to all His people. Turn to this Bible, this Book of the wars of the Lord. Wherever His Church has gone and He has risen up, have not His enemies been scattered? Though they were the hundred Kings of Canaan, were they not hanged upon trees, or speedily put to death with the edge of the sword? Though it were Agag, king of the Amalekites, was he not hewn in pieces?

Though it should be the mighty princes of the Philistines—did not their champions lose their heads and their princes fly apace? Though it should be the embattled ranks of Syria—did not God smite them in the valleys and chase them on the hills? Though it were Sennacherib—did not God rise up and did not His enemies at once die before His presence? Did they not fall like the leaves of the forest “when autumn has blown”? Though it were the hosts of Egypt in later times, or the mighty ranks of Babylon, or Media, or Persia—can we not say concerning them all—“Your right hand, O Lord, Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. Your right hand, O Lord, has done wonderful things, this is known of all the earth”?

But when we have read the Bible story through, the Book of God’s triumph has only begun. Look to the later battles of the Church. You remember the story of Oliver Cromwell and his men at the battle of Dunbar—when before the battle they all of them knelt on the heather and asked the Lord their God to be with them and then springing up they chanted this old Psalm—

***“Let God arise and scattered let all His enemies be,
And let all those that do Him hate before His presence flee.
As the smoke is driven, so drive You them. As fire melts wax away,
Before God’s face let wicked men, so perish and decay.”***

And then, home went their swords and their enemies fled down the hill and a speedy victory was given.

I quote not this except as a picture and illustration of the history of the entire Church. Methinks, in a spiritual sense, when Luther first bowed his knee the Church began to chant, “Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered.” When Knox in Scotland upheld the glory of Jesus’ name, was it not once again, “O God arise, let them that hate You flee before You”? When Whitefield and Wesley, seraphic Evangelists of Jesus Christ, went through this land, was not this the very song of Israel, “O God, arise and let Your enemies be scattered”? And shall it not be ours today? Let but God go forth with our arms. Let Him but speak through our ministers. Let Him but dwell in our elders. Let Him but make the bodies of our Church members His temples and His enemies must be scattered and they must consume away.

I can well conceive, my Brethren, that such a prayer as this would well befit the tongue of a minister who lands as the first herald of the Cross in some barbarian land. My Brother, a solitary missionary in some populous city in China might bow his knee when first he attempts to preach and say, "O Lord, arise and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You." A Williams landing upon Erromanga might say, even though his blood stained the wave, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered."

Livingstone and Moffat, toiling in the midst of the thick dense ignorance of central Africa might frequently say from their innermost souls, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered." Those brave men who risk all for Christ, not counting their lives dear unto them that they might finish their course with joy—methinks when they as pioneers for Christ bear the ark in the midst of the wilderness, they could not breath a better prayer for themselves and you and I cannot do better than put it up for them now, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered. Let them that hate You flee before You."

Brethren, this ought to be our prayer today, in anticipation of the Millennial splendor. When it is to come, I do not know. Dr. Cumming may. But I am not so wise as he. This I know, Scripture says He is to come. But I *think* it says, "He shall come in such an hour as you think not"—He comes as a thief in the night. Whether He shall come in the year 1866, I do not know. I hope He may, but I had rather that He should come in the year 1861. I should not like to postpone my watchfulness till 1866, but be always looking for Him. Whether He shall come in the morning or at cock-crow, in mid-day or midnight, blessed is that servant who when his Lord comes shall be found watching.

Cast your eyes mentally over the world and look today in what a state it is. What wonderful changes have taken place and yet how firm are the roots of evil! How tightly bound around the very granite of earth's nature are the roots of the great upas tree of iniquity. Who can hope to tear it up by the roots, or cut down this towering cedar? See in one land where liberty was blustered, the lash still dripping with goutts of gore. See you in another land where there is much advancement in many things, the people priest-ridden and borne down beneath the yoke. Look at the myriads that have never seen the great light—that sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death.

Where is the arm, where is the arm that can put back the world upon its proper pivot? Where is the almighty power that can turn once again the pole so that earth shall stand no more oblique, but in uprightness roll before the Throne of God? Where is the arm that can roll up the clouds as a mantle and the mists as rags? There is but one. And our business is to cry today, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered. Let them that hate You flee before You." Come quickly, come quickly—come, Lord Jesus.

Then shall the world be rid of her tyrants. Then shall slavery cease to be. Then shall your unsuffering kingdom come. The Great Shepherd shall reign and everywhere shall He be extolled—to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. Prayer also shall be made for Him continually and daily shall He be praised.

Before I pass from this head, quietly, for the edification of each individual Christian, let me remark that this prayer will suit your personal difficulties. Have you been in conflict lately? Has old Apollyon put you to your wits end? Has he thrown his fiery darts at you thick as hailstones when they fell on Egypt? Have you been crushed beneath his foot? Can you not deliver yourself? Pray “Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered.” Do your doubts prevail? Has your faith suffered an eclipse? Has a darkness that might be felt brooded over you? Say, “Rise up, Lord.”

All that is wanted in the darkest night to clear it away is for the sun to rise. Battle not with your doubts yourself. Wrestle not with your own fears. Pray, “Rise up, Lord. These doubts of mine are enemies to Your honor—enemies to Your promise—enemies to Your Truth. Rise up, Lord and let them flee before You.” You shall soon find peace and quietness and in assurance and confidence your souls shall rest. Are you beset today by men who hate you? As a child of God have you acted with such simplicity and integrity that men not understanding you have imputed to you wrong motives?

Have you been slandered and abused? “Avenge not yourself, but rather give place unto wrath. Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Let your prayer be, “Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered.” Are you serving God in some particular work where many are seeking to undo all that you can accomplish? Are you a City Missionary and do you labor in the midst of a den of iniquity? Does it seem that what you do in one day is undone in one hour by others? Take it to the Throne of Grace. Say, “Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered.” Have you a great purpose conceived within your soul and does Providence seem to stand in the way of its accomplishment? Has the Lord commanded you to some special work and do friends discourage and enemies abuse? This prayer may suit you: “Rise up, Lord.”

It needs but that God should make bare His arm—His uprising is enough. As Luther said when opposing the Church of Rome—“They are not strong. God can overthrow them with His little finger.” And so say you. All the foes of the Church with all their battlements behind which they are entrenched are nothing. They but seem to be. They are shadows, emptiness, nothing. Do you in confidence cry to your God—“Lord, do but rise. Do but stand up. Do but manifest Your power in any way whatever and Your enemies are scattered at once and those that hate You must flee before You for evermore”—

“When He makes bare His arm, what shall withstand His work?”

***When He his people's cause defends, who, who shall stay His hand?
Let us, in life and death, boldly Your Truth declare
And publish, with our last breath, Your love and guardian care."***

II. We shall now take the text IN ITS REFERENCE—TO CHRIST.

Scripture is the best defender of Scripture. The diamond is not to be cut except with a diamond. We shall not understand one passage in the Word without another to explain it. That Book has keys in its own self for all its own locks. The 68th Psalm informs us that the moving of the ark from the lower place of the city of David was typical of the ascending of Christ into Heaven. Ah, methinks, my dear Brethren, the sorrowing Church when they beheld their Lord dragged by cruel men to judgment, when they heard Him accused and slandered, when they saw Him mocked and spit upon must have considered the battle to be a defeat.

The tears must have stood in their eyes when they saw that He who was to be the Deliverer of Israel could not deliver Himself. How dense must have been the gloom over the fearing hearts of the Church when they saw their King, their Head, dragged away and nailed ignominiously to the tree. And how dead must all their hopes have been when at last He bowed His head and gave up the ghost and the sword pierced Him to the heart and out there came the blood and water!

Was it not the day of Hell's triumph, the hour of earth's despair, the moment of Heaven's defeat? No. It was the reverse of all this. That moment when Christ died He gave the deathblow to all His enemies. That hour when they thought they were treading on Him He was crushing them and bruising the serpent's head. Even when the Master was laid in the tomb and had to sleep there His three days as Jonah in the whale's belly—if the Church had had faith they might have come early on the dawn of the first day of the week. And standing outside the tomb they might have begun to sing, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You."

I think it will be no fantastic imagination if we conceive that the angels did in that hallowed day come down from Heaven before the sun had risen, knowing the appointed time and while one of them rolled away the stone the rest stood waiting on the wing and chanted, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered, let them that hate You flee before You."

Methinks I see the Champion awake. He unbinds the napkin from His head, He sees again the light—He rolls off the cerements of the tomb, rolls them up and places them by themselves. He has risen! The stone has been rolled away. He comes forth into mid air. O Hell, how did you shake! O Death, how were you plagued! O Earth, your Sun had risen indeed that day! Heaven, surely you did rejoice and the song rolled mightily along your streets! He rises and in that moment *sin* dies. The resurrection of Christ was God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifices. It was all that was wanted.

The handwriting of ordinances had once been nailed to the Cross—they are now forever blotted out. Once had He borne the burden but now the burden is removed from His neck. God accepts Christ as being justified and therefore He rises from the dead and by that act all His people are justified. “He rose again for our justification.” The last hope of sin was crushed—its last pretense to any claim upon the people of God was hushed forever—its last arrogant claim to any right to their souls, or to their bodies, was quashed in Heaven’s High Court when Christ the Risen came forth in pure white robes to demand the spotlessness of His people *in Him* because of His resurrection *for* them.

Nor was sin alone that day scattered. Did not all the hosts of Hell fall before Him? How glad they had been! All the demons had exalted themselves with the hope that their reign would now begin. Loosed should be the iron chain, broken should be the bolts at the pit’s mouth. Now might they come forth and revel, for the king who was to destroy them had been destroyed Himself. But when He rose, blank despair sat on the face of every fiend. How could they hope to kill His people? “Because He lives, they shall live also.” How could they hope to condemn His people? “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again.”

Their hopes were gone, they were scattered indeed. As the wax melts before the fire so did their hopes melt away. Where was that day the boast of *death*? Had Christ remained in the jaws of death—had the Holy One seen corruption?—then had the redeemed remained the bond slaves of death, too. But He lives, He has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Blessed are they that sleep, for they shall rise, too. He has led the way, the Breaker has gone up before them, the King at the head of them. He has cleared the gap. They have but to follow and enter into the resurrection and the life.

That day methinks all the *gods of the heathen* fell down. It is a tradition that at that hour when the veil of the temple was rent in two, all the gods tottered on their thrones—they did so spiritually—if they did not literally. That day slavery began to relax its grasp of its whip. That day the tyrant’s throne began to shake. That day Heaven shone with greater splendor and Hell was more murky and dull than it had been before. That day Evil heard its own death knell sound in the air, while Good heard the marriage-peal of rejoicing saints, while angels shouted over a rising Savior.

Nor was that all. After Christ had thus risen you will remember that He rose again. He rose from the grave to earth—He next rose from earth to Heaven. I think we may again conjecture that the angelic spirits came to meet the Master and they said, “Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You.” Up He went, dragging sin, death and Hell at His chariot wheels, scattering, as He rode along, those gifts which He had received for men. He went up with sound

of trumpet and with shouts of archangels. They near the gates—they sing, “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up you everlasting door, that the King of Glory may come in.”

The angelic spirits on the other side chant, “Who is the King of Glory?” and once again, in waves of melody, they dash open the pearly gate singing again, “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lift up you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” On, on He rides. Scattered forever are all His enemies—having put all things under His feet and being crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. The Wonderful, the Counsellor. The Mighty God. The Everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace. Glory be unto Your name, Jesus, my soul warms with Your fire! Glory be unto You! These hands would put the crown upon Your head—this voice would sing instead of preach Your praise. Blessed be You, God over all, blessed forever!

You have ascended up on high. You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts for men. Rise up, Lord—rise up from the Throne of Your majesty. Come and take the purchased possession. Come to claim Your own and these hands shall welcome You with joyful applause and this tongue shall welcome You with joyous songs. Yes, even these very feet shall dance like David before the ark if You will but arise, for Your enemies shall be scattered and they that hate You shall flee before You.

III. But thirdly, WHAT MESSAGE HAS THIS TEXT FOR US AND HOW MAY WE USE IT?

In the Providence of God we, as a Church and people, have had to wander often. This is our third sojourn within these walls. It is now about to close. We have had at all times and seasons a compulsion for moving. Sometimes a compulsion of conscience. At other times a compulsion of pleasure as on this occasion. I am sure that when we first went to the Surrey Music Hall, God went with us. Satan went too. That frightful calamity, the impression of which can never be erased from my mind, turned out in the Providence of God to be one of the most wonderful means of turning public attention to special services.

And I do not doubt that it—fearful catastrophe though it was—has been the mother of multitudes of blessings. The Christian world noted the example. They saw its after-success. They followed it and to this day, in the theater and in the cathedral, the Word of God is preached where it was never preached before. Never could it be more manifestly seen than in that place, that the Word of God when preached simply and earnestly is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

In each of our relocations we have had reason to see the hand of God and here particularly, for there are very many residents in the West-end who have in this place come to listen to the Word, who probably might not have taken a journey beyond the river and here God’s grace has broken the hard heart, here have souls been renewed and wanderers been rec-

laimed. Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name.

And now we journey to the house which God has in so special a manner given to us. I stand before you now as Moses stood before the people of Israel and with faith like his though not with such power and might as belonged to that honored servant of God I would pray, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You."

"But what enemies do we have?" you say. We have multitudes. We shall have to do battle in our new Tabernacle more nearly with that old enemy of the church the Scarlet Beast—Rome has built one of its batteries hard by our place and there is one who styles himself "Archbishop of Southwark." Well, we shall have to do battle against him and woe to you, Babylon! Woe to you, Babylon! Let but Christ be preached and where is Anti-Christ? Let the Cross be lifted up and away with your crucifixes. Let the Truth be declared and where are your lies? This one Book, as the old reformers used to say—this Book against all the popes and cardinals and priests and all the devils in Hell.

You have seen the picture, I dare say, of a pair of scales in one of which there is a Bible, very heavy, touching the very ground. And in the other there is a pope with his tiara on and a cardinal with his scarlet cap and a whole host of priests and Virgin Marys and idols all piled up. There is another learned doctor just hooking on to the chains and trying to pull down if he can—but all their combined weight cannot reach anything like the weight of this one blessed Book.

Why, a farthing candle of Divine Truth can set on fire a whole prairie of popish error. It needs no great power in the preacher—he needs but to preach Christ's Truth as he finds it in the Word of God and he shall find it to be a blast from the nostrils of God to wither up the beauty of this towering cedar. What matters it to me whether it is a cedar or a fir? In the name of God I feel my axe this morning. It is sharp and keen and shall be laid to the roots of this tree and if we cannot avail, yet other hands and other arms should wield that self-same axe so sharp and keen and you, towering cedar, whose top is in the stars, but whose roots are in Hell—you shall yet come down and the nations of the earth shall rejoice because of your fall.

Then we shall have another enemy. We have hard by us, almost as a next-door neighbor, Infidelity. *There* has been one of its special places for display. Well, well, Infidelity is but a very puny adversary comparatively. It is not half so cunning as Popery and has nothing like its might. There is something in Romanism that can seize the human mind. But Infidelity is bare, bald, naked, filthy. There are very few who will be overturned by that in an age when men are compelled to come more and more closely to God in the discoveries of nature and the wondrous findings out of science. We are not afraid of you, O Infidelity. Come forth Goliath—it is but David who

meets you—the ministers of Christ are but little compared with your stalking greatness and gigantic might. But the sling and stone of Christ, preached simply and preached affectionately, shall reach the forehead of your wisdom and find you out and bring you down.

But worse enemies than this we have. We shall have to deal with the indifference of the masses round about us and with their carelessness concerning Gospel Truth. We shall have to deal with prevailing sin and corruption—sin which at night-fall from the very steps of that edifice may be seen in all the colors of its harlotry. And how will we deal with it? Will we bring in some Socialist system? Shall we preach up some new method of political economy?

No! The Cross, the old Cross is enough. This is the true Jerusalem blade, like that razor of old, with which the Tarquin cut the whetstone. We will but preach Christ as the sinner's Savior. The Spirit of God as applying Christ's Truth to the soul. And God the Father in His infinite sovereignty saving whom He will and in the bounty of His mercy willing to receive the vilest of the vile. And there is no indifference so callous, no ignorance so blind, no iniquity so base—there is no conscience so seared as not to be made to yield when God wills it before the might of *His* strength. "Rise up, Lord. Rise up, Lord and let these Your enemies be scattered and let them that hate You flee before You."

But what is to be our prayer? Does it say, "Rise up, *preacher*—occupy your pulpit"? True we may say, "Awake, Barak, awake and lead your captivity captive, you son of Abinoam." But that is *after* the battle is fought, not *before*. "Rise up, *Lord!* O God the Father, rise up! Pluck Your right hand out of Your bosom and let Your purposes be accomplished! O God the *Son*, rise up. Show Your wounds and plead before Your Father's face and let Your blood-bought ones be saved! Rise up, O God the *Holy Spirit*, with solemn awe, we do invoke You! Let those that have resisted You give way! Come, melt the ice. Dissolve the granite. Let the hardest heart give way. Rise up, Lord, Father, Son and Spirit, *we can do nothing without You*. But if *You* arise, Your enemies shall be scattered and they that hate You shall flee before You."

Will you and I go home and pray this prayer by ourselves, fervently laying hold upon the horns of God's altar? I charge you, my Brethren in Christ, do not neglect this private duty. Go, each one of you, to your chambers. Shut your doors and cry to Him who hears in secret and let this be the burden of your cry—"Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered." And at your altars tonight, when your families are gathered together, still let the same cry ring up to Heaven. And then tomorrow and all the days of the week and as often as we shall meet together to hear His Word and to break bread, cry, "Rise up, Lord and let Your enemies be scattered. And let them that hate You flee before You."

Pray for your children, your neighbors, your families and your friends and let your prayer be—"Rise up, Lord. Rise up, Lord." Pray for this neighborhood. Pray for the dense darkness of Southwark and Walworth and Lambeth. And oh, if you cannot pray for others because your own needs come so strongly before your mind, remember, Sinner, all you need is but faith to look to Christ and then you may say, "Rise up, Lord. Scatter my doubts—kill my unbelief. Drown my sins in Your blood. Let these Your enemies be scattered. Let them that hate You flee before You." Amen. Amen!

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD NO. 363

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 24, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.”
Numbers 11:23.***

GOD had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means—calculates his commissariat—and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain? How, then, should they have cattle wherewith to stock the land upon which they hoped soon to enter? And if they should slaughter *all* their beasts there would not be food enough for ravenous people for a month.

Shall all the fish of the sea leave their watery element and come to the tables of these glamorous hungry men? Even then, Moses thought there would be scarcely food enough to feed so vast a host for a month. You will see, my Brethren, right readily the mistake which Moses made. He looked to the *creature* instead of the *Creator*. Does the Creator expect the creature to fulfill his promise? No. He that makes fulfils. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfillment upon the cooperation of the puny strength of man.

God as a sovereign gives an absolute promise. And He can do it without fear of mistake, because He has Omnipotence wherewith to fulfill His greatest word. It was an error, indeed, to look to the sea for fish, instead of waiting upon Heaven for the promise. To look to the flocks for food, instead of believing on Him to whom belongs the cattle on a thousand hills. Suppose, my Friends, this country should be threatened by an invasion of some foreign power and you, in your wisdom and full of trembling should say to those whose province it is to guard our happy island—“I fear this land can never be protected, for the Emperor of China has but very little power. The Presidents of the Republics of South America have but little influence.” You would be stared at. Men would say, what has that to do with the question? The troops of Britain are to defend the land, not the

troops of China, or Bolivia. What matters the weakness of those republics or kingdoms? They are not expected to defend our land!

You would be absurd in looking for help where help was neither expected nor promised. And yet how commonly we do the same. *God* has promised to supply our needs and we look to the *creature* to do what *God* has promised to do. And then because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble we indulge in unbelief. Why do we look to that quarter at all? Will you look to the top of the Alps for summer heat? Will you journey to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Or will you take your journey towards the equator that your body may be braced by cool invigorating breezes?

Verily you would act no more foolishly if you did this than when you look to the weak for strength, or the creature to do the Creator's work. The great folly of Moses is the folly of most believers. Let us, then, put the question aright. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible *God* most surely to do as He has said. And, then, if after that we dare to indulge in mistrusts, the question of *God* comes home mightily to us: "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" And may it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question, there may come also that blessed promise, "You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not."

It is a singular thing that such a question as this should ever be asked at all: "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" If we look anywhere and everywhere, apart from the conduct of man, there is nothing to suggest the suspicion. Look to *God's creation!* Is there anything there which would make you say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" What pillar of the heavens has begun to reel? What curtain of the sky has been rent or moth-eaten? Have the foundations of the earth begun to start? Do they not abide as the Lord has settled them? Has the sun grown dim with age? Have the starry lamps flickered or gone out in darkness?

Are there signs of decay today upon the face of *God's* creation? Have not howling tempests, the yawning ocean and death-bearing hurricanes asserted but yesterday their undiminished might? Say, is not the green earth as full of vitality, as ready to yield us harvests now as it ever has been? Do the showers fall less frequently? Has the sun ceased to warm? Are there any signs and tokens that *God's* creation is tottering to its decay? No, journey where you will, you will see *God* as potent upon the face of the earth and in the very bowels of the globe as He was when He first said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

There is nothing which would tempt us to surmise or suspect that the Lord's hand has waxed short. And look you, too, in *Providence*—is there anything there that would suggest the question? Are not His prophecies

still fulfilled? Does He not cause all things to work together for good? Do the cattle on a thousand hills low out to Him for hunger? Do you meet with the skeletons of birds that have fallen to the ground from famine? Does He neglect to give to the fish their food, or do the sea-monsters die? Does not God still open His hand and supply the want of every living thing?

Is He less bounteous today than He was in the time of Adam? Is not the cornucopia still as full? Does He not still scatter mercies with both His hands right lavishly? Are there any tokens in Providence any more than in nature that God's arm has waxed short? And look, too, in the matter of *grace*—is there any token in the work of grace that God's power is failing? Are not sinners still saved? Are not profligates still reclaimed? Are not drunkards still uplifted from their sties to sit upon the Throne with princes? Are not harlots as truly reclaimed as were those in the days of Christ?

Is not the Word of God still quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword? Which of His arrows has been blunted? Where have you seen the sword of the Lord snapped in two? When has God assayed to melt a heart and failed in the attempt? Which of His people has found the riches of His grace drained dry? Which of His children has had to mourn that the unsearchable riches of Christ had failed to supply his need?

In grace, as well as in Providence and nature, the unanimous verdict is that God is still Almighty, that He does as He wills and fulfills all His promises and His counsels. How is it, then, that such a question as this ever came from the lips of God Himself? Who suggested it? *What* suggested it? What could there have been that should lead Him or any of His creatures to say, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" We answer there is but one creature that God has made that ever doubts Him. The little sparrows doubt not—though they have no barn nor field, yet they sweetly sing at night as they go to their roosts, though they know not where tomorrow's meal shall be found.

The very cattle trust Him. And even in days of drought, you have seen them when they pant for thirst, how they expect the water—how the very first token of it makes them show in their very animal frame, by some dumb language, that they felt that God would not leave them to perish. The angels never doubt Him, nor the devils either—devils believe and tremble. But it was left for *man*—the most favored of all creatures—to mistrust his God. This high, this black, this infamous sin of doubting the power and faithfulness of Jehovah was reserved for the fallen race of rebellions Adam.

And we alone, out of all the beings that God has ever fashioned, dishonor Him by unbelief and tarnish His honor by mistrust. I shall try now, as

God shall help me, to mention some four or five cases in which men act as if they really believed that God's hand had waxed short and I pray that in the most of these cases, this malady may be at once healed by the fact that God has said, "You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not."

I. First of all, with regard to THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE. How often is it true that she so behaves herself as if she had a question in her mind as to whether the Lord's hand had waxed short? She believes that the Divine hand was once mighty enough to bring in three thousand in one day by the simple preaching of Peter. She believes that her God was with her in olden times so mightily that her poor illiterate preachers were more than a match for the scholars of Socrates and Solon and were able to overturn the gods of the heathen, though they had both poetry and philosophy to be their bulwarks.

She believes still this and yet how often does she act as though the Gospel had become effete and outworn and the Spirit of God had been utterly withdrawn from her? In those early days she sent her missionaries to the ends of the earth. They were unprovided for, but they went forth without purse or script, believing that He who called them to go would find them sustenance. They landed on islands that were unknown to man and ventured among barbarous tribes who knew nothing of civilization. They ventured their lives even to the death—but they won for Christ the empire of the whole earth till there was not a spot known to men at that time where the name of Jesus had not been preached and where the Gospel had not been proclaimed.

But, now, we—the degenerate sons of glorious fathers—are afraid to trust God. There are some who would shut out the Gospel from India, because, forsooth, it might disturb our pitiful empire over that people. There are others who think the Gospel ill-adapted to some minds and that civilization must go before the Cross and not the Gospel in the vanguard of all true civilization among barbarous tribes. The mass of us—it is common to us all—the mass of us would be afraid to go out trusting in God to supply our needs. We should need first that everything should be prepared for us and that the way should be paved. We are not ready to leap as champions upon the wall of the citadel, leading the forlorn hope and planting the standard where it never stood before.

No, we can only follow in the track of others. We have few Careys and few Knibbs, few men who can go first and foremost saying, "this is God's cause. Jehovah is the only God and in the name of the Eternal, let the idols be abolished." O for more anointed ones to preach the Gospel, believing in its intrinsic might, assured that where it is preached faithfully, the Spirit of God is never absent! The doubts, the fears, the calculations, the

policies, the judicious advisors of too many Christians prove my point that often the Church acts as if she thought the Lord's hand were waxed short.

O Zion! Get up! Get up! Count no more your hosts for their strength is your weakness. Measure no longer your wealth for your wealth has often been your poverty and your poverty your wealth. Think not of the learning or the eloquence of your ministers and missionaries for full often these things do but stand in the way of the Eternal God. Come forth in simple confidence in His promise and you shall see whether He will not do according to His Word. You shall see a nation born at once. You shall behold the reign of Christ hastening on when you know how to deal with the world in the power of faith, believing in Christ, knowing that He shall have the beastly for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

I ought to say here that while this is a common sin of the Church, there are very many missionaries who have gone out from England during the last few years unconnected with any Society. And that there are now hundreds throughout the whole earth who have no visible means of support but who, by faith and prayer, depending simply upon God, find themselves as well provided for as those who have a Society at their back. I happen to be acquainted with some few of these men who have been foolish enough to trust God, who have been silly enough to believe His promise, who have been weak enough to rely only upon Him.

And I can say their testimony is that in all things God has been as good to them as His Word and I know they have been more useful as missionaries and more successful in evangelization because they believed God. They have proved their faith by their acts and God has honored their faith by giving them great success. I speak thus not of all—there are a few exceptions—but still it is the general rule that as a Church, the Church does not believe God. She believes her subscribers, she does not believe the Lord. She believes the committee, she does not trust in the Eternal. She trusts in the means, she does not rest on the bare arm of God. She wants to have her arm sleeved, girded about and robed with the weavings of man.

II. But I now pass on to a second point. WHEN BELIEVERS DOUBT THEIR GOD WITH REGARD TO PROVIDENCE, the question might well be asked of them, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"

I do not doubt that I am speaking to some here this morning who have had many hisses and crosses in their business. Instead of getting forward they are going back and perhaps even bankruptcy stares them in the face. Or possibly, being hard working men, they may have been long out of employment and nothing seems now to be before their eyes but the starva-

tion of themselves and their little ones. It is hard to bear this. This is an iron that enters into the very soul. The pangs of hunger are not very easily appeased and to have want and destitution constantly before our eyes is enough to bring down the strong man and make the mighty tremble.

Little do some of us know how sharp and how acute must be these trials of famine and nakedness. But do you doubt, O Believer, do you doubt as to whether God will fulfill His promises wherein He said, "His place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure"? Would you question the advice of your Master: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek"? "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them"? "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" ?

And so you think that your heavenly Father, though He knows that you have need of these things, will yet forget you? When not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father and the very hairs of your head are all numbered, yet you must mistrust and doubt Him? Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you till you dare to trust your God and then it shall end. Full many there are who have been tried and sore vexed till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance. They have seen whether God would keep His promise or not.

And now, O true Believer, what say you to this picture? In the cold, cold winter, when the snows have fallen thick on every tree and the ground is hard and crisp you have sometimes seen the charitable man open wide the window of his house and scatter crumbs along the white snow and you have seen the birds come from all the trees around and there they eat and were satisfied. A slanderer who lives next door tells you that that man starves his children. Do you believe him? Feed the sparrows and neglect the offspring of his loins? Give crumbs to birds and not feed his sons and daughters?

You feel instinctively that the kind heart which remembers the fowls of Heaven must yet more remember his own offspring. But what say you to this picture concerning yourself? Your God hears the young ravens when they cry and gives liberally to all the creatures that His hands has made and will He forget His sons and His daughters? His people bought with blood, His own peculiar heritage? No. Dare to believe Him *now*. His hand has not waxed short. Dare to trust Him *now*. Please not Satan and vex not yourself by indulging any more those hard thoughts of Him. Say, "My Fa-

ther, You will hear my cry. You will supply all my needs.” And according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you.

Look back, Sir, look back upon the peat! How many deliverances have you had? You have been in as bad a plight as this *before*—did He leave you then? He has been with you in six troubles and are there not six arguments why He should not leave you in the seventh? You are growing gray-headed and you have found Him faithful for sixty years. Ah, how few more you have to live! Suppose you live till seventy—there are but ten! He has been faithful to you in sixty and can you not trust Him with ten?

Surely you ought to say and you must say, I think, if you are actuated by a right spirit, “O God, I leave all things in Your hand. I will have done with these cares. I will leave everything to You. I know that You love me and will not forsake Your own but will surely deliver them out of all their temptations.” You shall have my text fulfilled to you, I trust—“You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not.

III. But to proceed—there is a third way by which this question might be very naturally suggested and that is WHEN A MAN WHO HAS FAITH IN CHRIST IS EXERCISED WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS WITH REGARD TO HIS OWN FINAL PERSEVERANCE OR HIS OWN PRESENT ACCEPTANCE IN CHRIST.

I must confess here, with sorrow, that I have seasons of despondency and depression of spirit which I trust none of you are called to suffer. And at such times I have doubted my interest in Christ, my calling my election, my perseverance, my Savior’s blood and my Father’s love. I am sorry I ever told you that, but having done so on one occasion, I make now my humble apology as before God for it.

I met with a sharp rebuke this last week. A Brother who lives very near to God—I believe one of the honest men living—told me he never had a doubt of his acceptance once he believed in Christ and another Christian confirmed his testimony. I do not question the Truth of my Brethren, but I do envy them. ‘Tis a wondrous position to stand in!

I know how it is. They both of them live by simple faith upon the Son of God and one of them said to me, “When I speak to some of the friends and tell them they should not doubt and fear, they say, ‘Yes, but our minister has doubts and fears.’ ” When he said that, I felt how wrong I had been, because the pastor should be an example to the flock and if I have sinned in this respect, as I must sorrowfully confess I have, at least *there was no necessity that I should have said so*, for now it gives cause to some of the weak of the flock to excuse themselves.

My Brethren, if I should stand here and say I occasionally steal my neighbor’s goods, you would be shocked at me. But when I said that I sometimes doubt my God, you were not shocked. There is as much guilt

in the one as in the other. There is the highest degree of criminality in connection with doubting God and I feel it so. I do not see that we ought to offer any excuse whatever for our doubting our God. He does not deserve it of us—He is a true and faithful God and with so many instances of His love and of His kindness as I have received and daily receive at His hands, I feel I have no excuse to offer either to Him or to you for having dared to doubt Him.

‘Twas a wicked rein. ‘Twas a great and grievous offense. But I pray you, do not use that sin on my part as a cloak for yourselves. I pray that I may be delivered from it entirely and with an unstaggering faith, like Abraham, know that what He has promised He is able also to perform. And then I trust I shall not have under my pastoral care a puny race of men who cannot trust their God and who cannot, therefore, do anything—but a strong host of heroes who live by faith upon the Son of God—who loved them and gave Himself for them. Who shall be a thundering legion. Whose march to battle shall be but a march to victory and the drawing of whose swords shall be but the prelude and prophecy of their triumph.

Take not me as an example further than I follow my Lord, but pray for me that my faith may be increased. Doubt not, I pray you. Believe your God and you shall prosper. The joy of the Lord is our strength, not the melancholy of our hearts. It does not say, “He that doubts shall be saved,” but “He that *believes* shall be saved.”

I know some ministers preach up doubts and fears so much that you would really think that doubting was the way to Heaven. And the more you could doubt and fear, the more proof there would be that you were a child of God. The fact is—the children of God *do* doubt and fear. I am sorry to say *all* of them (not all of them—I question whether all of them do not, but still my Brother says *he* does not and I believe him. I fear, however, he will doubt one of these days, I hope he never may. But when he does, it will be very wrong and very wicked of him, indeed, just as it has been with me and as it has been with you), for when we doubt, it is sin.

Oh cursed sin of unbelief! Most damnable of sins, because it so stains God’s honor and so makes the enemy to blaspheme. “There,” say they, “there is a man who cannot trust his God. A minister who cannot trust his God. A Christian that cannot repose upon the promise of the Almighty.” We cannot *measure* the guilt of sins—all sins are all base and vile—but there are crimes which we set down as being very heinous, which, I believe, are but little when compared with that which we think so trivial—the sin of doubting God and mistrusting His promise.

If unbelief is like a thistle in the field, which proves that the soil is good, or it would not produce thistles—at any rate that is no reason why you and I should sow thistle seed. Let us cut the thistles up if there are

any and may the Holy Spirit plant the evergreen fir of hope, the towering pine of love and the hardy box tree of faith. Trust in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice." Let your joy be full. Be you not cast down and troubled, but rejoice in Him evermore.

IV. I shall now pass on to a fourth point very briefly—"is the Lord's hand waxed short?" This is a question which I may well ask of any here present who are CONVINCED OF SIN, BUT ARE AFRAID TO TRUST THEIR SOUL NOW, AT THIS VERY HOUR, IN THE HAND OF A LOVING SAVIOR.

"Oh, He cannot save me, I am so guilty, so callous! Could I repent as I ought, could I but feel as I ought, *then* He could save me. But I am naked and poor and miserable. How can He clothe, enrich and bless *me*? I am cast out from His presence. I have grieved away His Spirit. I have sinned against light and knowledge—against mercy—against constant grace received. He cannot save me." *"And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? You shall see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto you or not."*

Did He not save the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus? Why, then, can He not save you? Is it not written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleans us from all sin"? Has that blood lost its efficacy? Have Christ's merits lost their savor? Are they no more an offering of a sweet smell before the Throne of God? Has His sacrifice lost its plea and the plea its authority? Is He no longer prevalent before the Father's face? Soul! Soul! Soul! Would you add to your sin? Then doubt Christ's power to save you. Would you seal your doom? Then through this mock humility distrust Christ.

But would you be saved? Then dare, I pray you, in the teeth of all your sins, to trust my Master—

"He is able

He is willing: doubt no more."

He is able, for He is God. What can He not perform? He is willing, for He was the slaughtered Man. And He that died and had His heart rent for us cannot be unwilling. Do you wish to stab Him in the most tender point and vex Him? Then indulge that mean, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive. But would you wish to honor Him and relieve yourself at the same time? Then step out of all appearances, all hopes and fears suggested by your own feelings. Come to the foot of His Cross and looking up into those eyes full of languid pity and to those hands streaming with precious blood, say, "Jesus, I believe. Help You my unbelief," and so you shall see whether He will not keep His Word.

If you should come to Him and He should refuse, then would He not have broken His promise? Did He not say, "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out"? "But, O Sir, I am so black a sinner, I am one of Sa-

tan's castaways." But what if you are? Christ did not make any exception. He said, "*Him that comes,*" and that means any "him" in all the world who comes. If with weeping and with supplication, mourning for past sins, you will go to Him now, poor Sinner, you will find Him quite as good as His Word and you shall wonder and be astonished to find your own hardness of heart suddenly taken away and all your load of guilt removed.

Oh, I would that I had words, that this heart had language and needed not to employ dull flesh with which to utter its thoughts! Soul, Soul, my Lord is worthy of your faith! I trusted Him. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him. I looked unto Him and was lightened and my face was not ashamed and—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream,
His flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."***

Oh, if you knew my Savior. If you knew Him, you *must* trust Him! Surely if you will but think of the tens of thousands that are around the Throne today, singing the song of grace, each one of these would seem to say to you, "Sinner, trust Him. He was true to me." If God's people who are here this morning could stand up and speak, I know their testimony would be, "Soul, trust Him—He has been good and true to me." Ah, my Lord, why have You not cast some of us away long ago? When we think of our unbelief and our repeated backsliding, the wonder is that You have not torn up the marriage-bond and said, "He shall go—he shall go—he has rebelled against Me. He is as a backsliding heifer and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

But no. The strong love of God which first laid hold of us has never let go its grip. He has kept us when we have forsaken Him, pardoned all our shortcomings and blotted out all our trespasses. And here we are to bear witness that He is a God ready to forgive, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin. Sinner, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you—believe on Christ and—"As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ's place, be reconciled to God." Think not that He is hard towards you. Jehovah's heart yearns to clasp His Ephraims to His breast. Prodigal! Your Father sees you—come, He will meet you—He'll kiss you, He'll clothe you, He'll make a banquet for you. He will bring forth music and dancing. And His own heart will have the sweetest of the music in itself. Come, then, come, I pray you—trust Him and leaving all else behind, of good or bad which belongs to you, come empty to be filled. Come naked to be clothed.

V. I have but now one other point and I shall not detain you, probably two moments, while I dwell upon it. The subject would not be complete

without it. It has been said of some preachers of the Word and especially of me that we delight to preach damnation and the fires of Hell. I think that all who have heard me constantly know that a more unfounded libel was never uttered against any living man. I have preached terrible sermons. They have been few and far between. But I have never preached them with a tearless eye. It has ever been to me a far greater misery to preach than it has been to any to hear. And this last sentence or two, with which I conclude, is wrung from my very soul.

And you say, do you, that God will not avenge your sins upon you—that you may go on in your iniquities and yet meet with no punishment? That you may reject Christ and do it safely? Trample on His blood and yet God is so calm that His anger will never flame forth against you? Well Soul, well Soul, “you shall see whether His Word shall come to pass or not.” But let me tell you His hand is not waxed short. He is as strong to punish as when He bade the floods cover the earth. As powerful to avenge as when He rained hail out of Heaven upon the cities of the plain.

He is today as mighty to overtake and punish His enemies as when He sent the angel through the midst of Egypt, or afterwards smote the hosts of Senacherib. You shall see whether He will keep His Word or not. Go on in the neglect of His great salvation. Go to your dying bed and buoy yourself up with the false hope that there is no hereafter, no Hell to come. But, Sinner, you shall see. You *shall see*. This point in dispute shall not long be a matter of question to be laughed at on the one side and to be taught with tears on the other. *You shall see* and *we* are willing enough ourselves to wait that time, only, Soul, when *you shall see*, it will be too late to escape.

When the fire gets hold upon *you*. When the hail of God begins to dash you in pieces and there shall be none to deliver, where will your infidelity be then? Where your hard sayings against God’s earnest ministers then? You will use another note and sing another tune and yell another cry. O God, grant that none among us may ever dare to doubt You here and think that You can not and will not punish us.

By Your grace may we come to the Cross as sinners and be saved, lest unhappily in the world to come when You say, “Depart you cursed,” we shall see whether Your Word shall come to pass unto us or not.

May God add His own blessing for Jesus’ sake!—

***“From where then shall doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas, our mind receives
The comfort that our Maker gives.
Oh for a strong, a lasting faith,
To credit what the Almighty says!
To embrace the message of His Son,***

And call the joys of Heaven our own!

***Then should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls should fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.
Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the venerable skies,
Where the eternal Builder reigns,
And His own courts His power sustains."***

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MISTRUST OF GOD DEPLORED AND DENOUNCED NO. 1498

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“How long will it be before they believe Me?”
Numbers 14:11.***

THE children of Israel were very prone to unbelief. They wanted something visible to worship and to trust. They could not learn the lesson of faith in the one great Invisible and, therefore, they were one day bowing before an idol and the next they were murmuring against the true God. Their life was according to the flesh, after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears and so they praised God when Pharaoh was drowned and when manna lay round about their camp, but the moment they were in need or difficulty and *saw* no supply or relief, they could not trust in God, but began to mistrust and murmur. With what wonderful longsuffering the Lord bore with them! His mercy seemed to outrun their unbelief!

They cried for water and they doubted God's power to give it to them in the desert sands, but lo, the smitten Rock poured forth a crystal stream! Then they cried for bread and charged the Lord with bringing them into the wilderness to kill them with hunger—and yet, in answer to their murmuring—the heavens were opened and there fell a shower of angels' food for them to feast upon! They then clamored for meat and they had not long begun their unbelieving murmuring before a strong wind brought them up quail till they fed, even to the full! Such liberal answers to their vexatious murmuring ought to have silenced their fears and they should have exhibited confidence in their great Friend! Yet they did not do so, but for 40 years they provoked the Lord.

The incident before us relates to that great and terrible provocation in which the longsuffering of God came to a pause. They sent spies into Canaan and when they were informed by 10 false-hearted men that the giants were in the land and that the inhabitants of it dwelt in walled cities which they could not hope to capture, they then began to accuse the Lord according to their former manner, denying His power to fulfill His ancient Covenant and give them the land that flowed with milk and honey! This time the Lord lifted His hand and swore that they should not enter into His rest.

Let us be warned by this fact that there is a limit to the longsuffering of God and especially when it is tried by distrust. He may bear with unbelief for a time and, blessed be His name, for a *long* time, for He remembers that we are dust. But when it comes to willful perseverance in unbelief, the Lord will not forever be thus provoked. It behooves us to listen to the words of Paul—“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.” This

morning my one subject is this sin of unbelief which I desire to deal with in the fear of God and in the power of His Holy Spirit.

I. Our first head shall be the sin of Israel is here DEFINED—"HOW long will it be before they believe Me?" Observe that God's account of all the murmuring, discouragement and fear which these people felt was simply that they did not believe Him. They doubtless said that they were naturally afraid of their enemies—the Anakim, the sons of the giants—these would overtop and overcome them. They seemed like grasshoppers in the sight of such gigantic beings and, therefore, they might well tremble. Had the Anakim been ordinary men, however numerous their bands, Israel declared that they should not have been afraid. But these huge monsters created a natural and unavoidable fear.

"No," says God, "that is an idle excuse! No fear of giants would enter their minds if they believed Me. How long will it be before they believe Me?" If these sons of Anak had been 10 times as tall as they were, yet the almighty Lord could vanquish them! And if their cities had been literally, as well as figuratively, walled up to the skies, yet Jehovah could smite them out of Heaven and cast their ramparts into the dust! Gigantic men and fortified cities are *nothing* to Him who divided the Red Sea! When the Omnipotent is present, opposition vanishes. This was so clear that if the Israelites were afraid, the *real* reason was that they did not believe their God.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, let us strip our discouragements and murmuring of all their disguises and see them in their true character and they will appear in their own naked deformity as discrediting God. It is true the difficulty before us may appear great, but it cannot be great to the Lord who has promised to make us more than conquerors. It is true the circumstances may appear unusually perplexing, but they cannot perplex Him who has promised to guide us with His counsel! And since we are well aware of this, it is clear that the true reason why we are so dismayed is not to be found in the difficulties and the circumstances, but in our misgivings of God.

"Ah, but," these people might have replied, "we fear because of our *weakness*. We are not a trained host like the armies of Egypt. We know not how to fight against chariots of iron! We are only feeble men with all these women and children to encumber our march. We cannot hope to drive out the hordes of Amalekites and Canaanites. A sense of weakness is the cause of our terror and complaint." But the Lord puts the matter very differently. What had their weakness to do with His promise? How could their weakness affect His power to give them the land? He could conquer Amalek if they could not! Caleb had told them, "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." They knew that their feebleness had not prevented the Lord's bringing them out of Egypt, despite the pride and power of Pharaoh—and they must have known that He could, with equal ease, overthrow the Canaanites and their armies. Their weakness could only be a foil to the Glory of the Divine power, so that it would be made the more conspicuous!

We, also, when we plead our weakness, ought to be ashamed, for we know that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. If we

probe to the bottom of those doubts and fears which apparently arise out of a sense of our own weakness, we shall find that they spring from mistrust of God! Our trembling is not humility, but unbelief! We may mask it however we please, but that is the state of the case as God sees it and He sees it in truth. The question is not, "How long will they be weak?" but, "How long will it be before they believe *Me*?" "No, no," the people may have said, "we are not murmuring against *God*! It is against Moses and Aaron. They made a mistake when they brought us into the wilderness and they have undertaken an enterprise which they cannot carry through—we blame these two men for their foolhardiness."

But the Lord would not have it so. Moses and Aaron were only His instruments and mere second causes. The Lord will not allow that the quarrel is with them, but He asks, "How long will it be before they believe *Me*?" Thus, Brethren, we sometimes fix upon our fellow man—his infirmity, his shortsightedness, his lack of wisdom—and we say that we do not doubt God but we can never feel secure while our leaders or our friends are such poor, unwise creatures. If you put this pretext to the test, you will see that it avails nothing, for God can use what instruments He pleases, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. And He can accomplish His purposes despite their frailty.

His Word is not to fall to the ground because of the medium through which He carries it into effect. Strip our distrust of the agents whom God employs of all the masks with which it seeks to disguise itself and it comes to this—we do not believe God! Our dreading and complaining are often a kind of practical atheism. I mean this, that if God has pronounced a promise and we doubt its fulfillment for any cause whatever, we think and feel as if there were no God! We profess to believe that the promises of Scripture are the promises of God, Himself, and it follows that if we doubt their fulfillment, we do as good as deny the Godhead of the Promiser, since he who cannot or will not keep his promises cannot be God.

The Word of the true God has been proven to be Omnipotent by its creating force and, therefore, promises which are not of the same power cannot be the Word of the one almighty God! Dare we make it out that God speaks frivolously and that His solemn promises are like the false words of man which mock the ears and disappoint hope? Are God's promises like yon sere leaves which the passing wind bears into forgetfulness? Then I say that such a god is no god at all and such a conception sets up a false god and robs the true God of His essential Character. Is it not so? Sometimes we put our doubts in one shape and sometimes in another—and we are apt to claim that we do not really doubt God for we know that He both *can* and *will* keep His promises as a rule—but for certain reasons we doubt whether He will keep His Word to us.

We talk of our unworthiness and so on, but, being interpreted, our inmost thought is that we can believe anything of God but that which is the most necessary for us to believe! We believe all other Words but that very one which we are most called upon to credit! Strange faith, which will exert itself everywhere but where it is needed! We claim that if things were otherwise than they are, we could believe God—and what is this but to say that under existing circumstances we do not conceive Him to be wor-

thy of our confidence? He who doubts that particular promise which God speaks to him may as well doubt all the rest, since they all hang together and they are either all of them lies or all of them eternal Truths of God! Yes, this is the essence of it—our timorous suspicions of any one promise are a reflection upon the Lord Himself!

So, Brothers and Sisters, I come back to that first point and solemnly declare that though our doubts and fears are called, oftentimes, by more respectable names because we do not like to see their sin in all its nakedness, yet they come to this—that we do not believe the ever-blessed God! If we look at our discouragement and mistrust in this light, we shall no longer pity, but blame ourselves—and instead of excusing, we shall *accuse* our heart of a great crime. Mistrust towards God is not a mere weakness—it is a wickedness of the most grave order.

II. We will now proceed, in the second place, to further DESCRIBE this sin of not believing. I would remark, first, that at the first blush *it would seem incredible* that there should be such a thing in the universe as unbelief of God. That God should manifest Himself to man so as to make a promise to Him is indescribable condescension! One would think that the high and lofty One would abide in His eternal silence, or communicate Himself to the most exalted creatures rather than speak to such a being as *man*. What is man that God should be mindful of him and speak to him? Yet we believe that the Lord has often spoken to us by His Prophets and in these last days by His Son.

Now, if an angel altogether unacquainted with human history could be informed that God had spoken to men, I imagine that his astonishment would be overwhelming if we also informed him that men have disbelieved Him. “What?” he would ask. “What? Dare to disbelieve the Lord? Doubt the Lord, whose infinite love stooped to speak with His creature? God, who is essential Truth and cannot possibly lie nor deceive—are there creatures vile enough to perpetrate such an insult upon their Maker, their Benefactor? Can they suspect the infinitely Pure of deceit? Dare they question the Truth of the Perfect One whom cherubim adore?”

I say that an angel would be staggered at such blasphemy! Why, look, Sirs—the Lord *spoke* to nothingness and out came this globe, swathed in the swaddling bands of darkness! He spoke again and forth leaped the light and all things were quickened into life and clothed with beauty! The power of His Word was all creating—and is it to be *imagined* or conceived that this Word can be a lie? Jehovah’s Word is but Himself in action! His will making itself manifest! And is it to be supposed that this can be a lie under any conceivable circumstances whatever? My Brothers and Sisters, it is sorrowful to have to confess that what looks like inconceivable blasphemy has, nevertheless, been perpetrated abundantly by the sons of men! Shame on our race that it should ever have insulted the Most High God! Oh, the incredible infamy which lies, even, in the bare *thought* of calling in question the veracity of God! It is so vile, so unjust, so profane a thing that it ought to be regarded with horror as a monstrous wrong!

Consider, next, that, though unbelief certainly exists, *it is a most unreasonable thing*. If God has made a promise, on what grounds do we doubt its fulfillment? Which of all the attributes of God is that which

comes under suspicion? Probably the first distrusted attribute will be His power. Have not men said, "Can God furnish a table in the wilder-ness? Or can He deliver us out of the deep waters?" Let us think of this. Has the Lord promised to supply and deliver? Then, my dear Friend, do you really, in your sober senses, question the power of God to do as He has said? Has He not made the heavens and the earth? Do not all things subsist by His continuous power? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is His arm shortened that He cannot save? Is His hand paralyzed that He cannot achieve His purpose? The more we consider the supposition that God is unable to keep His promises, the more we discard it with indignation! It is not to be entertained for a moment!

What, then, is it God's *goodness* that we suspect? After He has filled the world with bounty and multiplied His loving kindnesses to His creatures—above all, after He has given from His bosom His only-begotten Son to die as the fulfillment as well as the seal of the great promises of His Covenant—dare we question His goodness? Do we call God evil? Do we impute unkindness to Him? Let horror seize us at the suggestion of such thought! Let our bones quake that we should ever tolerate the hideous libel upon Him whose very name is good! For what is "God" but "good" written in brief? It must come back to this with which we started, that we suspect the Truth of God and yet the more we shall consider the supposition, the more we shall be alarmed by its blasphemous character.

Do you believe, O Man, the *creature* of God, that your Maker can belie Himself? Do you imagine that He can forswear Himself? With reverence do I speak the word and awe is upon me as I utter it—do you profanely *dream* that He can perjure Himself? Every promise of His is virtually sealed with that oath by which the Covenant is confirmed. He has lifted His hand to Heaven and sworn *by Himself* because He could swear by no greater, that by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie we might have strong consolation! Reason itself teaches that the Judge of all must, Himself, be just! And this He could not be if He were not true. Truth enters into the very *conception* of God—a false god is no god. Any other doubt in the world may plead some ground and guarantee, but a doubt of God's Truthfulness is utterly unreasonable—and if sin had not filled man with madness—unbelief would never find harbor in a single bosom!

Again, because this sin is so unreasonable, *it is also most inexcusable*. Let me try, if I can, to frame an excuse for doubting the truthfulness of the Lord our God. Look back upon your own experience and take with it the experience of all men that have ever lived and find, if you can, a single instance in which God has been untrue to the Word He has spoken. We challenge eternity to divulge such an instance! We appeal to all mankind, from Adam to the latest born—and to angels, yes—and to devils themselves, to produce one single case in which Jehovah has turned from a promise or from a threat so as to forfeit His Word. His faithfulness is indisputable! The ages witness it! Now, if there had been one instance, we might be justified in our misgivings. If we could find *one* authenticated case, fully established, in which God had acted contrary to His promise,

or failed to keep His Word, then we might lawfully distrust. But as we can never find such a case, what excuse can we make?

Moreover, when a man is suspected of untruthfulness, we usually impute to him some motive for it—he has something to gain by the lie and, therefore, we suppose he will prove false. But what motive can be imputed to the Lord Most High which could lead *Him* to forfeit His Word? He knows all things from the beginning and, therefore, even if it were supposable that to keep a promise would be inconvenient to Him, He would never have made it, for He would have foreseen that inconvenience. God is not bound to promise and, therefore, if the good deed were not to His mind, He would not promise to perform it! Nor has God changed, since immutability is essential to His being. If, therefore, He has uttered a Word, you may rest quite sure that it will stand fast—an unchangeable Being cannot be fickle and run back from His promise.

Why, my Friends, it is to God's Glory to keep His Word! As it is to the glory of every man to be upright, so is it to the Glory and honor of God to be faithful to His solemn declarations. Even on the lowest conceivable ground, the Lord's own interests are bound up with His Truth. All the Glory of His name and the honor of His Divine Person bend towards the keeping of His Word. There is no supposable reason why the Lord should not be true! How dare we, then, without the slightest cause, cast suspicion upon the truthfulness of the Most High? My dear Brothers and Sisters, I venture to say that unbelief of God's word *ought*, therefore, *to be impossible*.

It ought to be impossible to every reverent-hearted man. Does he know God and tremble in His Presence and shall he think of distrusting and doubting Him? No one that has ever seen Him in contemplation and bowed before Him in sincere adoration would not be amazed at the impertinence that would dare to think that God could lie! O reverent heart, it ought to be to you beyond the bounds of *possibility* that you should doubt the Truth of the promises of God! And this ought to still be more impossible, if such an expression may be used, to God's own children! You could not make a true-hearted child suspect his father of falsehood. If he heard such an accusation brought against a loving and kind father he would be indignant! He would not want to hear rebutting evidence, he would say, "It is impossible! I know my father, I know his character. I have seen him; I understand him; I cannot endure to hear him slandered and I do not need to hear him defended, for of this I am sure—he cannot lie."

In the child's case there might be a partiality and the father might have been guilty. But in the case of the children of God no such possibility exists, for our Father is the God of Truth. Oh, my Brethren, shall it ever be said that the children of God doubt their Father? I have heard some professing Christians say that they find it hard to believe His promises and yet they do not appear to think that they have said a dreadful thing—yet a very dreadful thing it is! What must be their opinion of God if they find it hard to believe Him? Think of it again—a child of God finding it hard to believe his own Father—his heavenly Father! Ah, wretched sin! Wretched insult to God! If *we* were not so false-hearted, ourselves, we should never dream of the Lord's being so and, if we were not conscious of being

chargeable with lies, the thought that God might fail to fulfill His Word would never be tolerated. It is horrible!

If it has crossed your mind, scuttle it and, with many tears, confess it before God, for to a child of God it ought to be impossible to doubt His Father's truthfulness! To some children of God that impossibility ought to be still more striking because certain of us have received special and Infallible proofs of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises. He has answered the prayers of some of us in a way that has drowned our eyes with tears of joy! He has made us laugh like Sarah when the child of promise was given to her. We have felt amazed at the mighty goodness of our God and for us to doubt, now, would be impossible! We ought to settle it in our minds that, come what may, though the earth were removed and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea—though everything should alter and the laws of Nature should be changed and day and night forget their time—yet would we never suppose, nor allow others to suppose that God could be false to His promises and break His Word!

I am resolved and, my Brethren, you will join with me in it and may God give us Grace to carry it out—to doubt the evidence of my eyes, but not to doubt God—for our eyes have often deceived us, but Jehovah, never! Light may play tricks with these poor optics, but the Lord has never spoken to mock us, nor said what He cannot perform. Resolve, my Brothers and Sisters, to doubt your ears and deny your hearing sooner than doubt your God, for sounds are often imaginary and ears are speedily duped! Resolve to doubt your most deliberate judgment rather than one Word of the Lord. How often have you been mistaken? Even when, according to mathematical calculations, it seems as certain as that twice two make four, that God cannot execute His Word—deny the mathematics but never doubt God. There is nothing certain under Heaven *but* God! Uncertainty is upon all things but upon His Word!

If you consult with friends and in their judgment they all unanimously conclude that the case is hopeless and that the promise cannot be fulfilled, reject them all and refuse to consult with flesh and blood! Let God be true and every man a liar! Yes, and *everything* a liar! Doubt your own feelings as much as you please—it is seldom that they are to be relied upon. Mistrust, as I have already said, your own senses—they are but very fallible reporters of fact—but *never* distrust your God! If devils, or even angels could stand in squadrons and swear unanimously that God had failed—call them liars, too, for God cannot, cannot, cannot lie!

The things which are seen are, after all, but mere shadows and dependent for their appearing and continuing upon the Lord, alone. Why, then, confide in them at the expense of your confidence in God? God, only, is true, and when you have no hope but in Him, alone, you have all the hope worth having! They say of us who trust in God, alone, that we have nothing to look to. Our answer is that faith in the unseen God is the highest reason and is grounded on the surest fact! His unseen arm is stronger than all that angel or human eyes can ever see and there is more potency in God, who is neither to be heard nor seen, than in all the crash of whirlwinds or the glare of tempests. There is no power but in Him and,

therefore, no certainty of Infallible Truth but in the Word which He has spoken.

Look, Sirs, every promise in God's Word comes to you, first, from the Father's lips—will you doubt Him? It next comes by the Holy Spirit, who reveals it—will you doubt Him? Beware lest you sin against the Holy Spirit! It comes, next, sealed with the blood of Jesus! Will you doubt Him? Will you suspect your Savior? A single doubt of a promise of God casts a stigma upon Father, Son and Holy Spirit and is a triple transgression against the triune God! O the venom that lies in a single suspicion of the Most High! It is strange how you and I can enter into confidence and conviction about many things and yet we cannot exercise the same confidence towards our God!

You all believe in the laws of matter. You expect that the law of gravitation will bring a weight downward if you throw it from the window—why are you so sure? Because you have *seen* the rule in action so often that you now expect to see it carried out—and yet the law of gravitation might be suspended! Indeed, it *has* been suspended, for at the Red Sea the floods stood upright as a heap and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea! You all expect the sun to rise in the morning and to set at his appointed time because he has kept his daily marches for many years. And yet there was a time when there was no sun to rise or set and there *will* be a time when the sun shall be turned into darkness and day and night shall cease. Can you trust the temporary and yet doubt the eternal? You all expect the seasons of the year to come and go, but they might be reversed by God right easily.

Now, if we can believe in the laws of Nature which are evidently changeable and which will one day certainly come to an end, how is it that we cannot believe in God whose regularity in the keeping of His promises has been as great as the regularity of day and night, of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat and whose permanent Immutability will run on throughout eternity? O that we were wise! O that we were commonly honest with God and spoke of Him as we have found Him! Then we should doubt Him no more, but abide in fixed and steadfast confidence! O Holy Spirit, work us to this end!

III. This brings me, in the third place, to dwell upon this sin very much in the same way, only with this heading, the sin bitterly DEPLORED. We have all been guilty of it. Some, here, are living constantly in the commission of it. But what I need to call to your remembrance is this, that in any one case of doubting the truthfulness of God there is the full venom of the entire sin of unbelief. That is to say, if you distrust the Lord in one, you doubt Him altogether. You say that you can believe the Lord about other things, but there is one particular point which staggers you. But is it not clear that the man who is convicted of one falsehood is no longer trustworthy?

The Scripture calls Him, "God who cannot lie." Do you think He can lie *once*? Then He can lie and the Scripture is broken! "Ah, but I mean He may not keep His promise *to me*. I am such an unworthy person." Yes, but when a man forfeits his word, it is no defense for him to say, "I told an untruth, but it was only to an unworthy person." No, the truth must be spo-

ken irrespective of persons! I have no right to deceive even a criminal! Do you dare say that to one person the Lord can be untrue? If it can be so, He is not a true God any more! It only needs one falsehood, one breach of promise, one lie to be proven and you have smitten the character of the accused to the very heart—you would not dream of doing such a thing to the great God!

You may as well doubt Him about everything if you distrust Him upon any one matter. Get but the promise from God and there is an Infallible necessity that He will keep it, be it a little promise or a great one, for the character of a truthful Being is all square and He is false in nothing! Do you reply that you doubted Him upon a very trivial matter and it was only a little mistrust? Alas, there is a world of iniquity in the faint discredit of the thrice holy Lord! Reflect, then, with sorrow that we have been guilty of this sin, not once, but a great many times. Timorousness and suspicion spring up in some bosoms like weeds in the furrows. They sing the Lord's praises for a great deliverance just experienced, but the next cloud which darkens the sky fills them with fear and they again mistrust Divine Love. Their heavenly Father delivers them, helps them, comforts them and they say they will never doubt again. But in a short time another trial looms in the distance and they are despondent and dismayed.

Now, I will read to you, and I will read to *myself* these words of God which make up our text—"How long will this people provoke Me? And how long will it be before they believe Me for all the signs which I have showed among them?" Another thought upon this point and it is this—are there not some professing people of God who do not seem to live a life of faith at all? I mean some who have no faith about their temporal circumstances at all and almost look upon living by faith as if it were a kind of fanaticism which they admit to be very pious and good, but they can never come up to it. Yet faith should be an everyday thing with us.

In the life of Abraham how few acts are mentioned of outward religion, of long retirements, fasts, public services, sacraments and so forth—but how clear it is that his daily secular and domestic life was a living unto God as a pilgrim and a sojourner with Him. There is no visible line between secular and sacred in the Patriarch's life—it was all sacred! It is an evil distinction which says so far is spiritual and so far is secular. My Brothers and Sisters, your whole lives must be *spiritual* lives! There must be faith in God about your home, your families and your neighbors. Some look upon faith as a kind of Sunday Grace to be laid up in the Ark of the Covenant with Aaron's rod but, indeed, it is an everyday faculty, a Grace for the table, a Grace for the cupboard, a Grace for the pocket, a Grace for the market, a Grace for the nursery and a Grace for the sick bed!

The life of God's people is not to be lived within the four narrow walls of a Meeting House—it is lived wherever they are, for in every place the just shall live by faith! The religion of a Christian is to be the whole of his life and faith is to run through it like a thread through a coral necklace. We are to believe God as much when He says, "Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure," as when He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh, for more household faith, more Saturday

faith, more real faith! Let us blush and never cease to blush that we have had so little of it!

IV. Lastly, as we have now deplored this sin, we shall conclude by spending a moment or two in heartily DENOUNCING IT. This sin of unbelief, if there were no other reason for denouncing it, let it be reprobated because *it insults God*. I feel an infinite enmity to unbelief because it so terribly misrepresents and calumniates my God. If any man were to say to me, "Your father breaks his word," I would not suffer the accuser to go unanswered and assuredly I cannot be silent when my heavenly Father is thus slandered! Our race fell by believing the old dragon's base charge against God when he said to the woman in his vile serpentine language, "You shall not surely die!" He thus called God a liar!

Away with you, you subtle serpent! Away with you! Go and eat the dust that is your predestinated meat, for God cannot speak that which is not true—He is Truth itself! How greatly does unbelief dishonor the Lord! What shame it casts upon the splendor of His name! Alas, that there should be going up and down this world creatures denying the existence of their Creator and other beings who admit that there is a God and believe that He has spoken and given promise of good things to come, but treat His Word as if it were worthless and unfit to be trusted! Oh, hateful, abominable, loathsome mistrust which dares to treat the Lord as unworthy to be believed!

This is sufficient reason for denouncing it and yet, since weaker reasons may, perhaps, help the stronger, let me mention that we are bound to hate unbelief because *it is the ruin of the great mass of our race*. Why are men lost? All their sins which they have done cannot destroy them if they believe in Jesus, but the damning point is that they will *not* believe in Him. Thus says the Scriptures—"He that believes not is condemned already." Why? "Because he has not believed on the Son of God." God Himself hangs on a tree in human form and bleeds to death bearing the sin of man and yet men turn their backs on this infinite display of love and refuse to believe it? Therefore do they *deserve* to sink to death and Hell!

I look upon the myriads now in outer darkness and I ask, "Who slew all these?" The answer is, "They could not enter into Heaven because of unbelief—they perished because they would not believe in the testimony of God concerning reconciliation by the blood of His Son." May we not well hate this murderous unbelief?

We may hate it, again, because *it brings so much misery and weakness upon the children of God*. My Brothers and Sisters, if we believed God's promises, we should no longer be bowed down with sorrow, for our sorrow would be turned into joy. We would glory in our infirmities! Yes, we would glory in tribulation, also, seeing the good result which the Lord brings forth from them. The man who steadily believes His God is calm, quiet and strong. If men fail him, his God supports him. Suppose his business fails him—his chief business is to serve his God and that has not failed! If he is, himself, sick and racked with pain, he resigns himself to the great Father's chastening hand and patience is given.

If health is utterly failing—he leaves himself with God that he may take down his tabernacle, curtain by curtain, confident that he will build it

again in nobler form. When death approaches, he so fully believes in God that he feels it will be gain to him to pass out of this state of trial into everlasting blessedness at the Lord's right hand—and so he is always happy! How strong such a man becomes! The weakness which comes of fear and trembling does not touch him! His heart is fixed and, therefore, he has all his strength under control and can bring it to bear upon the place where it is needed.

I do not know whether you have thought of the prowess of Samson. His is a very poor character in many aspects, but yet what a true hero he is when you view him in the light of his faith! It was not that he was physically strong by nature, but that he believed God and strength came upon him. As a Believer in God he trusted that the Lord could make his sinews and muscles strong enough for any task which was allotted him. And so, when the gates of Gaza shut him in, he rose up from his sleep and bowed himself before the huge doors—and with a mighty tug lifted them up! And as the bars were fastened to the posts, he pulled up posts and all and carried the whole away to the top of the hill—not as a feat of Herculean strength—but as an act of *faith in God!*

But now the Philistines are upon him! He is upon a rock and cannot escape. He believes in God and he quails not before the host. There are a thousand of the enemy and he is but one—he looks for a weapon and there is nothing handy for him to fight with but a dried bone which once had made the jaw of an ass. What does it matter? He trusts in God and not in the weapon! Look how the Philistines flee before him, or would do so if they could, for with feet and knee and hands Samson is upon them! And his terrible arm sweeps them down in rows—this great child-man was a terrible Believer, but when the Divine fury of his faith was upon him, he was altogether irresistible! He never thought of odds against him, nor staggered at the promise through unbelief!

It was a grand deed for one man to fling himself upon a thousand! I like him better in such silent daring than even when he cries, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." Only believe God and you can do anything! If the Lord should bid you shake the world, you could do it by faith! Plucking up sycamore trees by the roots and hurling mountains into the sea are mere sport for *faith*, which before now has subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions and quenched the violence of fire! She has grander things to do than the mere slaying of Philistines, for she wrestles with principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places and comes off more than conqueror through Him that loved her!

And yet, my Friend, are you hiding in the rear? Are you lying in the background? Are you being nursed and cared for as a babe? Shall it always be so? Will you forever be a mere child? If you do not believe, you will never grow strong, but he that believes comes to the full development of that celestial manhood which is akin to the manhood of the Christ of God in whom we live! One very shocking point about this unbelief is that *it has hampered the work of Christ in the world.* The Christ that can save is a Christ *believed* in, but of a Christ who is *not* believed in it is written—"He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." The rea-

son why, at this time, whole nations lie under popery or heathendom is that the Church has not faith enough for their conquest! There is no straitening in God—our limit lies in our own timorous hearts!

The first thing to be done is for Zion to believe in God and then the rod of His strength shall go forth out of her midst and she shall become “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.” If the Son of Man should now come on the earth, where would He find faith? Where would He discover a high degree of it? You know what most Churches do—there is the regular performance of worship service; the regular preaching of an orthodox sermon as dry as it is orthodox; the regular meeting of a few people for a Praying Meeting in which there is no real prayer; and the regular revolution of a spiritual barrel organ, from which all spirituality has long ago been ground out! Nothing comes of this lifeless routine and it was never likely that there could be anything, for out of death, only death can come.

When we began to preach in faith, believing that men must be saved by the Gospel, they will be saved by it! When we go forth to battle, confident that the weapon of the Gospel in the hand of God cannot fail, it will not fail! It is lack of faith on our part which causes the eternal God to put His right hand into His bosom and keep it there! When once the Holy Spirit has worked a mighty faith in us—and we shall never have it till He does—*then* will the Lord lay bare His arm and we shall see marvelous things! His own right hand and His holy arm will get Him the victory! The world has never seen, since Apostolic times, what yet shall happen in our own day if we will but believe!

If we will but confide in God, our young men shall see visions and our old men shall dream dreams and then shall be poured out upon the Lord’s servants and handmaidens of His own Spirit and they shall prophesy! Then will the world wake up and cry, “The old fanaticism has come back! These men are drunk with new wine!” It will only be that they speak as the Spirit gives them utterance, for He works mightily where faith is mighty! But He is restrained because of this wretched, wicked, insulting, blasphemous unbelief of ours that persists in suspecting the Lord! Forward, Brothers and Sisters!

God the Holy Spirit helping you, resolve in your hearts this day that you will doubt all the boasted discoveries of science! You will doubt all the affirmations of the wise! You will doubt all the speculations of great thinkers! You will doubt all your own feelings and all the conclusions drawn from outward circumstances! Yes, and everything that seems to be demonstrable to a certainty, you will doubt! But NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, while eternity shall last, will you suffer the thought to pass your mind that *God* can ever, in the least degree, run back from anything that He has spoken, or change the Word that has gone forth from His lips!

Thus have I spoken for Him. May His Holy Spirit make it powerful on your minds, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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CALEB—THE MAN FOR THE TIMES

NO. 538

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit in him and has followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land he went. And his seed shall possess it.”
Numbers 14:24.***

IT is a rough name that—“Caleb.” Most translators say it signifies “a dog.” But what matters a man’s name? Possibly the man himself was somewhat rough—many of the heartiest of men are so. As the unpolished oyster yet bears within itself the priceless pearl, so oftentimes ruggedness of exterior covers worth. A dog, moreover, is not all badness, though, “*Without* are dogs and sorcerers.” It has this virtue, that it follows its master. And therein this Caleb was well-named. For never dog so followed his master as Caleb followed his God.

As we have seen the faithful dog following his master when he is on horseback through mud and mire and dirt, for many a weary mile, even though the horses heels might wound him, so Caleb keeps close to God. And even if stoning threatens him, yet is he well content to follow the Lord fully. The name, however, has another signification and we like it rather better—it means “*All heart.*” Here was a fitting surname for the man, whose whole heart followed his God. He says himself that he brought a report of the land according to all that was in his heart.

He was a man of a healthy and mighty spirit. He did nothing heartlessly. His spirit was not the Laodicean lukewarmness, which is neither hot nor cold, which God spits out of His mouth—it was a spirit of holy heat, of noble daring. If I may not call him lion-hearted, never lion had a braver heart than he. Many mortals appear to have no heart. They are like corporations of which we are often told that a corporation has a head—does it not have a new mayor every year? And yet who ever saw it blush?

It certainly has a mouth, for it swallows much—and hands, for it can grasp much—and feet, for it takes long strides. But whoever heard of a corporation with either heart or conscience? In the same manner it may be said of many persons—they have a head to understand and think, and feet to move and hands to act, but heart of compassion and a feeling heart they have not. Doubtless you have seen—doubtless you have met persons without hearts. The moment you come into their company you perceive what they are, as readily as the voyager on the Atlantic knows when there is an iceberg in the neighborhood—by the sudden chill which comes over him.

You shake the man’s hand—it drops into your hand as cold as a dead fish. The man’s blood is cold as a December frost. You talk with him, but no effort on your part can stir the frozen current of his soul. You begin to

speak to him about religion—which he professes to love so much—his words are few, his syllables faint, for his heart is not in the matter. Others we have the privilege of knowing—I trust there are many such in this community—who cannot talk of Jesus without emotion—

**“Their pulse with pleasure bounds,
The Master’s name to hear.”**

If they sing, they wake up their glory, saying, with David, “Awake, psaltery and harp. I myself will awake right early.” If they pray, it is the wrestling prayer of Jacob at the brook Jabbok. And if they serve their God, they carry out the words of the Apostles, “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto God and not unto man.” It is a *heartly* Caleb, then. We will rather interpret his name this way than the other. But if we put both together, he shall be *a dog* for faithfully following his God, but he shall be *all heart*, because he so fully follows his Lord.

There are three things about Caleb worthy of consideration, then—first, *his faithful following*. Secondly, *his favored reward*. And thirdly, *his inner character*—that which was the secret source of his following God, namely, that “he had another spirit.”

I. First, then, let this brave veteran stand before us. Let us look at him and learn something of HIS FAITHFUL FOLLOWING OF HIS GOD. Perceive, Beloved, *he never went before his God*. That is presumption. The highest point to which the true Believer ever comes is to walk *with* God, but never to walk *before* Him. It is true that we walk before the Lord in the land of the living, but that is in another sense, meaning *under His eyes*. We never run before God so as to outrun His Providence and become the directors of our own steps.

They who travel before the cloud will soon find other clouds lowering upon them. Those who leave the fiery pillar and will be their own guides, shall soon be in the fire, without a guide to bring them out again. We ought to *follow* the Lord. The sheep follow the shepherd. “He puts forth His own sheep,” says Christ, “and goes before them, and they follow Him.” They follow as the soldier follows the captain—he points the road, leads the van and bears the thick of the danger—while the faithful warrior keeps close behind.

They follow as the disciple follows the Master, not teaching, nor discussing, nor disputing, but sitting at His feet, believing that when He leads in the way of knowledge, it is a true and a right way, whereas if we seek to be wise beyond what is written, we make unto ourselves pits and traps and fall into a snare. Caleb followed the Lord. Many others do the same, but then they can not win that adverb, which is Caleb’s golden medal. He followed the Lord, “*fully*,” says one text, “*wholly*,” says another.

Some of us follow the Lord, but it is a great way off, like Peter, or now and then as did Saul the king. We are not constant. We have not given our whole heart to God. The essence, then, of the man’s faithful following lies in the adverb—“*fully*.” And here, by your leave, in explaining this word “wholly.” I shall follow the explanation of good Matthew Henry. I cannot think of a better, nor even of one so good, myself.

1. He followed the Lord wholly, that is, first of all, he followed Him *universally, without dividing*. Whatever his Master told him to do, he did—

***“In all the Lord’s appointed ways
His journey he pursued.”***

He did not say, “I will perform this duty and neglect the other. I will be faithful to my conscience and to my God upon this point, but that shall be left unto another day.” He took the Commandments as he found them and if they were ten he did not desire to make them nine. Nor did he want to change their order and put that second which God had put first. He did not wish to divide the commands. What God had joined together, he did not desire to put asunder. He followed the Lord without picking and choosing, being universally obedient to his Master’s Law.

Brethren, I wish we could say the same of all professed Christians. You see Caleb was quite as ready to *fight* the giants as he was to *carry* the clusters. We have a host who are ready for sweet duties. Pleasant exercises and spiritual engagements which bring joy and peace are always very acceptable. But as for the fighting of giants—how many say, “I pray you have me excused.” To defend Christ’s cause against adversaries, to submit themselves to rebuke, to go up single-handed and fight against the Lord’s foes—from this the many will draw back and we are afraid there are some that draw back unto perdition, because they have never had the perfect heart given to them which is obedient to God in all His will.

If you have a servant who will choose which of your commands she will obey, she is rather the mistress than the servant. If you, dear Brother, shall say concerning the Lord’s will, “I will do this and I will not do that,” you do in fact make *yourself* master. The spirit of rebellion is in you, you have already erred and strayed from your Lord’s ways and set up the standard of revolt. Mind that you do not pierce yourself through with many sorrows. Some excuse themselves for neglecting duties on the ground that they are non-essential—as if all *duty* was not essential to the perfect follower of Christ.

“They are unimportant,” says the man, “they involve nothing.” Whereas it often happens that the apparently unimportant duty is really the most important of all. Many a great lord, in the olden times, has given up his land on copyhold to his tenant. And perhaps the fee which was to be annually paid was to bring a small bird, or a peppercorn—in some cases it has been the bringing of a turf, or a green leaf. Now, if the tenant should on the annual day refuse to do his homage and say it was too trifling a thing to bring a peppercorn to the lord of the manor in fee, would he not have forfeited his estate? Thus he would have been setting himself up as superior owner and asserting a right which his feudal lord would at once resist.

It is even so—to quote a single instance—in the matter of Believer’s Baptism. When the Believer says, “Well, surely this is but a small thing, I may safely neglect it,” does he not therein deny unto his Sovereign Lord and Master that act of homage which, though it is simple in itself, is nevertheless full of meaning, because it is an acknowledgment of the superior

rights of the great King? Who told you it was nonessential? Who bade you neglect it? Surely it must be a *spirit of darkness* that talked with you!

The Jew of old must not neglect circumcision. His child shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel unless the painful rite be performed. He must not refuse the paschal supper, for if he does, the destroying angel shall smite his household. And in that Passover everything must be observed. Not a bone must be broken. The creature must not be eaten raw, nor sodden at all with water. It must be roasted in the fire. It must be eaten with bitter herbs. There are minute particulars given and every one of these having the solemn command of God upon them are to be carefully observed by the children of Israel throughout all generations.

Surely it must be so with Christian ordinances and with the commands of the King of Heaven. We cannot violate them with impunity. The spirit which would prompt us to neglect one of the least of them is of the devil and leads down to Hell—a spirit of partial obedience is a spirit of radical disobedience. The old Prophet did but eat and drink at Bethel and that, too, as he thought, upon prophetic authority, and yet the lion slew him because he rebelled against the express bidding of God.

We are not to imitate the Pharisee who tithed the mint, anise and cummin, and then neglected the weightier matters of the Law, but we are to remember that Jesus said, “These things ought you to have done and not to have left the other undone.” So that mint and anise and cummin, are still to be tithed. And still in the little as well as in the great our obedience to God is to be carried out. Take care, dear Friends, that, like Caleb, you follow the Lord fully, that is, *universally, without dividing*.

Now may I put a question of conscience to all around me? Is there not something that I know to be my Master’s will which I have not done? Brothers and Sisters, is there not some command which as yet you have not obeyed? Some self-denying duty which you have shirked, some holy engagement for the good of your fellow men, or for your Lord’s glory, which you have carelessly avoided? If it is so, do, I pray you, see to it, for you can never have the blessing of Caleb till you have the complete and universal spirit of obedience which Caleb had.

2. But secondly, Caleb followed the Lord fully, that is, *sincerely without dissembling*. He was no hypocrite. He followed the Lord with his whole heart. One of the safest tests of sincerity is found in a willingness to suffer for the cause. I suppose that the twelve spies met each other in the south part of the land and held a little consultation as to what should be the report they would bring up. Like twelve jurymen they were now to bring in their verdict and ten of them were agreed—“It is a land that flows with milk and honey, but it eats up its inhabitants. It is full of giants with cities walled up to Heaven and it is impossible for us to take possession of it.”

Caleb and Joshua both dissent from that verdict. I cannot tell what were the arguments and the reasonings, what the bantering and the jests and the jeers, to which Caleb was exposed from the other ten princes. But we do know that when they came to give in their verdict Caleb dared to stand forth, alone, and declare that such was not his testimony. Joshua

appears to have said nothing, probably from prudential reasons, because, being the servant of Moses, the people would attach less importance to what he said, arguing that he was sure to take part with Moses and would be biased by his superior.

Therefore Caleb stood out alone and took the brunt of the tumult. How courageous was that man, who had only numbered forty summers, to put himself in opposition to the other ten princes and declare in flat contradiction to them—"Let us go up. We are able to possess the land." When the people took up stones and Joshua was forced to speak with Caleb, it was with no small peril and required no little mental courage to stand up amidst the insults and jeers of the crowd and still to bring up a good report of the land. Caleb followed the Lord sincerely.

O Beloved, how many profess to follow God who follow Him without their hearts! The semblance of religion is often dearer to men than religion itself. As one says, many a man has spent five hundred pounds upon a picture of a beggar by Murillo, or a brigand by Salvator Rosa, who would not give a penny to a *real* beggar and go out of their wits at the sight of a brigand. The picture of religion, the outward name of it, men will give much to maintain. But the reality of religion—ah, that is quite a different thing.

Many of our Churches are surmounted with the Cross in stone, but how few of the worshippers care to take up the Cross of Christ daily and follow Him. We know religious men who are respected by the ungodly, not for their religion, but on account of some adventitious circumstance. It was not the religion itself they cared for. If you should take a bear in a cage into a town, men will pay their money to see it, but let it loose among them and they will pay twice as much money to get rid of it. So sometimes if a religious man has gift or ability, there are many who will regard and admire him, but not for his religion.

Let the religion itself come abroad in the daily actions of his life and then straightway they begin to abhor him. There is much false love to Jesus—much unhallowed profession. Let us remember, however, that the day is coming when all false profession will be destroyed. The fan in Christ's hands will leave none of the chaff remaining upon the wheat heap and the great fire will not suffer a single particle of dross to be unconsumed. Happy shall that man be whose faith was a *real* faith, whose repentance was sincere, whose obedience was true, who gave his heart, his whole heart to his Master's cause!

3. The third point is most noteworthy. Caleb followed the Lord wholly, that is, *cheerfully without disputing*. Those who serve God with a sad countenance, because they do what is unpleasant to them, are not His servants at all. Our God requires no slaves to grace His Throne. He is the Lord of the empire of love. The angels of God serve Him with songs, not with groans. And God loves to have the joyful obedience of His creatures. In fact I will venture to say that that obedience which is not cheerful is disobedience, for the Lord looks at the heart of a thing and if He sees that we serve Him from force and not because we love Him, He will reject our offering.

That service which is coupled with cheerfulness is hearty service, and therefore true. Take away joy from the Christian and you have taken away, I believe, that which is the test of his sincerity. If a man is *driven* to battle, he is no patriot, but he that marches into the fray with flashing eye and beaming face, singing, "It is sweet for one's country to die," proves himself to be sincere in his patriotism. Cheerfulness, again, makes a man strong in service. It is to our service what oil is to the wheels of a railway carriage. Without its proportion of oil, the axle soon grows hot and accidents occur. And if there is not a holy cheerfulness to oil our wheels, we shall not be able to serve God with anything like power.

The man who is cheerful in his service of God proves that obedience is his element. I have seen the sea birds in stormy weather flying over the land with their huge heavy flapping wings. What a contrast between them and the lark, which, as it mounts to Heaven makes its wings vibrate many times in a moment, while these heavy broad-winged creatures fly as if they could not fly. They are out of their element. They long till again they shall be swimming upon the sea.

Some men in the service of God are like these heavy swans. Their wing goes every now and then with a sort of dying flap—there is no sprightliness of life in them. They are out of their element. Now God will never receive at our hands an obedience which is not consistent with our nature. Understand me, if it were possible for a man with an unspiritual nature, with a fallen nature, to perform the very same work which is performed by a saint, his nature would mar his act. God looks at the *nature* from which the act comes, and if He sees that it comes from a spiritual, renewed, regenerated nature, then He recognizes that obedience is our element and so accepts our service.

Let me put this question round among you all. Brothers and Sisters, do you serve the Lord cheerfully? Frequently people give to the cause of God because they are asked. A guinea is dragged out of them. Do you think God cares for your guinea? You might as well have kept it. No blessing can come to you. When you give to the cause of God, do it cheerfully. He that gives must not give grudgingly, or else he has offered an unacceptable offering unto God. When you come out to week night services, do you come because you *should* come, or do you *love* to come? This is the mark of the genuine child of God, the true Caleb—that he can sing—

***"Make me to walk in Your commands
It is a delightful road."***

The man has his heart right, he feels at home in the work of the Lord! Here is his joy—

***"It is love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move."***

Caleb was one of those who served the Lord cheerfully.

4. But now there is a fourth point, he followed the Lord *constantly without declining*. Having begun when he first started upon the search to exercise a truthful judgment, he persevered during the forty days of his spying and brought back a true report. Forty-five years he lived in the camp of Israel, but all that time he followed the Lord and never once consorted with murmuring rebels. And when his time came to claim his heri-

tage at the age of eighty-five, the good old man is following the Lord fully. Still his speech betrays him. He shows a constant heart. God set his seal upon that man's soul in his youthful days and he remained his God's when gray hairs adorned his brow.

Beloved, how many professors fail in this respect? They follow the Lord by fits and starts. They go out from us because they are not of us. For if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us. They leap into religion as the flying fish leaps into the air. They fall back again into their sins, as the same fish returns to its element. They make a great name for a time like the crackling of thorns, but lo, the flame has soon expired, for they are not like the miraculous bush which burned, God dwells not in them!

Caleb was kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. He could say with Jude, "Now unto Him who is able to keep me from falling, unto Him be honor and glory forever and ever." He was not as some are, who imitate the lame beggar who limped all day in the streets to gather money and then at night went to the thieves' kitchen, where all the dainty bits were brought out of the bag, the money flowed freely and the wine and the good cheer was bought. Then the rogue unloosed his lame leg and danced as merrily as the rest.

No, Caleb was not of this kind. He did not limp in virtue nor leap in vice. His walk was ever the same and the way was always straight. God had delivered him from dissimulation, and had given him constancy in its place. How brightly he shone when he was left alone, faithful among the faithless. Even Joshua for awhile is silent. But we may compare him, to use the metaphor of good old Gotthold—we may compare him to a tree. The wind had been blowing—it was a dreadful hurricane and Gotthold walked into a forest and saw many trees torn up by the roots.

He marveled much at one tree which stood alone and yet had been unmoved in the tempest. He said, "How is this? The trees that were together have fallen and this alone stands fast!" He observed that when the trees grow too closely they cannot send their roots into the earth—they lean too much upon each other. But this tree, standing alone, had space to thrust its roots into the earth and lay hold on the rock and stones, and so when the wind came, it fell not. It was so with Caleb—he always would lay hold upon his God, not upon men. And so when the wind came, he stood.

I saw this morning a huge tree which stood by the water's edge but yesterday, blown into the large pond upon our common. Well might it fall during such a night, but there were other trees further from the water that stood fast. You know it is our prosperity, our mercy-side—it is where the water comes to the root, where the plenty comes. But the temptation comes, too, and we are ever weakest where perhaps we dreamt we were the strongest. Caleb was constant because he was a rooted man and even success did not overturn him. He was not one of those plants which spring up quickly because there is no depth of earth. He had a firm hold upon his God.

You know, my Sisters, how you wear your rings. I would that every Christian wore his graces after the same fashion. You wear not only the

wedding ring, but the keeper, too. And every Christian should wear the keeper of constancy to guard the ring of his faith. Caleb had set a seal upon his heart and a bracelet upon his arm—his love was strong as death and endured even to the grave. He saw the Lord, he loved the Lord, he trusted the Lord. And for these reasons he followed the Lord wholly. Here I leave him, only asking you, dear Friends, to see to it that you have his holy perseverance. Therefore pray, “Hold You me up and I shall be safe,” and trust yourself where Caleb trusted himself—in the hands of God.

I will give you those four subdivisions again: universally, without dividing. Sincerely, without dissembling. Cheerfully, without disputing. Constantly, without declining.

II. Now for the second point, which is CALEB’S FAVORED PORTION. In reward for his faithful following of his Master, *his life was preserved in the hour of judgment*. The ten fell, smitten with plague, but Caleb lived. Blessed is the man who has the God of Jacob for his confidence—

***“He that has made his refuge God
Shall find a most secure abode;
Shall walk all day beneath His shade,
And there at night shall rest his head.
What though a thousand at your side,
At your right hand ten thousand died,
Your God His chosen people saves
Among the dead, amidst the graves.”***

If any man shall experience special deliverances, Caleb is he. If he follows God fully, God will fully take care of him. When you look to nothing but your Master’s honor, your Master will look to your honor.

When Queen Elizabeth sent a certain merchant over to Holland, he complained to her, “If I do your Majesty’s business, my own business will be ruined.” “You do my business,” said the Queen, “and I will see to your business.” It is so with our God. “My servant, serve Me, and I will serve you.” Caleb is willing to give his life for his Master, and therefore his Master gives him his life. There are many who seek their life that lose it. And there are some who lose it for Christ’s sake, that find it to life eternal. Caleb was also comforted with *a long life of vigor*. At eighty-five he was as strong as at forty and still able to face the giants.

If there is a Christian man who shall have in his old age a vigor of faith and courage, it is the man who follows the Lord fully. I have in my mind’s eye one who gave himself, while yet a young man, to his Master’s cause. He has zealously served the Church in his day and generation and it is his privilege now to see the good of God’s chosen. His heart is so glad at the sight of God’s mercy that he is ready to say with Simeon—“Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

We gain our old saints from among those faithful young ones. If ever we are to see among us noble veterans—champions of the age whose heads shall be crowned with gray hairs of honor—we must look for those who in the beginning of their days were hearty in their Master’s cause, were universal in their obedience, thorough in their consecration to God. Experi-

ence, wisdom, Divine Grace are the gifts of our Lord Jesus to those who walk with zeal and earnestness in His ways.

Again, Caleb received as his reward *great honor among his Brothers and Sisters*. He was at least twenty years older than any other man in the camp except Joshua. How the mothers would hold up their little children in their arms to look at Caleb as he walked down the street! “All died,” the mothers would say, “all died in Israel’s host, except that man who walks yonder with steadfast tread. All died and their carcasses were buried in the wilderness, except that man and Joshua the son of Nun.” At their council he would be regarded with as much reverence as Nestor in the assemblies of the Greeks. In their camps he would stand like another Achilles in the midst of the armies of Lacedaemon.

As king and sire he dwelt among men. As some mighty Alp lifts its head nearer to Heaven than all its compeers—its pure, snow-white head communing with celestial things—so this gray-headed old man must have seemed a towering summit in the midst of Israel’s worthies! A Grace-made prime minister of the people of Israel after Joshua himself had departed. Well, Brothers and Sisters, such will God make of us if we give our hearts wholly to Him. I say, again, if we honor God He will honor us. “They that honor Me I will honor. They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Inconsistent professors—men and women who may be Christians, but who never enter thoroughly into the Lord’s work—are never honored in the Church. They must necessarily keep in the background. They are rather tolerated than admired. But warm-hearted spirits, zealous and full of life—these are the men who stand like Joseph’s sheaf in the midst of his Brothers and Sisters’ sheaves which do obeisance unto it.

Again—and you will think this is a strange thing to say—Caleb had the distinguished reward of being *put upon the hardest service*. That is always the lot of the most faithful servant of God. There were three huge warriors in Mount Hebron. No one will undertake to kill them except our good old friend Caleb. These Anakims, with their six toes on each foot and their six fingers on each hand, are to be upset and driven out. Who is to do it? If nobody else will offer himself, here is Caleb. No, he does not merely allow himself to be sent upon the service, but he craves permission to be allowed to take the place, the reason being because it was the worst task of the war and he panted to have the honor of it.

Grand old man! Would God you had left many of your like behind you. If there is some pleasant thing to do for Christ, how we scramble after the service. But if there is a front place in the battle, “Oh, let Brother So-and-So do it.” Do you not notice the way most men decline the honor of special danger? “Our friend So-and-So is much better qualified for that. Let him take it.” If we were true heroes we should each of us contend which should undertake the most hopeless, the most difficult, and the most dangerous task. Who wins the honor? Why the man that leads the forlorn hope!

But there are not many who will strive to have the privilege of going first. They are not quite so fond of being knocked off the ladder and sent headlong from the wall to have their brains knocked out on the ground—

not quite so desirous of being blown to pieces by the batteries. But, truly, if we could rival even earthly soldiers in their bravery and self-sacrifice, it were well. Caleb had the distinguished honor of being permitted to lead the van against the gigantic Anakim. Follow the Lord fully and the devil himself will be afraid of you—keep close to your Lord and defy all the fiends of Hell.

Last Tuesday morning, when I left London to go to Worcester to preach, the fog was about as thick as I have ever seen it, but what did that matter? The engine had just to keep on the rails, stick fast to the metals and she was safe. There was no particular need of seeing, because the road was laid down. And when a Christian knows he is right, he may go straight on, fog or no fog. But when a man gets off the road, then he may well pause, for he may be in a ditch and no one knows how soon he may come to grief. Get your heart right and you are independent of weather. Get your soul right and you may defy the sharpest arrow of the Adversary. The Lord is with us, if we are with Him.

This grand old man in his after years had *the honor of enjoying what he had once seen*. He had only seen the land when he said, “We are able to take it.” But others said, “No, no, no.” Well, he lived not only to take it, but to enjoy it for himself. We get in some of our Churches—I say nothing of mine just now—certain reverend old gentlemen who might as well have gone to Heaven years ago, who if there is any enterprise to be undertaken, say, “Oh, no, no! It cannot be done.” They sit down and figure away on a piece of paper with their pencil and say, “We have not enough money. It cannot be done.”

Perhaps some youthful soldier of Christ in the army says, “It can be done. I am sure we can do it.” But the good old man, having made up his mind never to walk by faith, stands to his watchword, “It is imprudent.” That is the big word with which they try to knock out the brains of young Zeal—“imprudent, *imprudent!*” But thank God there are others of another sort, who though they grow gray, say, “Well, I do not know. I may be thought to be a boy in my old age, but I do believe that God will hear prayer and that if it is God’s work we can do it.” And the old man lays his hand on the young soldier’s shoulder and bids him go on and God be with him.

That is the kind of Caleb I like! May such men live to see the reward of their confidence! Indeed they shall see that God is true to their faith and that He does reward those who dare to do hard things in confidence in His name. I may be speaking to some people from the country. You have got a minister down there but he wants to do a little more good than you like him to do. Now mind what you think. Stand back. If you cannot help him, let him alone. But I do pray you, on the other hand, endeavor to encourage him, cheer him on, for you will never win a Hebron for yourself or the Church if you are always talking about the giants and the difficulties and the dangers. There are no difficulties to the man who has faith enough to overcome them.

To conclude this point, good old Caleb *left a blessing to his children*. He had many sons, but he fought for them and carved out a portion for them

all. And he had a daughter, too, whom he promised to give to wife, you will remember, to anyone who would smite Kirjath-Sepher. He was a man of such a kind that he did not like to have a man for a son-in-law who could not fight as well as himself. He delighted to see valor in young people and so he offered his daughter as a prize. When he had given his daughter, she came to him and asked for a double blessing.

She had the field and a south country—she would have the land of springs—and he gave her the blessing of the upper and the nether springs. If there is any man who shall be able to leave his children the blessing of the upper and nether springs, it is the man who follows the Lord fully. If I might envy any man, it would be the Believer who from his youth up has walked through Divine Grace according to his Lord's Commandments and who is able, when his day comes, to scatter benedictions upon his rising sons and daughters and leave them with godliness which has the blessing of this life and that which is to come. The blessing of the upper and the nether springs, then, was the reward of good old Caleb.

There are some of us who are young in years, members of this Church, men and women, and we have before us, I hope, the opportunity, if God gives us Divine Grace, of becoming Calebs. And if the Lord should spare me as he spared Joshua, and spare you as he spared Caleb, we may yet, when our hairs are gray, do something, still, for the Lord our God, when those that fought the fight before us shall sleep among the clods of the valley. O for the Holy Spirit within us and the love of Jesus upon us, that we may be accepted in the Beloved!

III. And now, the last point of all—CALEB'S SECRET CHARACTER. The Lord says of him, "Because he has another spirit with him." He had another spirit—not only a bold, generous, courageous, noble and heroic spirit, but the Spirit and influence of God which thus raised him above human inquietudes and earthly fears. Therefore he followed God *fully*—literally he filled after him. God showed him the way to take and the line of conduct he must pursue—and he filled up this line, and in all things followed the will of his Master. Everything acts according to the spirit that is in it.

Yonder lamp gives no light. Why? It has no oil. Here is another. It cheers the darkness of the cell. Why? It is full of oil and oil is the mother of light. There are two huge bags of silk. One of them lies heavily upon the ground, the other mounts up towards the stars. The one is filled with carbonic-acid gas. It cannot mount, it acts according to the spirit that is in it. It has a heavy gas and there it lies. There is another full of hydrogen and it acts according to the spirit that is in it and up it goes. The light air seeks the lighter regions and up it mounts. Everything recording to its own order. The real way to make a new life is to receive a new spirit. There must be given us, if we would follow the Lord fully, a new heart and that new heart must be found at the foot of the Cross, where the Holy Spirit works through the bleeding wounds of Jesus.

Dear Friends, I would to God that we had, all of us, that which is the distinguishing mark of a right spirit, the spirit of *faith*. That spirit which takes God at His Word, reads His promise, and knows it to be true. He

that has this spirit will soon follow the Lord fully. Unbelief is the mother of sin, but faith is the nurse of virtue. More faith, Lord, more simple child-like faith upon a precious Savior! Then a faithful spirit always begets a *meek* spirit and a meek spirit always begets a *brave* spirit. It is said of the wood of the elder tree that none is softer, but yet it is recorded of old that Venice was built upon piles of the elder tree because it will never rot.

And so the meek-spirited man who is gentle and patient lasts on bravely, holding his own against all the attacks of the destroying Adversary. The true Believer has also a *loving* spirit as the result of Jesus' Grace. He loves God, therefore he loves God's people and God's creatures. And having this loving spirit he has next a *zealous* spirit and so he spends and is spent for God and this begets in him a *heavenly* spirit. And so he tries to live in Heaven and to make earth a Heaven to his fellow men, believing that he shall soon have a Heaven for himself and for them, too, on the other side of the stream.

Such a spirit had good Caleb. We cannot imitate him till we get his spirit. We are dead until He quickens us. O that the Holy Spirit would lead us to go to Jesus just as we are and look up to Him and beseech Him to fulfill that great Covenant promise—"A new heart also will I give them, a right *spirit* will I put within them." You and I have not followed the Lord fully. What shall we do, then? First let us humbly repent. Caleb means a dog. Let us learn from a dog. When a dog has done amiss, and you take a stick and are about to beat him, he will lie down on the ground and howl and creep to your feet and look up so piteously at you that you throw down your stick.

Now let us each do the same. Let us each be Calebs—dogs in this. Let us crouch at the feet of God's justice. Let us look up into the face of God's mercy and through Jesus Christ He will forgive us. Having done this, may He enable us to exercise a simple faith in Christ. As the child lives hanging upon the mother's breast and deriving its nourishment from the parent, so be it yours and mine to hang upon the wounds of our own dear Lord. And tonight when we come to His Table, let us eat His flesh and drink His blood, keeping close to His Person, receiving *our* life from the secret channels of *His* life, living upon Him.

Ah, if we live close to Jesus, we must be Calebs! He that is one with Jesus will follow God because Jesus is perfect in His following of His Father. And we, being parts of Him, shall be perfect, too. But the Holy Spirit's work must begin by bringing us to Jesus just as we are. God help us to trust Him as we are and then, by His Grace He will make us Calebs and keep us to the end. Amen.

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THE SPIES

NO. 197

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THE SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 6, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

“And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof. And all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.”
Numbers 13:32.

“And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes. And they spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.”
Numbers 14:6, 7.

THE unbelief of the children of Israel prompted them to send spies into Canaan. God had told them that it was a good land and He had promised to drive out their enemies—they ought therefore to have marched forward with all confidence to possess the promised heritage. Instead of this, they send twelve princes to spy out the land and, “alas, for human nature,” ten of these were faithless and only two true to the Lord. Read over the narrative and mark the ill effect of the lying message and the holy boldness of the true spies.

Now I must take up my parable. The land of Canaan is a picture of *religion*. I do not think it was ever intended to be a picture of *Heaven*, for there are no Canaanites in Heaven. Certainly in Heaven there are no sons of Anak, no giants to be driven out, no walled cities and no kings with chariots of iron. Canaan is, however, a very excellent picture of religion. The children of Israel must stand this morning as the representatives of the great mass of mankind. The great mass of mankind never try for themselves what religion is. They neither search our sacred books, nor taste and try our religion.

But this is what they do. They consider those who make a profession of religion as spies who have entered the land and they look upon our character and our conduct as the message which we bring back to them. The ungodly man does not read his Bible in order to discover whether the religion of Christ is holy and beautiful. No, he reads the living Bible—Christ’s Church—and if the Church is inconsistent he condemns the Bible, though the Bible is never to be accountable for the sins of those who profess to believe it.

Ungodly men, of course, do not come by repentance and faith and make a trial of the love of Christ. They do not enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, or else they would soon discover that it is a good land that flows with milk and honey. But instead thereof they stand still and they say, “Let us see what these Christians make of it. Do *they* find it to be a

happy thing? Does it succor *them in* their hour of trouble? Does it comfort *them in* the midst of their trials?” And if they find that our report is a gloomy or an unholy one, they turn aside and they say, “It is not a good land. We will not enter into it, for its difficulties are great, but its enjoyments are few.”

Beloved Brethren and Friends, to put the parable as simply as I can, I am about to make out every Christian man and woman here to be a spy who has entered into the good land of religion and who by his conduct and conversation brings either an evil or a good report of this good land and either moves the world to murmur at and to despise religion, or else inspires it with a holy dread of goodness and something of a longing after a portion therein.

But I shall begin with a word of caution. In the first place I shall notice that *the men of the world are not to be excused for their folly in trusting a mere report from other persons*. Then secondly, I shall endeavor to describe *the evil reporters*, the evil spies, which are in the camp. Then we will mention some *good spies*, who bring a good report of the land. And, in conclusion, bring a *few weighty reasons to bear upon Christian men and women, why they should act like Caleb and Joshua and bring up a good report of the land*

I. In the first place, then, THE UNGODLY WORLD IS NOT TO BE EXCUSED for that, which must nevertheless be admitted to be a very natural matter, namely, that INSTEAD OF INVESTIGATING RELIGION FOR THEMSELVES, THEY USUALLY TRUST TO THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHERS.

The worldly man looks at a Christian to see whether his religion is *joyful*. “By this,” says he, “shall I know whether there is that in religion which will make a man glad. If I see the professor of it with a joyous countenance, then I will believe it to be a good thing.” But hark, Sir, have you any right to put it to that test? Is not God to be counted true, even before we have proved Him? And has He not declared Himself, “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile”? Does not the Scripture itself declare that godliness is profitable, not only for this life, but for that which is to come—that it has the blessing of two worlds, the blessing of this world below the sky and of that upper world above the stars?

Would you not know from Scripture if you were to take the Bible and read it, that everywhere the Christian is commanded to rejoice, because it is comely for him? “Rejoice in the Lord you righteous and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart.” “Rejoice evermore.” “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice.” Remember you have no right to put the joyfulness of religion to any test short of your own experience, for you are bound to believe God on His naked word. It is not for you to stand still till you can see it to be true. It is your duty to believe your Maker when He declares that the ways of religion are pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

Again, you say you will test the *holiness* of Christ’s religion by the holiness of Christ’s people. You have no right, I reply, to put the question to

any such test as that. The proper test that you ought to use is to try it yourselves—to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” By tasting and seeing you will prove His goodness and by the same process you must prove the holiness of His Gospel. Your business is to seek Christ crucified for yourselves—not to take the representation of another man concerning the power of grace to subdue corruption and to sanctify the heart.

Your business is yourselves to enter into its valleys and pluck its grapes. Yourselves to climb its hills and see its inhabitants inasmuch as God has given you a Bible. He intended you to read it and not to be content with reading *men*. There is His Holy Spirit. You are not to be content with feelings that rise through the conversation of others. Your only power to know true religion is by having that Spirit operating upon your own heart—that you may yourself know what is the power of religion.

You have no right to judge religion from anything extra or external from itself. And if you despise it before you have tried it yourself, you must stand confessed in this world as a fool and in the next world as a criminal. And yet this is so with most men. If you hear a man rail at the Bible, you can usually conclude that he never reads it. And you may be quite certain if you hear a man speak against religion, that he never knew what religion was. True religion, when once it takes possession of the heart, never allows a man to quarrel with it.

That man will call Christ his best Friend who knows Christ at all. We have found many who have despised the enjoyments of this world—but we never found one who turned from religion with disgust or with satiety, after having once enjoyed it. No, remember my Hearers, if you take your religion from other people and are led by the example of professors to discard religion, you are nevertheless guilty of your own blood. For God has not left you to the uncertain chart of men’s characters. He has given you His own Word—a more sure Word and testimony—whereunto you do well if you take heed.

It will be in vain for you to say at the Day of Judgment, “Such-and-Such a man was inconsistent, therefore I despised religion.” Your excuse will then be discovered to be idle, for you shall have to confess that in other respects you did not take another man’s opinion in business, or in the cares of this life—you were independent enough. In your political opinions you did not pin your faith to any man’s coat. And, therefore, it shall be said of you at last you had enough independence of mind to steer your own course even against the example of others, in business, in politics and such like things. You certainly had enough of mental vigor, if you had chosen to have done so, to have stood out against the inconsistency of professors, and to have searched for yourselves.

If all Christ’s Church were inconsistent, so long as there is a Bible upon earth, you could have no excuse in the Day of Judgment. For Christ was not inconsistent and you are not asked to follow Christ’s *followers*—you are asked to follow Christ Himself. Until you can find a flaw in *His* character, a mistake in *His* conduct, you have no right to fling the inconsistency of His followers in the teeth of Christ, nor to turn from Him because His disciples forsake Him and flee.

To their own Master they stand or fall. They must bear their own burden and you must bear yours, too. "Every man shall bear his own burden," says Scripture, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account for the things which we have done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil." You will not be accountable for another man's sins, but for your own. And if another man by his sin has brought reproach upon Christ, still it shall be no excuse for you if you do not follow Him wholly, in the midst of an evil generation.

II. With that, by way of caveat and guard, I shall now bring forth THE BAD SPIES. I wish that the men mentioned in the text had been the only spies who had brought an evil report—it would have been a great mercy if the plague that killed them, had killed all the rest of the same sort. But alas, the breed, I am afraid, will never be extinct and as long as the world endures, there will be some professors who bring up an evil report of the land.

But now let me bring forth the evil spies. Remember, these spies are to be judged, not by what they say, but by *what they do*. For to a worldling, words are nothing—*acts* are everything. The reports that we bring of our religion are not the reports of the pulpit, not the reports that we utter with our lips, but the report of our daily life, speaking in our own houses and the everyday business of life.

Well, first, I produce a man who brings up an evil report of the land and you will see at once that he does so, for *he is of a dull and heavy spirit*. If he preaches, he takes this text—"Through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." Somehow or other, he never mentions God's people, without calling them God's *tried* children. As for joy in the Lord, he looks upon it with suspicion. "Lord, what a wretched land is this!" is the very height of poetry to him. He could sing that always. He is always in the valley, where the mists are hovering. He never climbs the mountain's brow to stand above the tempests of this life. He was gloomy before he made a profession of religion—since then he has become more gloomy still.

See him at home. Ask the children what they think of their father's religion. They think they could wish their father was anything except religious. "Father will not let us laugh," they say. "He pulls the blinds down on the Sunday. He tries to make us as dark and miserable as he can on the Sabbath-Day." He thinks it his duty as a strict Sabbatarian, to make the Sabbath the greatest day of bondage out of the whole seven.

Ask his wife what she thinks of religion. She says, "I do not know much about it myself, but I wish my husband were a little more cheerful." "Nay, but is it his religion that makes him miserable?" "I do not know what it is," she says, "but I know when he is most miserable, he is generally most religious." Hear him pray—when he is on his knees he gives a long list of his trials and troubles. He never says at the end, "More are they that are for us than all they that are against us." He usually dwells upon the valley of Baca and about crying so much that he makes it a well. He never goes on to say, "They go from strength to strength, everyone of them in Zion appeared before God." No, it is just the black part of the story.

If you want to see this brother in perfection, you must see him when he is talking to a young convert. The young man is full of joy and gladness, for he has found the Savior and, like a young fledgling that has just taken wing, he delights to fly about in the sunshine and chirp merrily in the joy of his faith. "Ah," says the old Christian, "the black ox has not trod on your toes yet. You will have more troubles than you dream of." Old Mr. Timorous was a friend of mine—did you ever hear what he said to Christian, when he met him on his journey? I will tell you the same. "The lions! The lions! The lions!" he cries. He, however, reveals not, "the lions are chained." "The giants! the giants! The giants!" he exclaims.

He never says, "He carries the lambs in His bosom and gently leads those that are with young." He takes always the dreary side of the question, bringing up an ill report of the land. And, do you know, some of these people are so proud of their ill report that they form themselves into a little knot and they cannot hear any preacher except his face be of an extreme length and except he has studied the dictionary to find all the most mournful terms and except he appear unto men to fast—just like the Pharisees of old.

Now, I do not hesitate to say that these men are evil spies. Far be it from us to mask the great fact that religion does entail tribulation and that a Christian, like everybody else, must expect in this world to have trouble, for man is born to it as the sparks fly upward. But it is as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. So sure as God is good, His religion is good and as God is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works, religion is an atmosphere in which those tender mercies play and the sea in which His loving kindness swims.

Oh, come, you dreary professors, take away those storm clouds and wreath a few rainbows on your brow. Come, now, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast. Take those harps from the willows. Down with them and now try if your unaccustomed fingers cannot make them alive with melody. And if you will not do it and cannot do it, permit me to bear *my* testimony. I can say, concerning Christ's religion—if I had to die like a dog and had no hope whatever of immortality—if I wanted to lead a happy life, let me serve my God with all my heart. Let me be a follower of Jesus and walk in His footsteps, for never was there a truer word spoken than that of Solomon, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

It is a land that flows with milk and honey. There are clusters even on earth too heavy for one man to carry. There are fruits that have been found so rich that even angel lips have never been sweetened with more luscious wine. There are joys to be had here so fair that even the nectared wine of Paradise can scarce excel the sweets of satisfaction that are to be found in the earthly banquets of the Lord.

Perhaps, however, this poor man that I have just sent off is to be pitied. Not so the next one, for he is a rascal indeed. Look at him! He comes forward as Mr. Meek-Face making a great profession of religion. How he mouths the hymns! When he stands up to pray, with what a spiritual kind of voice he prays. Nothing carnal about his voice! He is among the Chris-

tian people a great leader. He can preach sermons by the yard. He can dissect doctrines by the hour. There is not a metaphysical point in all our theology that he does not understand—

***“He can a hair divide,
Betwixt the west and north-west side.”***

His understanding is, in his own opinion, infinite. And he makes very boastful pretensions to piety. Everybody says when they see him in his good frames in Chapel or elsewhere, “What a dear good man he is!” You follow him to business. He will not swear, but he will lie. He won’t out-and-out rob, but he will cheat. He will not curse a man to his face, but he will do worse—he will speak ill of him behind his back. You watch him! He, if he could find a drunkard in the street, would upbraid him and talk to him so proudly against the sin of intoxication—but he himself very seldom knows his own way upstairs to bed. Only that is in a quiet way—therefore nobody sees it—and he is thought to be a very reputable member of society.

Don’t you know any such people? I hope you do not. But I have met with them. There is a great stock of them still living—men that make grand professions and their lives are as much opposed to their professions, as Hell is opposed to Heaven. Now what does the world say of religion when they see these people? They say at once, “Well, if this is religion, we had better have none of it.” Says the businessman, “I could not do what So-and-So does, it is true, I could sing out of his hymn book, but I could not keep his cash book.”

We have known many men say, “I could not make so long a prayer as So-and-So and could not make out my invoices in the dishonest way he does.” We have met with worldly men who are far more honest as tradesman and professional men than persons who make a profession of religion. And we have known on the other hand, men who have made the greatest profession, indulging in all kinds of evil. Horrible shall be that man’s fate, who thus ruins other men’s souls by bringing up a bad report of the land. But, oh, I beseech you, my Hearers, if any of you have seen such professors, let the righteous stand out today, like Joshua and Caleb of old. Let the Church stand before you and rend its garments while it entreats you not to believe the lying and slanderous reports of such men.

For, indeed, religion is holy. As Christ is holy, even so do His people desire to be holy. And the grace of God which brings salvation is pure and peaceful. It produces in men things that are holy and of good report, things that magnify God and that make human nature appear glorious. But scarcely do I need to tell you that in your own circle while you have met with hypocrites, you have met with men whom you could not doubt. Yes, you have sometimes seen even in your evil company, a man who was like an angel. You have felt as Satan did when Abdiel, the faithful among the faithless, stood forth and would not turn a rebel to his God—

***“Abashed the devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness was.”***

I beseech you therefore, do not believe the ill report of the hypocrite and the unholy man.

But there is a third class of professors who bring up a bad report of the land. And this I am afraid will affect us all in some measure—we must all plead guilty to it. The Christian man, although he endeavors uniformly to walk according to the Law of Christ, finds still another law in his members warring against the law of his mind and consequently there are times when his witness is not consistent. Sometimes this witness is, “The Gospel is holy” for he is holy himself. But, alas with the very best of men, there are times when our witness contradicts our faith. When you see an angry Christian—and such a thing may be seen—and when you meet with a Christian who is proud and such a thing has been known—when you catch a Christian overtaken in a fault, as you may sometimes do—then his testimony is not consistent. He contradicts then what he has at other times declared by his acts.

And here, I say again, I fear that all of us must plead guilty. We have sometimes by our actions put in words which seem to conflict with the general testimony of our lives. Oh, my Friends, do not believe all that you see in us and if sometimes you see a Christian man betrayed into a hasty or a wrong expression—do not blame it on our religion—blame it on our poor fallen humanity. If sometimes you should catch us overtaken by a fault, and we trust it shall be rarely enough you do see us, abuse *us*, but do not abuse our Master! Say what you will concerning *us*, but do not, we beseech you, blame it on our *religion*—for saints are sinners still and the most holy men have still to pray—“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.”

But we do beseech you, when the madness of sin deludes us, do not believe the maundering of our madness, but have regard to the general testimony of our lives and that, we trust, you will find to be consistent with the Gospel of Christ. *I* could bear to be abused, but I should not like to have the Master abused. I would rather have it believed that I was not a Christian at all than allow anyone to say that any faults I have were caused by my religion. No, Christ is holy. The Gospel is pure and spotless. If at any time we seem to contradict that witness, do not believe us, I beseech you, but look into the matter for yourselves—for indeed it is a good land—a land which flows with milk and honey.

III. Thus I have brought forth the evil spies who bring up a bad report. And now, thank God, we have some GOOD SPIES, too. But we will let them speak. Come Joshua and Caleb, we want your testimony. Though you are dead and gone, you have left children behind you. And they, still grieved as you were at the evil report, rend their clothes—and they boldly stand to it that the land they have passed through is an exceeding good land.

One of the best spies I have ever met with is an *aged Christian*. I remember to have heard him stand up and tell what he thought of religion. He was a blind old man, who for twenty years had not seen the light of the sun. His gray locks hung from his brow and floated over his shoulders. He stood up at the table of the Lord and thus addressed us—“Brothers and Sisters, I shall soon be taken from you. In a few more months I shall gather up my feet upon my bed and sleep with my fathers. I have not the

tongue of the learned nor the mind of the eloquent but I desire before I go, to bear one public testimony to my God.

“Fifty and six years have I served Him and I have never found Him once unfaithful. I can say ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of my life and not one good thing has failed of all the Lord God has promised.’ ” And there stood that old man, tottering into his tomb, deprived of the light of Heaven naturally and yet having the light of Heaven in a better sense shining into his soul. And though he could not look upon us, yet did he turn himself and seemed to say, “Young people, trust God in early life, for I have not to regret that I sought Him too soon. I have only to mourn that so many of my years ran to waste.”

There is nothing that more tends to strengthen the faith of the young Believer than to hear the veteran Christian, covered with scars from the battle testifying that the service of his Master is a happy service and that if he could have served any other master he would not have done so, for His service was pleasant and His wages everlasting joy.

Take the testimony of the *sufferer*—behold that fragile form of delicate transparent beauty, whose light-blue eye and hectic cheek are lit by the fires of decline—all droopingly she lies. As a dew-laden lily, her flaxen tresses, rashly luxuriant, damp with unhealthy moisture. I have seen her when her eyes were sunk, when she could scarce be lifted out of the bed, when the frame was wearied of life. And I have seen her quite complacent, as she took her Bible from beneath her pillow and read, “Yes, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.”

I have sat down and spoken to her and have said to her, “Well, you have been in this sad place these many months. Do you find religion cheers you now?” “Oh, Sir,” she has said, “what could I do without it? I cannot leave this bed. But it has been to me a couch of joy, where Christ has spread a banquet. He has made my bed in all my sickness. He has put His left hand under my head and His right hand has embraced me. He has given me joy in my sorrows and has prepared me to face death with a calm and unflinching countenance.” Such a case bears witness to the Master. Like that of the gray-headed saint, it is an excellent report of this good land.

But we need not look to sick beds and to gray heads for the only witness. We know a Christian merchant. He is immersed in the cares of this life and yet he always finds time to prepare for a world that is to come. He has as much business as any man in the city and yet family prayer is never neglected. And perhaps you find him serving the office of civic magistrate—as was the case in one instance—and yet even on the day of banquet, he rises from his chair, in order that family worship may still be kept up in his house.

He is known in business as one who is willing to help little tradesmen. He likes good securities, as other people do. But he will sometimes run a risk to help a rising man. When you go to him you find him a sharp man of business, he is not to be taken in. But at the same time you will find

him a man that will not take you in. You may trust him. Whatever the transaction may be, you have no need to look over the invoice if he has had anything to do with it. There will be no mistake there—or if there be a mistake, it will be palpably a mistake and immediately confessed with the greatest possible sorrow—for he is upright in his dealings.

There has come sometimes in his case an unhappy crisis and when houses were tumbling and bankrupts were as common as leaves upon the trees he was not disturbed and distracted like other men, for his confidence was in his God and his trust in the God of Jacob. He had some anxiety, but he had more faith. And when his prosperity returned to him, he dedicated part of his substance unto the Lord. Not in a noisy way, so that it might appear in a report that So-and-So gave a hundred a year to a society—but he gave five hundred and nobody knew of it.

Men said of him in the Exchange and in the Market, “If there is a Christian, it is that man.” When they saw him, they said, “There is something in religion. We have watched him. We have never found him trip or turn aside. We have always found him the same upright character, fearing his God and fearing no man.” Such a man brings up a good report of the land. I may talk here Sunday after Sunday and every day in the week elsewhere, but I cannot preach in so forcible a way as you can, who by your actions are preaching to the world. Ah, and I cannot preach so well as those who are servants, who by their holy action in the midst of trial and difficulty have an opportunity to show what grace can do in the heart. Those are good spies who bring up a good report of the land.

And, my Sisters, let me say a word to you. It is possible for you, too, to bring up a good report. Not by neglecting your households in order to attend to visiting societies. Let visiting societies be attended to. God be thanked for them, for they are among the best institutions of our times. But I have known some people who would have been a great deal better employed in scrubbing their dressers and seeing their servants wash up the tea things, than going out visiting the sick from house to house. For their house has run to riot and their families have been quite out of order, because the wife, like a foolish woman—was plucking everything down at home—while trying to do good abroad.

We have known many true Sisters of mercy, who are really blessed among women and God shall bless them abundantly. We have known others who very seldom go out visiting the sick, but they are at home ordering their household. We have known an ungodly husband converted by a godly wife. I remember to have heard an instance of a man who had a wife of so excellent a disposition, that though he was a worldly man, he used to boast in his company that he had got the best wife on earth. Said he, “You cannot put her into a passion. I go home late at night, in all sorts of trim, but she always receives me meekly and I feel ashamed of myself every time I see her, for her holiness rebukes me. You may put her to any test you like, you will find her the best of women.”

“Well,” said they, “let us all go to supper with you tonight.” They did—in they rushed. She did not hint there was nothing in the house, though there was very little. But she and her maid set to work with all their

might, although it was past twelve o'clock and very soon had supper and she waited on them with all the grace of a duchess, seeming as glad to see them as if they were her friends and had come at the most opportune time. And they began to tell how it was they had come and asked her how it was she could bear it so patiently. She said, "God has given me a husband. I was not converted before I was married, but ever since I was converted, my first endeavor has been to bring my husband to know Jesus. and I am sure," said she, "he will never be brought to do so except by kindness."

Her husband, through these words, after the company had gone, confessed how wrong he had acted to her. His heart was touched—next Sabbath he went to the House of God with her and they became a happy couple, rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. She was a good spy and brought a good report of the land. I doubt not there are many women whose names will never be heard of on earth who will receive the Master's commendation at last, "She has done what she could." And when you have done what you can for Christ, by holy, patient, quiet meekness, you are good spies. You have brought a good report of the land.

And you servants, you can do the same. A religious servant girl ought to be the best servant anywhere. A religious shoebblack ought to black shoes better than anybody else. If there is a religious man who is set to clean knives, he ought to take care that he does not take the edge off. You know of the slaves' piety in America. It is such that a religious slave is worth many dollars more than another and always sells well. The masters like them to get religious because they are the men that do not rebel, but submit meekly and patiently. And the poor men, who, finding themselves slaves—much as they may hate their position—yet by God's grace they regard One to be their master who is higher than all and "not with eye service as men-pleasers, but with singleness of heart," they endeavor to serve God.

IV. And now I want to press with all my might upon every professing Christian here THE GREAT NECESSITY OF BRINGING OUT A UNIFORMLY GOOD TESTIMONY CONCERNING RELIGION. Brethren, I feel persuaded if Christ were here today, there are some of us who love Him so well that we would turn our own cheek to the smiters, rather than He should be smitten. One of Napoleon's officers loved him so well that when a cannon ball was likely to smite the emperor, he threw himself in the way, in order that he might die as a sacrifice for his master. Oh Christian, you would do the same, I think, If Christ were here you would run between Him and insult, yes, between Him and death.

Well, then, I am sure you would not wantonly expose Christ. But remember, every unguarded word you use, every inconsistent act, puts a slur on Christ. The world, you know, does not find fault with *you*—they lay it all to your Master. If you make a slip tomorrow they will not say, "That is John Smith's human nature." They will say, "That is John Smith's religion." They know better, but they will be sure to say it. They will be sure they put all the mischief at the door of Christ. Now, if you could bear the blame yourself you might bear it manfully. But do not al-

low Christ to bear the blame—do not suffer His escutcheon to be tarnished—do not permit His banner to be trampled in the dust.

Then there is another consideration. You must remember, if you do wrong the world will be quite sure to notice you. The world carries two bags—in the bag at the back they put all the Christian's virtues—in the bag in front they put all our mistakes and sins. They never think of looking at the virtues of holy men. All the courage of martyrs and all the fidelity of confessors and all the holiness of saints, is nothing to them. But our iniquities are ever before them. Please remember, that wherever you are as a Christian, the eyes of the world are upon you. The Argus eyes of an evil generation follow you everywhere. If a Church is blind, the world is not.

It is a common Proverb, "As sound asleep as a Church," and a very true one, for most Churches are sound asleep. But it would be a great falsehood if anyone were to say, "As sound asleep as the world," for the world is never asleep. Sleeping is left to the Church. And remember, too, that the world always wears magnifying glasses to look at Christians' faults. If a man trips who makes no profession, oh, it is nothing—you never hear of it. Let a minister do it—let a Christian professor do it—and then comes out the magnifying glass. It is nothing in anybody else, but it is a great sin in us.

There are two codes of morality in the world and it is very right there should be. If we make profession to be God's children and to have God's grace in our hearts, it is no more wrong of the world to expect more of us than of others than it is for a gardener to expect his plants to grow more quickly on a hot-bed and under a glass-shade than he would out of doors in the cold frost. If we have more privileges and more culture and make more profession, we ought to live up to them and the world is quite right in expecting us to do so.

There is another consideration I must offer you before I have done. Remember, if you do not bring a good testimony for your religion, an evil testimony will defeat a great deal of good. All the saints in a Church but one may be faithful to Christ and the world will not honor the Church for it. But let one professor in that Church turn aside to sin and you will hear of it for many a day. It is even so in nature. Take the days in the year. The sun rises and shines upon us and we do not note it. All things continue as they were—the stars smile sweetly by night and the day and night roll on in quiet. But there comes one day, a day of thunder and lightning, a day of earthquake and storm and it is put on the rolls of our history that such-and-such a remarkable day occurred at such-and-such a time.

Why not note the good days? But so it is. The world will only note the *evil*. You may cross through a country and you will notice a hundred fair rivers, like silver streams threaded with emeralds running through the pastures. Who hears the sound of their waters, as they flow gently to the sea? But there is one precipitous rock and a waterfall dashes there. You may hear that half a mile off. We never hear anything about the river St. Lawrence, in all its lengths and breadths, it is only the falls of Niagara that we hear of. And so the Christian may flow on in a steady course of

life, unseen, unheard—but you are sure to hear of him if he makes a fall. Be watchful, therefore—your Master comes. Be watchful—the enemy is at hand even now. O may the Holy Spirit sanctify you wholly, that you may abound in every good work, to the glory of God!

As for you who fear not God, remember, if Christians do sin, that shall not be an excuse for you. Suppose a man you are dealing with says to you, “I cheated you, but I did not make any profession of being honest.” You would tell him he was a confirmed rogue. Or if a man were taken before a magistrate and were to say, “You need not put me in a prison, I never made a profession of being anything but a thief. I never said I would not break into people’s chambers and get at their plate baskets!” The magistrate would say, “You speak honestly, but you are by your own confession a great rogue and I will transport you for life and you shall never have a ticket of leave.”

It will be of no use for you at the Last Day, to say that you never made a profession of wanting to go to Heaven or to escape Hell, of leaving sin and trusting in Christ. If you never made a profession of serving God, you may rest assured He will have short work with you. “You have made no profession. O there is no judgment required. Depart! You did make no profession of loving Me and now you shall have no possession of My glory. Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire.” May the Lord deliver us from that, for Jesus’ sake.

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THE HIGH PRIEST STANDING BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING NO. 341

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 21, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STAND.**

***“And Aaron took as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation: and behold, the plague was begun among the people. And he put in incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.”
Numbers 16:47, 48.***

WE have attentively read the passage which contains the account of this transaction. The authority of Moses and Aaron had been disputed by an ambitious man belonging to an elder branch of the family of Levi. He had craftily joined with himself certain factious spirits of the tribe of Reuben, who themselves also sought to attain to power by their supposed rights through Reuben the first-born. By a singular judgment from Heaven God had proven that rebellion against Moses was a mortal sin. He had bid the earth open its mouth and swallow up all the traitors and both Levites and Reubenites had disappeared, covered in a living grave.

One would have imagined that from this time the murmurings of the children of Israel would have ceased. Or at least should they have been daring enough to even gather in a little mutinous mob, their traitorous spirit never would have come to so great a height as to develop itself in the whole body openly before the Lord's tabernacle. Yet so it was. On the very morrow after that solemn transaction, the whole of the people of Israel gathered themselves together and with unholy clamors surrounded Moses and Aaron, charging them with having put to death the people of the Lord.

Doubtless they hinged this accusation upon the fact that whenever Moses prayed, God heard him. Then would they say, “Had he prayed upon this occasion the people would not have been destroyed, the earth would not have opened her mouth and they would not have been swallowed up.” They would thus attempt to prove the charge which they brought against these two great men of God.

Can you picture the scene now in your mind's eye? There is the infuriated mass of people. The spectacle of such a crowd as I see before me in this hall is overpowering—and were all this multitude in tumult against two men, the two might have sufficient cause for trembling. But this would be but as a grain of sand compared with that inconceivable number who were then gathered. A large part of those three millions would come up in one vast tumultuous host. Whatever was proposed by any leader of the mob would no doubt have instantly been carried into

effect and had it not been for the awful majesty which surrounded the person of Moses, no doubt they would have torn him to pieces on the spot.

But just as they are rushing up like the waves of the sea, the cloudy pillar which hung above the tabernacle descends and envelopes in its fold, as with a protecting Baptism, the whole of the sacred place. Then in the center of this cloud there blazed out that marvelous light called the Shekinah, which was the indication of the presence of Him who cannot be seen, but whose glory may be manifest. The people stand back a little. Moses and Aaron fall upon their faces in prayer. They beg of God that He would spare the people, for they have heard a voice coming out of the excellent glory, saying, "Get you up from this people, that I may destroy them in a moment."

This time God's blow goes forth with His word, for the destroying angel begins to mow down the outer ranks of the vast tumultuous host. There they fall one upon another. Moses with his undimmed vision, looking over the heads of the people, can see them begin to fall beneath the scythe of death. "Up,"

says Moses, "up and take with you your censer. Snatch fire from off the holy altar and run among the people, for the plague has begun." Aaron, a man of a hundred years of age, fills his censor, runs along as if he were a youth and begins to swing it towards Heaven with holy energy, feeling that in his hand was the life of the people.

And when the incense is accepted in Heaven, death stops in his work. On this side are heaps upon heaps of corpses slain by God's avenging angel and there stand the crowd of living people, living only because of Aaron's intercession. They are living simply because he had waved that censor and burned that incense for them—otherwise, had the angel smitten them all, they would all have lain together as the leaves of the forest lie in autumn—dead and sear.

I think you can now, in your imaginations, picture the scene. I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of men who, "like sheep have gone astray and have turned every one to his own way." We shall look at Aaron this morning in a five-fold character. The whole scene is typical of Christ. And Aaron, as he appears before us in each character is a most magnificent picture of the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us look at Aaron as the LOVER of the people. You know who it is to whom we give that name, "Lover of my Soul." You will be able to see in Aaron, the lover of Israel, Jesus the lover of His people. Aaron deserves to be very highly praised for his patriotic affection for a people who were the most rebellious and stiff-necked that ever grieved the heart of a good man. You must remember that in this case he was the grieved party. The clamor was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who intercede and saved the people. They were the offended ones, yet were they the saving ones.

Aaron had a special part in the matter, for no doubt the conflict of Korah especially, was against the priesthood, which belonged exclusively to Aaron, than against the prophetic dispensation which God had granted to Moses. Aaron must have felt when he saw Korah there and the

two hundred and fifty men, all of them with their censors, that the plot was against *him*—that they wished to strip from him his miter—to take from him his embroidered vest, and the glittering stones that shone upon his breast. He felt they wished to reduce him to the position of a common Levite and take to themselves his office and his dignity.

Yet, forgetting himself, he does not say, “Let them die. I will wait awhile till they have been sufficiently smitten.” But the old man with generous love hastened into the midst of the people, though he was himself the grieved person. Is not this the very picture of our sweet Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonored Him? Was He not the Eternal God and did not sin therefore conspire against Him as well as against the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit? Was He not, I say, the One against whom the nations of the earth stood up and said, “Let us break His bands asunder and cast His cords from us”?

Yet He, our Jesus, laying aside all thought of avenging Himself, becomes the Savior of His people—

***“Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.”***

Oh, generous Christ, forgetting the offenses which we have committed against You and making atonement by Your own blood for sins which were perpetrated against Your own glory!

Well, you note again that Aaron, in thus coming forward as the deliverer and lover of His people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood. They were desiring to put him and Moses to death, and yet in spite of all thoughts of danger, he snatches up his censer and runs into their midst with a Divine enthusiasm in his heart. He might have stood back and said, “No, they will slay me if I go into their ranks—furious as they are, they will charge this new death upon me and lay me low.”

But he never considers it. Into the midst of the crowd he boldly springs. Most blessed Jesus, You might not only think thus, but, indeed, You did feel it to be true. You did come unto Your own and Your own received You not. You did come into the world to save a race that hated You and oh, how they proved their hatred to You, for they did spit upon Your cheeks. They did cast calumny and slander upon Your Person. They did take the heir and say, “Come, let us kill Him that the inheritance may be ours.”

Jesus, You were willing to die a martyr, that You might be made a sacrifice for those by whom Your blood was spilt. Jesus transcends Aaron—Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people—Jesus Christ did actually meet it. And yet there he stood even in the hour of death, waving his censer, staying the plague and dividing the living from the dead.

Again, you will see the love and kindness of Aaron, if you look closer. Aaron might have said, “But the Lord will surely destroy me, also, with the people. If I go where the shafts of death are flying they will reach me.” He never thinks of it. He exposes his own person in the very forefront of the Destroying One. There comes the Angel of Death, smiting all before him and here stands Aaron in his very path, as much as to say, “Get back! Get

back! I will wave my incense in your face—destroyer of men, you can not pass the censor of God's high priest."

Oh, glorious High Priest of our profession, You might not only have feared this which Aaron might have dreaded, but You did actually endure the plague of God, for when You did come among the people to save them from Jehovah's wrath, Jehovah's wrath fell upon You. You were forsaken of Your Father. The plague which Jesus kept from us slew Him, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The sheep escaped, but, "His life and blood the Shepherd pays, a ransom for the flock."

Oh, You lover of Your Church, immortal honors be unto You! Aaron deserves to be beloved by the tribes of Israel, because he stood in the gap and exposed himself for their sins. But You, most mighty Savior, You shall have eternal songs, because, forgetful of Yourself, You did bleed and die, that man might be saved!

I would again, for one moment, draw your attention to that other thought which I have already hinted at, namely, that Aaron as a lover of the people of Israel deserves much commendation, from the fact that it is expressly said, he *ran into* the host. I am not just now sure about Aaron's age, but being older than Moses, who must have been at this time about ninety years of age, Aaron must have been more than a hundred and probably, a hundred and twenty, or more. It is no little thing to say that such a man, clad no doubt, in his priestly robes, ran—and that for a people who had never shown any activity to do him service, but much zeal in opposing his authority.

That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the Divine impulse of love that was within. Ah, and was it not so with Christ? Did He not hasten to be our Savior? Were not His delights with the sons of men? Did He not often say, "I have a Baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished"? His dying for us was not a thing which He dreaded. "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover." He had panted for the moment when He should redeem His people.

He had looked forward through eternity for that hour when He should glorify His Father and His Father might glorify Him. He came voluntarily bound by no constraint, except His own Covenant engagements and He cheerfully and joyfully laid down His life—a life which no man could take from Him—but which He laid down of Himself. While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ. While I write Aaron down as the lover of his race, I write down Jesus Christ as being the best of lovers—the Friend that sticks closer than a brother.

II. But I now pass on to take a second view of Aaron as he stands in another character. Let us now view Aaron as THE GREAT PROPITIATOR.

Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin and it is God's Law that His wrath shall never stay unless a propitiation is offered. The incense which Aaron carried in his hand was the propitiation before God, from the fact that God saw in that perfume the type of that richer offering which our Great High Priest is this very day offering before the Throne.

Aaron as the propitiator is to be looked at first, as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. He did not come empty-handed. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censor, he must fill it with the ordained incense, made with the ordained materials—and then he must light it with the sacred fire from off the altar and with that alone. With the censer in his hand, he is safe—without it Aaron might have died as well as the rest of the people. The qualification of Aaron partly lay in the fact that he *had the censer* and that that censer was full of sweet odors which were acceptable to God.

Behold, then, Christ Jesus as the propitiator for His people. He stands this day before God with His censor smoking up towards Heaven. Behold the Great High Priest! See Him this day with His pierced hands and head that once was crowned with thorns. Mark how the marvelous smoke of His merits goes up forever and ever before the eternal Throne. It is He, it is He, alone, who puts away the sins of His people. His incense, as we know, consists, first of all, of His positive obedience to the Divine Law. He kept His Father's commands. He did everything He should have done. He kept to the full the whole Law of God and made it honorable.

Then mixed with this is His blood—an equally rich and precious ingredient. That bloody sweat—the blood from His head, pierced with the crown of thorns. The blood of His hands as they were nailed to the tree. The blood of His feet as they were fixed to the wood. And the blood of His very heart—richest of them all—all mixed together with His merits—these make up the incense—an incense incomparable—an incense peerless and surpassing all others.

Not all the odors that ever rose from tabernacle or temple could for a moment stand in rivalry with these. The blood, alone, speaks better things than that of Abel—and if Abel's blood prevailed to bring vengeance—how much more shall the blood of Christ prevail to bring down pardon and mercy! Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement, which are as sweet frankincense before the Father's face.

Besides that, it was not enough for Aaron to have the proper incense. Korah might have that, too, and he might have the censor also. That would not suffice—he must be the ordained priest. For mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others—their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the Propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained one—called of God as was Aaron. Settled in eternity as being the predestinated Propitiation for sin, He came into the world as an ordained Priest of God, receiving His ordination not from man, neither by man, but like Melchisedek, the priest of the Most High God, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life—He is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.

Stand back, sons of Korah, all of you who call yourselves priests. I can scarce imagine that any man in this world who takes to himself the title of "priest," except he take it in the sense in which all God's people are priests—I cannot imagine that a priest can enter Heaven. I would not say a thing too stern or too severe. But I do most thoroughly believe that an assumption of the "office of priest" is so base an usurpation of the priestly

office of Christ, that I could as well conceive of a man being saved who called himself God, as conceive of a man being saved who called himself a “priest.”

If he really means what he says, he has so trenched upon the priestly prerogative of Christ, that it seems to me he has touched the very crown jewels and is guilty of a blasphemy, which, unless it be repented of, shall surely bring damnation on his head. Shake your garments, you ministers of Christ, from all priestly assumption. Come out from among them—touch not the unclean thing. There are no “priests” now specially to minister among men. Jesus Christ—and He only—is the Priest of His Church and He has made all of us priests and kings unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever.

If I should have any person here so weak as to depend for his salvation upon the offerings of another man, I bid him to forego his deception. I care not who your “priests” may be. He may belong to the Anglican or to the Romish Church. Yes, and to any Church under Heaven. If he claims to be anything of a priest more than you can claim yourself—away with him! He imposes upon you. He speaks to you that which God abhors and that which the Church of Christ should abhor and would detest, were she truly alive to her Master’s glory. None but Jesus, none but Jesus. All other priests and offerings we disdain. Cast dirt upon their garments—they are not—and they cannot be priests. They usurp the special dignity of Jesus.

But let us note once more, in considering Aaron as the great propitiator, that we must look upon him as being ready for his work. He was ready with his incense and ran to the work at the moment the plague broke out. We do not find that he had need to go and put on his priestly garments. We do not find that he had to prepare for performing the propitiatory work—he went then and there as soon as the plague broke out. The people were ready to perish and he was ready to save.

Oh, my Hearer, listen to this—Jesus Christ stands ready to save you now! There is no need of preparation. He has slain the victim. He has offered the sacrifice. He has filled the censor. He has put to it the glowing coals. His breastplate is on His breast. His miter is on His head. He is ready to save you now. Trust Him and you shall not find need for delay. Rely upon Him and you shall not find that He has to go a day’s journey to save you. “He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

You who know not Christ, hear this! You are lost and ruined by the Fall. Wrath is gone out from God against you. That wrath must consume you to the lowest Hell, unless someone can propitiate God on your behalf. You cannot do it. No man can do it. No prayers of Yours. No sacraments—no—though you could sweat a bloody sweat, it would not avail. But Christ is able to make propitiation. He can do it and He alone. He can stand between you and God and turn away Jehovah’s wrath and He can put into your heart a sense of His love. Oh, I pray you, trust Him, trust Him!

You may not be ready for Him. But He is always ready to save and, indeed, I must correct myself in that last sentence, you ARE ready for Him. If you are ever so vile and ever so ruined by your sin, there needs no preparation and no readiness. It was not the *merit* of the people that saved

them, nor any preparation on their part. It was the preparedness of the High Priest that saved them. He is prepared. He stands on the behalf of those who believe on Him.

Would that you would now believe on Him and trust your soul in His hands. And oh, believe me, your sins which are many shall be all forgiven. The plague shall be stayed, nor shall God's wrath go out against you, but you shall be saved.

III. Let me now view Aaron as THE INTERPOSER.

Let me explain what I mean. As the old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moves along a field of corn." There it came. It began in the extremity. The faces of men grew pale and swiftly on, on, it came and in vast heaps they fell till some fourteen thousand had been destroyed. Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague. It came on, cutting down all before it and there stood Aaron the interposer with arms outstretched and censor swinging towards Heaven, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people.

"If there are darts that must fly," he seemed to say, "let them pierce me. Or let the incense shield both me and the people. Death," says he, "are you coming on your pale horse? I arrest you, I throw back your steed upon his haunches. Are you coming, you skeleton king? With my censor in my hand I stand before you. You must march over my body—you must empty my censer. You must destroy God's High Priest, before you can destroy this people."

Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. The Law was about to smite us—the whole human race must be destroyed. Christ stands in the forefront of the battle. "The stripes must fall on Me," he cries. "The arrows shall find a target in My breast. On Me, Jehovah, let Your vengeance fall." And He receives that vengeance and afterwards, springing up from the grave, He waves the censor full of the merit of His blood and bids this wrath and fury stand back.

On which side are you today, Sinner? Is God angry with you, Sinner? Are your sins unforgiven? Say, are you unpardoned? Are you abiding still an heir of wrath and an inheritor of death? Ah, then would that you were on the other side—the side of Christ. If you do believe on Christ, then let me ask you, do you know that you are completely saved? No wrath can ever reach you, no spiritual death can ever destroy you, no Hell can ever consume you, and why? What is your guard, what is your protection?

I see the tears, glistening in your eyes as you say, "There is nothing between me and Hell save Christ. There is nothing between me and Jehovah's wrath save Christ. There is nothing between me and instant destruction save Christ. But He is enough. He with the censor in His hand—God's great ordained Priest—He is enough!" Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if you have put between you and God *things*, such as Baptisms and communions, fasting, prayers, tears and vows, Jehovah shall break through your refuges as the fire devours the stubble.

But if, my Soul, CHRIST stands between you and Jehovah, Jehovah *cannot* smite you. His thunderbolt must first pierce through the Divine Redeemer before it can reach you and that can never be. My dear Hearers,

do you perceive this great Truth of God, that there is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God? And oh, I put again the personal enquiry to you—are you sheltered behind Christ? Sinner, are you standing today beneath the Cross? Is that your shelter? Is the purple robe of Jesus' atonement covered over you?

Are you like the dove which hides in the clefts of the rock? Have you hidden in the wounds of Christ? Say, have you crept into His side and do you feel that He must be your shelter till the tempest is past? Oh, be of good cheer! He for whom Christ is the intercessor is a rescued man. Oh, Soul, if you are not in Christ, what will you do when the destroying angel comes? Careless Sinner, what will become of you when death arrests you? Where will you be when the judgment trumpet rings in your ears and sounds an alarm that shall wake the dead? Sleepy Sinner, sleeping today under God's Word, will you sleep then, when Jehovah's thunders are let loose and all His lightning set the heavens in a blaze?

I know where you shall seek a shelter! You shall seek it where you cannot find it. You shall bid the rocks fall upon you and ask the mountains to hide you. But their stony hearts shall know of no compassion—their hearts of adamant shall yield you no pity—and you shall stand exposed to the blast of vengeance and the shower of the hot hail of God's fury. Nothing shall protect you—and as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed from off the face of the earth, so must you be destroyed—and that forever and ever—because you believed not on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

IV. But we cannot tarry longer here. We must again pass to another point. We have viewed Aaron in three characters—as the lover, the propitiator and the intercessor. Now, fourthly, let me view him as THE SAVIOR.

It was Aaron, Aaron's censor, that saved the lives of that great multitude. If he had not prayed, the plague had stayed and the Lord would have consumed the whole company in a moment. As it was, you perceive there were some fourteen thousand and seven hundred that died before the Lord. The plague had begun its dreadful work and only Aaron could stay it.

And now I want you to notice with regard to Aaron, that Aaron and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Savior. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron to wave his censor. The people could not demand it of him. Had they not brought a false accusation against him? And yet he saves them. It must have been love and nothing but love. Say, was there anything in the voices of that infuriated multitude which could have moved Aaron to stay the plague from before them? Nothing! Nothing in their character! Nothing in their looks! Nothing in their treatment of God's High Priest! And yet he graciously stands in the breach and saves them from the devouring judgment of God!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters—if Christ has saved us, He is a gracious Savior, indeed. Often as we think of the fact that we are saved, the tears fall down our cheeks, for we never can tell why Jesus has saved us—

***“What was there in you that could merit esteem!
Or give the Creator delight?”***

***'Twas 'Even so, Father! You ever must sing
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'***

There is no difference between the glorified in Heaven and the doomed in Hell, except the difference that God made of His own Sovereign Grace.

Whatever difference there may be between Saul the Apostle and Elymas the sorcerer has been made by infinite sovereignty and undeserved love. Paul might still have remained Saul of Tarsus and might have become a damned fiend in the bottomless pit, had it not been for free Sovereign Grace which came out to snatch him as a brand from the burning. Oh, Sinner, you say, "There is no reason in me why God should save me," but there is no reason in *any* man. You have no good points, nor has any man. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God. We are all such sinners, that Hell is our deserved portion. And if any of us is saved from going down into the pit, it is God's undeserved sovereign bounty that does it and not any merits of ours. Jesus Christ is a most gracious Savior.

And then again, Aaron was an unaided Savior. Even Moses did not come with Aaron to help him. He stood alone in the gap with that censor—that one solitary stream of smoke dividing between the living and the dead. Why did not the princes of Israel come with him? Alas, they could have done nothing, they must have died themselves. Why did not all the Levites come with him? They must have been smitten if they had dared to stand in the place of God's High Priest. He stands alone, alone, ALONE! And herein was he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trod the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Me."

Do not think, then, that when Christ prevails with God, it is because of any of your prayers, or tears, or good works. He never puts your tears and prayers into His censor. They would mar the incense. There is nothing but His own prayers and His own tears and His own merits there. Do not think that you are saved because of anything that *you* have ever done or can ever do for Christ. We may preach and we may be made in God's hand the spiritual fathers of thousands of souls, but our preaching does in no way help to turn away the wrath of God from us.

Christ does it all, entirely and alone, and no man must dare to stand as His helper. Sinner, do you hear this? You are saying, "I cannot do this or that." He asks you not to do anything. You say, "I have no merits." Man, He does not want any—if you try to help Christ you will be lost. But if you will leave Christ to do it all, you shall be saved. Come now, the very plan of salvation is this—to take Christ to be your All in All. He will never be a part-Savior. He never came to *patch* our ragged garments. He will give us a new robe, but he will never mend the old one.

He did not come to *help* build the palace of God—He will quarry every stone and lay it on its fellow, He will have no sound of hammer, or help in that great work. Oh, that this voice could ring through the world while I proclaim again those words, the death blow of all Popery, legality and carnal merit, "Jesus only, JESUS ONLY!" "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Nor does He need a helper; "He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him."

He was, then, you will perceive, a gracious Savior and an unaided one. And, once more, Aaron, as a Savior, was all-sufficient. Death came up to the very feet of Aaron. There lay a dead man, there lay a mother, a child, a prince, a hewer of wood, a drawer of water—there they lay. There stood a strong man in his agony and implored that he might not die, but he fell backward a corpse. There stood up a prince of Israel and must he die? Yes, he must fall. All-devouring death, like a hungry lion, came howling onward, amidst the screams and shrieks of the people, but there he stood. That censer seemed to say, “Up to here shall you come, but no further.”

What a miracle that the censer should stop the reign of death! Up to this mark the waves of that shoreless sea are flowing. There men stand on the terra firma of life. Aaron stands and as God’s High Priest, with only that censer, he puts back grim death. The whole host of Israel, if they had been armed and had carried bows, could not have driven back the pestilence. No, all the hosts of armed men that ever stained the earth with blood could not have driven back God’s plagues. Death would have laughed at them, yes, he would have trod in among their ranks and cut them in pieces.

But Aaron alone is enough, fully sufficient and that through the burning of the incense. Oh, Sinner, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, able to save. You cannot save yourself, but He can save you. Oh, Sinner, all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. It matters not how base and vile you may have been, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Though the remembrance of your sins makes you blush to think what a wretch you have been—has your life been foul adultery? Has it been blasphemy, lying, hatred of God’s people and what not? I add to this another, if you will—lasciviousness, debauchery, murder—if all these crimes were there, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, would be able still to cleanse you from them all.

Though you had committed every crime in the catalogue of iniquity, sins which we cannot mention, yet, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow.” And you say, “How can I partake of this?” Simply by trusting Christ with your soul. “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” This was Christ’s commission to the Apostles, He bid them go forth and preach this great Truth and again I proclaim it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not must be damned.”

He that believes not shall be damned, be his sins ever so few—he that believes shall never be lost—though his sins may have been ever so many. Trust your soul with Christ and your sins are at once forgiven, at once blotted out.

V. And now I come to my last point and that is, Aaron as THE DIVIDER—the picture of Christ.

Aaron the anointed one stands here. On that side is death, on this side life. The boundary between life and death is that one man. Where his incense smokes the air is purified—where it smokes not the plague reigns with unmitigated fury. There are two sorts of people here this morning. We forget the distinction of rich and poor. We know it not here. There are

two sorts of people—we forego the distinction of the learned and unlearned—we care not for that here. There are two sorts here and these are the living and the dead, the pardoned and the unpardoned, the saved and the lost.

What divides the true Christian from the unbeliever? Some think it is that the Christian takes the Sacrament, the other not. That is no division—there are men who have gone to Hell with sacramental bread in their mouths. Others may imagine that Baptism makes the difference, and indeed, it is the *outward* token—the Baptismal pool is the means by which we show to the world that we are buried in Christ's grave—in type that we are dead to the world and buried in Christ. We rise up from it in testimony that we desire to live in newness of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He who is baptized does in that way cross the Rubicon, he draws the sword and throws away the scabbard, he is the baptized one and has a sign that can never be eradicated from him. He is dedicated through that Baptism to Christ, but it is but an *outward sign*—for many have there been who have been baptized with water—who not having the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, have afterwards been baptized in the fiery sufferings of eternal torment.

No! No! The one division, the one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is Christ. A man in Christ is a Christian. A man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. "He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, he that believes not is lost." Christ is the only divider between His people and the world. On which side, then, are you today, my Hearer? Come, let the question go individually to you. Young man, on which side are you? Are you Christ's friend and servant, or are you His enemy?

Old man, you with the gray head yonder, you have but a little while to live, on which side are you? Are you my Master's blood-bought one, or are you still a lost sheep? And you matron, you who are busied, perhaps, even now in your thoughts upon your children, think not of them for a moment—on which side are you? Have you believed, have you been born again, or are you still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? You that stand yonder, let the question penetrate your thick rank now, where are you? Can you take the name of Christ upon your lips and say, "Jesus, I am Yours and You are mine, Your blood and righteousness are my hope and trust"? If not, my Hearer, you are among the spiritually dead and you shall soon be among the damned unless Divine Grace prevent and change and renew you.

Please remember, Brothers and Sisters, that as Christ is the great Divider now, so will He be in the Day of Judgment. Do you ever think of that? He shall divide them the one from the other—as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. It is the Shepherd's Person that divides the sheep from the goats. He stands between them and in that last day of days for which all other days were made, Christ shall be the great Divider. There will be the righteous clad in white, in songs triumphant, glorified with Him. And there the lost, the unbelieving, the fearful, the abominable. What divides them from yon bright host? Nothing but the Person of the

Son of Man, on whom they look—and weep and mourn and wail because of Him.

That is the impenetrable barrier that shall shut out the damned from eternal bliss. The gate which may let you in now will be the fiery gate which shall shut you out hereafter. Christ is the door of Heaven—oh, dreadful day when that door shall be shut—when that door shall stand before you and prevent you entering into the felicity which you shall then long for, when you cannot enter into it.

Oh, on which side shall I be when all these transitory things are done away with—when the dead have risen from their graves, when the great congregation shall stand upon the land and upon the sea—when every valley and every mountain and every river and every sea, shall be crowded with multitudes standing in thick array? Oh, when He shall say, “Separate My people, thrust in the sickle, for the harvest of the world is ripe.” My Soul, where shall you be? Shall you be found among the lost?

Shall the dread trumpet send you down to Hell, while a voice that rends your ear, shall call after you, “Depart from Me, depart from Me, you workers of iniquity into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels”? Oh, grant that I may not be there, but among Your people may I stand. So may it be. May we be on the right hand of the Judge to all eternity and remember that forever and ever Christ will be the Divider. He shall stand between the lost and the saved. He shall interpose forever between the damned and the glorified.

Again I put it to you, give me your ears just for one moment while I speak. What do you say, Sirs—shall this congregation be rent in two? The hour is coming when our wills and wishes shall have no forge. God will divide the righteous from the wicked then, and Christ shall be the dread division. I say, are we prepared to be separated eternally? Husband, are you prepared to renounce today your wife forever? Are you prepared when the clammy sweat gathers on her brow to give her the last kiss and say, “Adieu, adieu, I shall never meet with you again”?

Child, son, daughter, are you ready to go home and sit down at the table of your mother and before you eat, say, “Mother, I now forswear to you once and for all, I am determined to be lost and as you are on the side of Christ, and I will never love Him, I will part with you forever”? Surely the ties of kinship make us long to meet in another world and do we wish to meet in Hell? Do you wish all of you to meet there—a grim company to lie in the midst of the flames? Will you abide in the devouring fire and dwell in everlasting burning?

No, your wishes are that you may meet in Heaven! But you cannot unless you meet in Christ! You cannot meet in Paradise unless you meet in Him. Oh that now the Grace of God were poured upon you, that you might come unto Jesus.

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THE CENSUS OF ISRAEL

NO. 2198

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar, the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the Priest, numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.”
Numbers 16:66.

WE have come to another census, an important stopping place in the march of a nation's history. This carries our thoughts back to the ancient Bible story connected with the chosen people of God. A census was taken of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness two years after they had left Egypt. It only numbered males who were over twenty—the men capable of active service in war. By thus taking a census of His people, the Lord showed that He valued each one of them. They were registered by their families and by their names, thus were they personally enrolled in the family book of the living God and He thus, in effect, said to each one of them, “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” By the registration of each man by name, he felt that he was not lost in the crowd, but was, by person and pedigree, acknowledged as one of those to whom the Lord had promised the land which flowed with milk and honey. There was good reason for taking the number of the people just as the nation was forming, so that in the wilderness they might be arranged, marshaled and disciplined for the conflict which lay before them. When commanded of God, because He saw that great ends would be served thereby—and when associated with *redemption*—a census was by no means a wrong or a dangerous national arrangement. David ordered the people to be numbered, but because his motive and his method were wrong, it brought a pestilence on the land but, in itself, the taking of a census was a wise and useful thing.

Thirty-eight years had passed away since the first numbering at Sinai and the people had come to the borders of the Promised Land, for they were in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. The time had come for another census. The wisdom which commanded the counting of Israel at the beginning of the wilderness journey also determined to count them at the end of it. This would show that He did not value them less than in former years. It would afford proof that His word of judgment had been fulfilled to them and, moreover, it would marshal them for the grand enterprise of conquering the land of Canaan! They were to go forth in their

armies to fight giant races and armies versed in war. They were to dislodge nations from their ancient strongholds and, with the sword, destroy guilty aboriginal races which God had condemned to destruction. And for this, their military strength needed numbering and ordering. Here was good reason for the census, which now, for the second or third time, was carefully carried out.

Our text is from the Book of Numbers and the book well answers to its title, for it continually deals with numbers and numberings. The numbering on this occasion was not of the women and children or the infirm, for the order ran thus, "Take you the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel." If the numbers of our Churches were taken in this fashion, would they not sadly shrink? We have many sick among us that need to be carried about, nursed and doctored. Half the strength of the Church goes in ambulance service towards the weak and wounded. Another diminution of power is occasioned by the vast numbers of undeveloped Believers, to whom the Apostle would have said, "When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again what are the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They should have become men, but they remain babes in Grace! They are sadly slow in reaching the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. How many are quite unable to bear arms against the foe, for they need to be, themselves, guarded from the enemy! To revise the Church rolls so as to leave none but vigorous soldiers on the muster roll would make us break our hearts over our statistics. May the Lord send us, for this evil, health and cure!

When the second census was taken, it was found that the people were nearly of the same number as at the first. Had it not been for the punishment so justly inflicted upon them, they must have largely increased. But now they had somewhat diminished. They were a rapidly increasing people when they were in Egypt—the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied! The family of Jacob increased at a marvelous rate from the time of the going down into Egypt to the time of leaving that land. This was changed during the 40 years of the wilderness, for the whole of the grown men who came out of bondage were judged unfit to enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. And these, dying away rapidly, the people scarcely maintained their number. It is of *God* to multiply a nation, or a Church. We may not expect any advance in our numbers if we grieve the Spirit of God and if, by our unbelief, we drive Him to declare that we shall not prosper. Israel's growth ceased for 40 years—may it never be so with us as a Church! We would say with Joab, "Now the Lord your God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold." May the righteous seed multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, till their number shall be as countless as the sands of the shore, or as the stars of the sky!

Concerning the second census of Israel, I would speak with you, since this is the morning of the day on which our British census is to be taken. May we gather lessons of wisdom from the theme!

I. First, observe with interest and with a design to be profited—THE NOTABLE CHANGE WORKED AMONG THE PEOPLE BY DEATH. “But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the priest, numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.”

They answered to their names, 600,000 and more of them—and there they stood in their ranks, full of vigorous life. About 40 years had passed away and if these same names had been read out, not a man save Caleb and Joshua could have answered to the roll call. The entire mass of the nation had been changed! The old ones were all gone. All that stood in their places by the Jordan were men who were under age at the first census, or who were not even born at that time. “Not a man of them” remained, says the text. And it repeats the statement—“There was not left a man of them.”

Such changes strike us as most memorable. They must not be passed over without remark. In the course of 40 years, my Brothers and Sisters, what changes take place in every community, in every Church, in every family! A friend showed me, last Thursday, a photograph of myself in the midst of my first deacons. It was taken scarcely 38 years ago and yet, of the entire group, only I survive! Those associates of the youthful preacher have all gone to their reward. We have likenesses of other groups of Church officers of a later date, in which I am placed in the center, and I am there still, but nearly all of those who once surrounded me have gone Home. Those who were our leaders in our days of struggle—and who saw the hand of God with us in those first years—are growing few in number. We have not yet completed the 40 years, but when we have done so, the words of our text will be almost literally applicable to our case as a Church.

The going and the coming, the adding and the taking away have changed the texture of this fabric and no thread will soon be left. Surely the Lord would have us notice this, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. A costly operation, involving so many sorrows, is not to be passed over without thought. Beloved, we, too, are passing away! The pastor and his present helpers must, themselves, be summoned Home in due course. The march of the generations is not a procession passing before our eyes, while we sit, like spectators, at the window, but we are in the procession ourselves, and we, too, are passing down the streets of time and shall disappear in our turn. We, too, shall sleep with our fathers, unless the Lord shall come speedily. I hear a clarion blast sounding out from the graves which lie behind us—“Be you also ready!” From the last closed sepulcher there comes the prophetic warning, “Set *your* house in order, for *you* shall die, and not live.”

This change was universal throughout the whole camp. There was a change even in the enumerators. The Sinai census had been taken by Moses and Aaron and now Moses remains just long enough to take his leading place, but his brother, Aaron, is not there. The High Priest of God has gone up to Mount Hor, has been stripped of his garments, has been buried and mourned by all Israel—and now Eleazar, his son, stands be-

fore the Lord in his father's place. It was so among the other priests and Levites and elders of the people. There was change everywhere—among the poorest dwellers in that canvas city and among the princes who dwelt beneath the standards of the tribes, all had changed. “There was not left a man of them.”

Thus is it among ourselves—no offices can be permanently held by the same men—“They are not suffered to continue by reason of death.” No position, however lofty or lowly, can retain its old possessor. It is not only the cedars that fall, but the fir trees feel the axe. “There is no discharge in that war.” That same scythe which cuts down the towering flower among the grass also sweeps down whole regiments of green blades. See how they lie together in long rows, to wither in a common decay! Throughout the whole body, this change is gradually taking place. No man can climb the rock of immortality and sit there, amid the seething sea, and say to Death, “Your waves cannot reach me here!” Though vigorous in health, though sound in constitution, though guarded by all the armor of the science of health, you, too, must fall by the arrows of the insatiable archer. “It is appointed unto men once to die.”

The change is inevitable. Man that is born of woman must be of few days. If it had not been for the great sin of Israel at Kadesh, many of the people might have lived to the second census and beyond it. But even then, if by reason of strength their lives had been lengthened, yet would they soon have died out in the ordinary course of nature. If 40 years had not been appointed as the end of that generation, yet without that appointment they would all have passed away in another 20 or 30 years. As Moses said in his wilderness Psalm, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

We must soon quit our tents for the last battle. When the conscript number shall be drawn, we may escape this year and next, but the lot will fall upon us in due time. There is no leaping from the net of mortality wherein, like a shoal of fish, we are all enclosed. Unless our Lord shall soon appear, we shall each one find a grave, for, as the wise man says, “All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.” “We must necessarily die and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.” Therefore we wisely bow before the stern decree and yield ourselves to death.

But let us not forget that *all this change was still under the Divine control.* Though the people must pass away, yet still, the Lord's hand would be in each death and its surroundings. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge, we may rest assured that no man dies without the will of God—no man is carried to his long Home unless the Lord has said, “Return, you children of men.”—

**“What can preserve my life, or what destroy?
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave—
Legions of angels can't confine me there.”**

To create and to destroy are sole prerogatives of the King of Kings! Till *He* speaks the word, we live not, or, living, we die not. Walking in the midst of 10,000 stricken with the plague, we are safe till God appoints our re-

moval. Concerning those that are asleep, we know that they have not died without the will of our Father. Concerning our time, also, we know that we shall not be the toys of chance, or the victims of fate. A wise and loving God fixes the date and place of our decease, for, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Stern though the work may be, His great and tender heart rules the ravages of death! Let us, therefore, be comforted concerning the great changes which death is working. Here is no cause for tears, as though we were left in a monster's power and bereft of a Father's care. The Lord is still ruling and nothing happens save as He appoints.

Moreover, *the change was beneficial*. It was well that the first generation should die in the wilderness. The people who had been accustomed to servitude in Egypt had acquired the vices of slaves—and when they came out of the house of bondage they were fearful, fickle—the creatures of appetite and the victims of panic, selfishness and discontent. They had all the vices of subject races and were, alike, destitute of manliness and self-control. They were soon cowed by fear and baffled by difficulty. They were easily persuaded and as easily dissuaded. They were a people of whom nothing could be made. Even the Divine tuition in which Moses and Aaron were engaged and in which miracles, and types, and laws were employed, could not teach them anything so that they really knew it. To make a nation which could preserve the worship of the one God in the world, the generation which came out of Egypt must die out. The taint of slavery and idolatry must be lessened if it could not be quite removed.

It was desirable that there should be a people trained in a better school, with a nobler spirit, fit to take possession of the promised land. The change was working rightly—the Divine purpose was being fulfilled. Maybe we do not think thus of the changes which are taking place in the communities to which we belong. We scarcely think that better men are coming on—we even fear that the coming race is weaker than the present, but then, we are not fair judges, for we are prejudiced in favor of our own generation! I do not doubt that God means well to His own Church and that the accomplishment of His eternal purposes requires that men should come and go and thus the face of society should be changed. It is well that the age of man is not so protracted as in the days of Methuselah. A teacher influential for error dies and is forgotten. A sinner pestilential for vice passes away and the air grows pure. Imagine a gambler with 500 years of craft to guide him, or a libertine reeking with 600 years of debauchery! Surely the present narrowed limits of human life are all too wide for the depraved! We need not wish for giants of iniquity such as centuries of life would produce. The incoming of new blood into the social frame is good in a thousand ways—it is well that we should make room for others who may better serve our Master. God grant they may! Our prayer is, "Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your Glory unto their children." We are content to take the work if our sons may behold the glory! We are glad to move off that they may rise on stepping stones of our ended lives to nobler things!

One other remark I cannot help making and that is that *these changes are most instructive*. If we are now serving God, let us do so with intense earnestness, since only for a little while shall we have the opportunity to do so among men. "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go." Live while you live! At the same time, lay plans for influencing the rising generation. Lay yourself out to work while it is called today. If anything should be done, it were well that it were done quickly. If we wish the Truth of God to conquer and the Gospel to prevail, let us fight the Lord's battles *now!* And if we would see Truth prevail after we are gone, let us seek out faithful young men who will teach others that the testimony for the Lord God of Israel dies not out of the land. We must soon quit the field. Let each man set his house in order, for he must soon leave it to be gazed upon by strangers' eyes. Let us see that our lifework is rounded off and well-finished, so that in the survey of it by our successors they may say of us, "He being dead yet speaks." As we must soon be gone from among the living, let us bless them while we may. Arise, you saints, and bestir yourselves, for the day is far spent and the shadows of evening are falling! I pray that we may learn well this first lesson of our text. O Spirit of Life, teach us life even by the doings of death!

II. Secondly, we have here before us THE PERPETUITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. There was a change in the constituent elements of the Israelite nation, but the nation was still there. Not one man was there who was counted 38 years before, save Caleb and Joshua, and yet the nation was the same! Do you ask for Israel? There it is. Balaam can see the people from the top of the hill and they are the same people whom Pharaoh pursued to the Red Sea. The nation is living, though a nation has died. It is the same chosen seed of Abraham with whom Jehovah is in covenant. God has a Church in the world and He will have a Church in the world till time shall be no more! The gates of Hell and the jaws of death shall not prevail against the Church, though each one of its members must depart out of this world in his turn.

Mark well that "*the Church in the wilderness*" *lives on*. There are the same 12 tribes, the same standards heading the tribes, the same tabernacle in the midst of the host and the same priesthood celebrating sacred service with solemn pomp. Everything has changed and yet nothing has changed. God has built His holy habitation upon foundations which can never be removed! Although the men who bear the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord wear other names, yet they fulfill the same office. The music of the sanctuary rises and falls, but the strain goes on. The hallelujah never ceases, nor is there a pause in the perpetual chorus, "His mercy endures forever."

The gaps were filled up by appointed successors. As one warrior died, another man stepped into his place, even as one wave dying on the shore is pursued by another. The men were not all swept away at once, but by perceptible degrees. Now and then there came an awful and sudden destruction, as when Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down alive into the pit, but, as a rule, the people dropped off gradually, as ripe fruit falls from

the trees—and they were succeeded by others as the fading leaves of autumn have the buds of spring just beneath them. In the Church of God one dies in the order of Nature, but another is born into the Kingdom by the power of Divine Grace. We miss some useful Christian woman and we lament her, but before many days another Sister is prepared of the Lord to serve in her place. Baptism for the dead never ceases among us. An honored Brother falls asleep and we carry him to the grave and, possibly, we fear no other can do his work and fill the vacancy he leaves. Perhaps no one can do the *same* work, but yet, in some other way or form, the work is done! The vines are trimmed, the sheep are fed and the lambs are cherished. Not one dead man lies in the way to stop the march of the army, as did the corpse of Amasa, which lay dead in the road in David's day. The chosen host still marches on! Even as the stars in their courses, we still move on. God buries His workmen, but His work lives.

In Israel's case *the gap were filled by their own sons*. As these men passed away, their children took their places. I commend to you, my Brothers and Sisters, this fact as your encouragement in prayer for your children. Oh, that the Lord would pour His Spirit upon our seed and His blessing upon our offspring! Oh, that every saint here may be succeeded by his own descendants! This is the Lord's frequent way of keeping alive the gracious succession. Abraham is gone, but Isaac still kindles the altar fire. In a blind old age Isaac is gathered to his fathers, but Jacob worships "the Fear of his father Isaac." Jacob gathers up his feet in bed, but Judah and Joseph, and the rest of them, continue as salt in the earth. Oh, that it may be so in all our families! May we never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to testify for Him! Among all the honors that God can put upon our households I think this is the greatest, that we should have in our families a succession of saints! It is no small privilege to look back and to remember our ancestors who feared the Lord—may we also look forward with hope that if this dispensation lasts, there may still be some of our name, bearing our blood in their veins, who shall be called by Sovereign Grace into the service we have loved so well! Search beyond the congregation for new converts, but do not forget to look *within your own doors* for the largest accessions to the Church! Hope that your sons and daughters after the flesh may be born into "the one family in Heaven and earth," which bears the name of Jesus! Pray that *your* children may be *God's* children—and may your prayer come up with acceptance into the ears of the Lord our God whose mercy is on children's children of them that fear Him and keep His Covenant!

All the offices of "the Church in the wilderness" were filled with fitting men. Behold Aaron, in his robes of glory and beauty! What a man is he to be the High Priest! With what grace and dignity he presides! He dies—will not the priesthood fail? No, my Brothers and Sisters, yonder is Eleazar, who occupies his father's place most worthily! Moses also passes away. There is none like Moses. He is King in Jeshurun, without peer or rival! The Jews have a tradition that when he was called to go up to the top of Nebo to die, the people followed him up the hill, the women beating on their breasts and bitterly wailing, while the strong men bowed themselves

with grief and cried, "The father of the nation is to be taken away! Alas, what shall we do?" He was bid to leave the people on the mountain side and he went up, alone, to the place where Jehovah kissed away his soul—and so he passed into his rest. Truly it was a great loss, but the Lord found a man to follow Moses. Joshua was not equal to Moses in many things and yet, for the work he had to do, he was a much more fit man than Moses. The times were red with war and Joshua was more able than Moses to fight the Canaanites and conquer the land. Joshua was the man for the sword, as Moses had been the man of the Book. And God will fill every office in His Church, not as you and I might wish, but as His infinite wisdom determines. Therefore let us be of good courage and fear no lack.

At this second numbering, *the people stood ready for greater work than they had ever done before*. The first numbering found them fit for the wilderness—the second numbering found them ready for the capture of the goodly land and Lebanon. God had been preparing them, by 40 years of marching, for their new enterprise and for development into a nation. May it please the Lord to make His Church ready for the coming of her Lord and for the salvation of nations! If brighter days are dawning, the Church will be prepared as a bride for her husband—and if tribulation is to come to try all the earth, she shall be strengthened as a martyr for the burning! The Lord keeps her lest any hurt her—He will keep her night and day.

It was Israel's joy that *God's love was not withdrawn from the nation*. The Lord still acknowledged the tribes as His people. His Glory was still above the Mercy Seat and His fiery, cloudy pillar still guided their marching or fixed their stopping. Still the manna dropped from Heaven and still they drank of the water from the smitten Rock. Thus the Lord still has a Church and it is always the same Church, loved of her lord, indwelt by His Spirit and dedicated to His praise. Let us take courage—the Church is not destroyed! Many changes take place and many sorrows are involved therein, but the Church of God is as always as alive as her Immortal Head, who has declared, "Because I live, you shall live also." Her stars are still the hope of the world's night and her angels are the heralds of the eternal morning! She follows the bleeding Lamb who is the Doctrine of her teaching, the Model of her acting, the Glory of her hope!

III. Thirdly, let me bring before your minds THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD. This we perceive in the last verse. "For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Note *how unchangeable are the threats of the Lord*. "Among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the Priest, numbered. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness." Take note of this, you that think God's Word can fail—you know not what you dream! His Words of righteous wrath are not lost—they kill as with a two-edged sword. The verse says, "There was not left a man of them." Whom the Lord had condemned to die, *nothing* could keep alive. Therefore, do not imagine, O you that obey not the Lord, that you shall go unpunished!

The unbelievers were many, yet not one escaped. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” The rebels were a terribly large majority, but the crowds in the broad way make it none the safer. God has no respect for multitudes—“The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Here they outnumbered the faithful more than 10,000 times and yet the justice of God did not spare one of them! “There was not left a man of them.” How can any of you hope to escape? “Your hands shall find out all your enemies.” The proudest sinner shall be laid low—the thunders of Jehovah shall smite down each individual transgressor—and no one shall go away free in the day of God’s wrath!

It was a long time before all the sinners died, but the long-suffering of God had its limit and, in the end, every rebel died in the wilderness. They lived on, some of them, for all the 40 years, but they could not pass the boundary. Perhaps they said, “Ah, this ban from God will never take effect on *us*.” Yet, before the years were up, the survivors of the doomed race had to share the common fate. Not a man of those whom Moses and Aaron numbered at Sinai could pass the line of fire which closed in the 40 years. God waits, waits in infinite mercy, but the punishment of the wicked is none the less sure. “Their foot shall slide in due time.” The Lord has bent His bow and made it ready, and when their hour is come, they shall find that He is not slack concerning His Word. Do not, I pray you, doubt the terrible certainty of Divine threats because they are long in taking effect. Say not, “Where is the promise of His coming?” He will come—and when He comes it shall be “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some of the unbelieving generation were, no doubt, full of vigor, and they said, “We are as strong as old Caleb and quite as likely as he to cross the Jordan. Our eyes are as clear as those of Moses and we shall outlive the 40 years appointed us.” But death chilled the coals of juniper and quenched their vehement flame. The stalwart man of war laid down his weapons, vanquished by the unconquerable foe of men. “There was not left a man of them.” How like a knell those words sound in my ears! The mighty in the day of battle were no longer mighty when their hour had come! “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” “Their carcasses fell in the wilderness.” All their days were passed away in the wrath of God. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. It is vain for you to indulge a hope, “larger” or smaller, if you die in your sin! The Justice of the Most High is not to be escaped! In that Last Great Day, when the Throne shall be set, and every man shall give an account for the things done in his body, whether they are good or whether they are evil, the strict Judge will, by no means, clear the guilty, but they shall be driven away in His wrath to the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched!

Oh that you would flee to Christ for refuge! Look to His Cross, I pray you, that you may be saved! As the Lord fulfilled His threats, so *did He cause His promises to come to pass*. Caleb lived on and so did Joshua. They were often in danger. Did not the rebels take up stones to stone

them? They were often near to death—Joshua was commander-in-chief of the army and Caleb was a man of war from his youth up. They endured the common risks of soldiers, but nothing could kill them, for God had promised that they should enter the land! They believed God and honored Him by their conduct and, therefore, He kept them until the hour came to go in unto the land to possess it. There were only two of them, but God did not, therefore, overlook them. He keeps covenant with individuals as well as with nations! They were not men who kept themselves out of harm's way, neither were they timorous and, therefore, afraid to advance their opinions. No doubt they came in for a special share of envy and malice, but their reward with God was sure. If you believe in Jesus, though you should be the only one of your family, yet you shall be saved! Though you know none of your kin fear the Lord, yet the God of Israel will not forget the lone one who is separated from his brethren. Though the faithful should become so few that all the saints together should only make a handful, yet it is written, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

God's Word stands! "The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word by which the Gospel is preached unto you." Jehovah's threats and promises are of equal force. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" There shall be no change, even, to a jot or tittle in this wondrous Book! God forbid that we should begin to doubt it, for if we once begin, where shall we end? With this striking confirmation before us, we believe that the Word of the Lord must stand. Let us be as the man whom the Lord blesses, because, says He, "he trembles at My Word."

IV. Our last point is this—learn from my text THE ABIDING NECESSITY OF FAITH. Those people came out of Egypt with Moses and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea when they came forth into the wilderness. One would have hoped that they all would march to Canaan, but it was not so. The first census is taken. Their names are on the roll. But, sad to say, at the next numbering all those names have vanished! What a difference between the church roll at Sinai and the Book of Life by Jordan!

If you profess to be the people of God, we count you among His children—you are written among the living in Zion. But what an awful thing it would be if your name should not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life at the last! What if you should lie on the threshing floor in the great heap before the winnowing, but should be gone with the chaff as soon as the Lord has come, "whose fan is in His hand"? Oh, that none of us may provoke the Lord to swear in His wrath that we shall not enter into His rest!

Learn, first, that *no man is, was, or ever shall be saved without faith*. "He that believes not shall be damned" is our Lord's solemn declaration. It is written, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This is as true today as when it was first spoken.

Learn, next, that *no privilege can supply the lack of faith*. We read that they heard, as you do. But some, "when they had heard, did provoke."

Their provocation lay mainly in their unbelief. No hearing, no, not hearing the Apostles, themselves, could save you without faith! "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hearing may minister to condemnation if the Truth of God is not believed!

These people went a certain way with Moses towards the Lord's promised rest. They did come out of Egypt. They were numbered with Jehovah's people in the numbering at Sinai. They were separated from all the world in the quietude of the wilderness. But we read there was in them "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." In heart they went back to Egypt! It is not enough to *begin* well—"he that endures to the end shall be saved"—and no other! They had ceremonies in abundance, but they were not saved by them. They had the morning and the evening lambs. They were circumcised. They ate the Passover. They kept the Day of Atonement. But all these things together did not save them from dying in the desert, shut out of Canaan by unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Nothing can make up for the absence of faith. They had nothing to do all the day long in the wilderness but to learn the lessons of God. They had time for thought and they had the best of teachers to instruct them—and the best of textbooks in the ceremonial Law—and yet their knowledge did not preserve them from leaving their carcasses in the desert! They had plenty of time for meditation and contemplation. They had no care about temporals, for their bread was given them and their waters were sure. And yet, because of absence of *faith*, they did not learn that elementary Truth of God which would have ministered to them an entrance into rest.

But *none perished who had faith*—no, not one! All those who believed God and held fast to Him, were made inheritors of the land. Caleb and Joshua—these two saw the land and took their places in it. If you believe, whatever your name may be, you shall be saved, for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." It is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Caleb and Joshua, by faith, entered into the land promised to the fathers and you, my Hearer, can only enter in by faith! Have faith in God and you have all things! But without faith it is impossible to please God.

Mark this—while it was faith alone which saved them, *faith gave these men notable characters*. We read of, "My servant, Caleb." He that believes God becomes a servant of God and counts it all joy to obey his Lord! Faith is the mother of obedience. The Lord said that Caleb "had another spirit with him"—faith puts quite another spirit into a man—it is not a murmuring or a mutinous spirit. It is not an ungrateful or distrustful spirit. Neither is it a haughty, willful, rebellious spirit. But it is a spirit of love, of hope, of confidence in God. The faithful man is of another spirit from that of the world, for the Holy Spirit abides in him! Such a man chooses the way of God, so that the Lord says, "He has followed Me fully." This was well—it is wise not to run *before* God, nor to run *away* from God, but to *follow* Him step by step. It is wise not to follow *man*, but to wholly follow the Lord! It is commendable to follow Him fully with undivided, unwaver-

ing, unquestioning, untiring steps! The Lord will see that His servant, Caleb, enters into His rest—there is rest for good servants. As Caleb followed the Lord fully, it was meet that he should enter in where his Lord abides. Men of faith are not idle men, but servants—they are not wicked men, but they follow the Lord. They are not half-hearted men—they follow Him fully. It is not their holiness that saves them, but their faith—nevertheless, where there is no holiness, there is no fruit of faith and no evidence of salvation.

As for Joshua, he was like Caleb. He was a brave and truthful man, a true servant of God. And though we have his life given somewhat at length, yet we discover no flaw in his character. It is almost a rare thing in the Word of God to find a life written at any length without a record of infirmity and sin, for the biographies of Scripture are truthful and they mention men's faults as well as their virtues. As there is no recorded fault in Joshua's career, we gather that he was of a noble character. "The Lord said unto Moses, Take you Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him." So that the faith which took these two men into Canaan was in them the creator of a noble character.

Now, what do *you* say, Beloved Friends? Do you believe God? Do you believe His Word? Or are you of a captious and dubious spirit? Do you believe like children? Is God your Father and, therefore, is His Word your Father's Word which you cannot think of questioning? Will you follow the Lamb wherever He goes, against giants or Canaanites? Will you believe God, whatever may give Him the lie? If so, you shall dwell in the land that flows with milk and honey—and you shall have your portion when the Lord appears! But if you do not truly believe, whatever profession you may make, your carcasses must fall in the wilderness! Woe is me that I have to deliver such a prophecy! Greater woe to you if it should be fulfilled in you! Believe the Lord and you shall prosper.

This day, as you are preparing for the census of the nation, think of the time when God shall make up His last account of natives in His holy city. Will you be numbered with His people, or will your names be left out at the reading of the muster roll? God give us a place among His redeemed—and to His name shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers 1:1-5; 44-46; 14:1-10, 20-35; 26:1-4; 6-65.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—87, 88, 90.**

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS—A PARABLE

NO. 3141

A SERMON
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“And Moses brought their cause before the LORD.”
Numbers 17:5.

BY the help of God the Holy Spirit, I want to use this incident which forms a kind of episode in the rehearsal of the history of Israel's 40 years' wanderings in the wilderness, for a twofold purpose. First, let me indicate *its general teaching* and, secondly, let me take it as *a ground of appeal to certain special classes*.

I. First, I will try to indicate ITS GENERAL TEACHING.

I would ask your attention and exhibit for your imitation, *the faith which these five young women, the daughters of Zelophehad, possessed with regard to the promised inheritance*. You must remember that the children of Israel were still in the wilderness. They had not seen the promised land, but God had made a Covenant with them that they should possess it. He had declared that He would bring them into a land which flowed with milk and honey and there plant them. And that that land should belong to them and to their descendants by a Covenant of salt forever. Now, these women believed in this heritage. They were not like Esau, who thought so little of the inheritance which was his birth-right that he sold it to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage—they believed it to be really worth having. They regarded it, though they had never beheld it, as being something exceedingly substantial and so, thinking about it, they were afraid lest they should be left out when the land was divided. And though they had never seen it, yet, being persuaded that it was *somewhere* and that the children of Israel would have it in due time, their anxiety was they, having no brothers, would be forgotten in the distribution and so would lose their rights. They were anxious about an inheritance which they had never seen with their eyes and, therein, I hold them up to the imitation of this present assembly.

There is an inheritance that is far better than the land of Canaan. Oh, that we all believed in it and longed for it! It is an inheritance, however, which mortal eyes have not seen and the sounds of which mortal ears have not heard. It is a city whose streets are gold, but none of us have ever walked them. Never has traveler to that country come back to tell us of its glories. There the music never ceases, no discord ever mingles in it, it is sublime, but no member of the heavenly choir has ever come to write out for us the celestial score, or to—

*“Teach us some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above.”*

It is not a matter of sight—it must be to each one of us a matter of *faith*. By faith we know that there is another and a better land. By faith we understand that our disembodied souls shall mount to be with Christ and that, after a while, our bodies shall also rise to join our spirits so that body and soul may together be glorified forever in the Presence of our gracious Redeemer. We have never seen this land, however—but there are some of us who as firmly believe in it as if we had seen it—and are as certain of it and as fully persuaded as though these ears of ours had listened to its songs of joy and these feet of ours had walked its streets of gold!

There was this feature, too, about the faith of these five women—they knew that the inheritance was only to be won by encountering great difficulties. The spies who came back from the land had said that the men who dwelt in it were giants. They said, “We were in our own sight as grasshoppers and so we were in their sight.” There was many a man, in the camp of Israel, I have no doubt, who said, “Well, I would sell my share cheaply enough, for though the land is there, we can never win it! They have cities walled up to Heaven and they have chariots of iron—we can never win the land.” But these women believed that although they could not fight, God could! And though they had never put their fingers to a more terrible instrument than a needle, yet did they believe that the same right arm which got itself the victory when they went with Miriam, dancing to the timbrels’ jubilant sound, would get the victory, again, and bring God’s people in and drive the Canaanites out even though they had walled cities and chariots of iron!

So these women had strong faith. I would to God that you had the same, all of you, dear Friends, but I know that some of you who believe that there is a land which flows with milk and honey, are half afraid that you shall never reach it! You are vexed with many doubts because of your own weakness, which, indeed, should not merely make you doubt, but should make you utterly despair if the gaining of the goodly land depended upon your own fighting for it and winning it! But, inasmuch as “the *gift* of God is eternal life” and God, Himself, will give it to us, and inasmuch as Jesus has gone up on high to prepare a place for us and has promised that He will come again and receive us unto Himself that where He is, there we may also be, I would to God that our doubts and fears were banished and that we said within ourselves, “We are well able to go up and attack the land, for the Lord, even the Lord of Hosts, is with us! Jehovah-Nissi is our banner! The Lord Our Righteousness is our helper and we shall surely enter into the place of the beloved people of God and shall join the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven.”

I commend the faith of these women to you because believing in the land and believing that it would be won, they were not to be put about by the ill report of some who said that it was not a good land. There were 10 out of the 12 who spied out the land who said, “It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.” They brought back an evil report. But, whoever may have been perverted by these lies, these five women were not. Others said, “Why, the land is full of pestilence and hornets and those who

live in it now are dying,” forgetting that God was making them die in order to bring in the children of Israel in their place. And so they said, “who cares to have a portion there? Give us the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt—and let us sit again by the flesh-pots that we had at Rameses—but as for going on to this Canaan, we will never do it.” But these five women, who knew that if there were troubles in the household, *they* would be sure to have their share of them, that if the bread ran short, *they* would be the most likely to feel the straitness of it, and that if it were a land of sickness, *they* would have to be the nurses, yet coveted to have their share in it, for they did not believe the ill report. They said, “No, God has said it is a good land, a land of hills and valleys, a land of brooks and rivers, a land of olive oil and honey, a land out of whose hills we may dig iron and brass—and we will not believe what you spies say—it is a good land and we will go in and ask for our share of it.” So I commend their faith in this respect.

I know that some of you are occasionally met by sneering skeptics and they say to you, “There is no such place as Heaven! We have never seen it—are you such fools as to believe in it? Are you going on a pilgrimage over hedge and ditch, helter-skelter, to a country that you know nothing of? Are you going to trust that old-fashioned Book and take God’s Word, and nothing but His Word, and believe it?” Oh, I hope there are many of us—would that *all* of us were in that happy position—who can say, “It is even so!” Stand back, Mr. Atheist, and stop us not, for we are well persuaded that ours is no wild-goose chase! Stand back, Sir Ironical Skeptic! Laugh if you will. You will laugh on the other side of your face one of these days and we shall have the last laugh at that time! At any rate, if there is no Heaven, we shall be as well off as you will be, but if there is a Hell, where, O where will you be—and what will your portion be? So we go on our own way confident and sure, doubting nothing—believing as surely as we believe in our own existence that—

**“Jesus, the Judge will come
To take His people up
To their eternal home”—**

and believing that one hour with Him will be worth all the trials of the road—worth enduring ten thousand deaths, if we could endure them, in order to win it and that, moreover, by God’s Grace we shall win it—

**“We shall behold His face,
We shall His name adore!
And sing the wonders of His Grace
Henceforth forevermore!”**

So I hold up these daughters of Zelophehad to your commendation and imitation on account of their faith.

But there was another point. Feeling certain concerning the land, we must next commend them for *their anxiety to possess a portion in it*. Why did they think so much about it? I heard someone say, the other day, speaking of certain young people, “I do not like to see young women religious—they ought to be full of fun and mirth and not have their minds filled with such profound thoughts.” Now, I will be bound to say that this kind of philosophy was accredited in the camp of Israel and that there

were a great many young women there who said, "Oh, there is time enough to think about the good land when we get there! Let us be polishing up our mirrors. Let us be seeing to our dresses. Let us understand how to put our fingers upon the timbrel when the time comes for it! But as for prosing about a portion among those Hivites and Hittites, what is the good of it? We will not bother ourselves about that." But such was the strength of the faith of the five women that it led them to feel a deep anxiety for a share in the inheritance. They were not such simpletons as to live only for the present. They had outgrown their babyhood—they were not satisfied to live merely for the day. They knew that in due time the tribes would cross the Jordan and would be in the promised land, so they began, as it were, like good housewives, to think about where their portion would be and to reflect that were they left out when the muster-roll was read—and should no portion be appointed for Tirzah, no portion for Milcah and no place for any of the five sisters, they would be like beggars and outcasts in the midst of the land! The thought of all others having their plot of ground and their family having none, made them anxious about it. O dear Friends, how anxious you and I ought to be to make our calling and election sure! And how solemnly should that question of the Countess of Huntingdon come home to our hearts—

***"But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out
When You for them shall call?"***

Suppose I should have no portion in the skies? O you foundations of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones, you gates of pearl, you walls of jasper, must I never see you? O troops of angels and armies of the blood-bought, must I never wave the palm or wear the crown in your midst? Must the word that salutes me be that awful sentence, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire"? Is there no place for me, no room for me in the inheritance of the saints?

I do beseech you, never be satisfied till you can answer this question in the affirmative and say, "Yes, I have a place in Jesus' heart! I have been washed in Jesus' blood and, therefore, I shall be with Jesus where He is in His Glory when the fitting time comes." Oh, I would have you who are not sure about this, be as anxious as these women were! Let it press upon your hearts! Let it even take the color from your cheek sooner than that you should have an empty and frivolous gaiety and mirth which will entice you down to the Pit! Oh, make sure work for eternity! Whatever else you trifle with, seek to have an anchor that will hold you fast in the last great storm! Seek to be affianced unto Christ! Be sure that you are founded upon the Rock of Ages, where alone we can safely build for eternity!

These women were taken up with prudent anxious thoughts about their own part in the land of promise—and they were right in desiring to have a portion there when they remembered that the land had been given by Covenant to their fathers. They might well wish to have a part in a thing good enough to be a Covenant blessing! The land had been promised over and over again by Divine Authority—they might well wish to have a share in that which God's own lips had promised! It was a land to

bring them into which God had killed the first-born of Egypt and saved His people by the sprinkling of blood—they might well desire a land which cost so great a price to bring them to it! Besides, it was a goodly land. It was the most princely of all lands, peerless among all the territories of earth. Its products were most rich. The grapes of Eshcol—what could equal them? Its pomegranates, its olives, its rivers—the land that flowed with milk and honey—there was nothing like it in all the world! These women might well say, “Let us have a portion there!”

And, my dear Hearers, the Heaven of which we have to tell you is a land so good that it was spoken of in the Covenant before the world was! It has been promised to the people of God ten thousand times! Jesus Christ has shed His precious blood that He might open the gates of it and bring us in! And it is such a land that if you had but seen it, if you could but know what it is, you would pine away in stopping here for its very dust is gold, its meanest joys are richer than the transports of earth and the poorest in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he who is the mightiest prince in the kingdoms of this world! Oh, that your mouths were set a-longing after the feasts of Paradise! Oh that you pined to be where Jesus is and then, surely, you would be anxious to know whether you had a portion there!

I hold these women up as an example because they believed in the unseen inheritance and they were anxious to get their portion in it.

But I must commend them yet again for *the way in which they set about the business*. I do not find that they went complaining from tent to tent that they were afraid that they had no portion. Many doubters do that—they tell their doubts and fears to others, but they get no further. But these five women went straight to Moses. He was at their head, he was their mediator—and then it is said that “Moses brought their cause before the Lord.” You see, these women did not try to get what they wanted by force. They did not say, “We will take care to get our share of the land when we get there.” They did not suppose that they had any merit which they might plead, and so get it, but they went straight to Moses—and Moses took their cause and laid it before the Lord. Sinner, do you want a portion in Heaven? Go straight to Jesus and Jesus will take your cause and lay it before the Lord! It is a very sorry one as it stands by itself, but He has such a sweet way of so mixing Himself up with you and yourself with Him, that His cause and your cause will be one cause—and the Father will give Him good success—and give you good success, too! Oh, that someone here would breathe the prayer, if he has never prayed before, “Savior, will You see that I have a portion in the skies? Precious Savior, take my poor heart and wash it in Your precious blood, change it by your Holy Spirit and make me ready to dwell where perfect saints are! Oh, undertake my cause for me, blessed Advocate, and plead it before Your Father’s face!” That is the way to have the business of salvation effectually done! Take it out of your own hands and put into the hands of the Prophet like unto Moses, and you will surely succeed!

Now, observe *the success of these women*. The Lord accepted their plea, for He said unto Moses, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak rightly." Yes, and when you cry to Him and when His dear Son takes your prayer to Him, God will say, "That sinner speaks rightly." Beat on your breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and He will say, "That soul speaks rightly." Young woman, imitate these five sisters right now! May God the Holy Spirit bring you to imitate them by humbly offering your plea through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and God will say, "Ah, she speaks rightly, I have heard her and I have accepted her." And then God said that these sisters should have their portion just the same as the men had—that they should have their share of land just as if they had inherited it as sons—and so will God say to every seeking sinner! Whatever may be the disability under which you labor. Whatever bar there may have seemed to be to your claim, you shall inherit among the children, you shall take your part and your lot among the chosen people of God! Christ has set your cause before His Father, and it shall be unto you, poor Sinner, according to your desire—and you shall have a part among the Lord's people!

I wish I had power to press this matter more immediately home upon you. Many of us who are now present are saved. It is a great satisfaction to remember how large a proportion of my congregation has come to Christ, but ah, there are many, many here who are—well, what are they? They do not know that they have any inheritance! They cannot read their title clear to mansions in the skies and, what is worse, they are unconcerned about it! If they were troubled about it, we would have hope concerning them, but no, they go their way and, like Pliable, having got out of the Slough of Despond, they turn around and say to Christians, "You may have the brave country all to yourselves for all we care." They are so fond of present pleasure, so easily enticed by the wily whispers of the arch-enemy, so soon overcome by their own passions that they find it too hard to be Christians—to love Christ is a thing too difficult for them! Ah, may God meet with you and make you wiser! Poor Souls, you will perish—some of you will perish while you are looking on at this world's bubbles and baubles! You will perish—you will go down to Hell with this earth's joys in your mouths—but they will not sweeten those mouths when the pangs of Hell get hold upon you! Your life is short. Your candle flickers in its socket. You must soon go the way of all flesh. We never meet one week after another without some death occurring between. Out of this vast number, surely it is all but impossible that we should ever all meet here again! Perhaps before this day next week, some of us will have passed the curtain, will have learned the great secret and will have entered the invisible world! Whose portion will it be? If it is yours, dear Hearer, will you mount to worlds of joy, or shall—

***"Devils plunge you down to Hell
In infinite despair?"***

God make that a matter of concern with us, first, and then may we come to Jesus and receive the sprinkling of precious blood! And thus may He make it a matter of confidence with us that we are saved through Him and shall be partakers with them that are sanctified!

II. Secondly, I am going to use the whole incident as a GROUND OF APPEAL TO CERTAIN SPECIAL CLASSES.

Does it not strike you that there is here *a special lesson for our unconverted sisters*? Here are five daughters, I suppose young women, certainly unmarried women, and these five were unanimous in seeking to have a portion where God had promised it to His people. Have I any young women here who have not acted like that? I am afraid I have! Blessed be God for the many who come in among us who become solemnly impressed and give their young days to Jesus! But there are some, there may be some here, of another mind. The temptations of this wicked Metropolis, the pleasures of this perilous city lead them away from the right path and prevent them from giving a fair hearing to God's Word. Well, but you are here, my Sister, and may I, as a Brother, put this question to you? Do you not desire a portion in the skies? Have you no wish for Glory? Have you no longing for the everlasting crown? Can you sell Christ for a few hours of mirth? Will you give Him up for a giddy song or an idle companion? Those are not your friends who would lead you from the paths of righteousness! Count them not dear, but loathe them if they would entice you from Christ! But, as you will certainly die and will as certainly live forever in endless woe or in boundless bliss, do see to your souls! "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other necessary things shall be added to you. You have come fresh from the country, young woman, and leaving your mother's care it is very likely that you have begun to absent yourself from the means of Grace, but I charge you not to do so! On the contrary, let this bind you to your mother's God and may you feel that whereas you may have up to now neglected God's House and profaned God's Day, yet henceforth, like the daughters of Zelophehad, you will seek to have a portion in the promised land!

The subject bears another way. *Has it not a voice, and a loud voice too, to the children of godly parents*? I like these young women saying that their father did not die with Korah, but that he only died the ordinary death which fell upon others because of the sin of the wilderness. And also their saying, "Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he has no son?" It is a good thing to see this respect to parents—this desire to keep up the honor of the family. I was thinking whether there may not be some here, some children of godly parents, who would feel it a sad thing if they should bring disgrace upon the family name? Is it so, that though your father has been for many years a Christian, he has not one to succeed him? O young man, have you no ambition to stand in his place, no wish to let his name be perpetuated in the Church of God? Well, if the sons have no such ambition or if there are none, let the daughters say to one another, "Our father never disgraced his profession. He did not die in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord, but he served the Lord faithfully—and we will not let his name be blotted out from Israel! We will join ourselves to the people of God and the family shall be still represented." But oh, how I desire that the brothers and sisters would

come together! And what a delightful thing it would be to see the whole family! In that household there were only five girls, but they all had their heritage. Father, would you not be happy if it should be so with your children? Mother, would you not be ready to say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation," if you could see all your children brought in? And why not, my Brothers and Sisters, why not? We will give God no rest until it is so! We will plead with Him until they are all saved! And young people, why not? The Lord's mercy is not straitened! The God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob and your father's God, we trust, will be your God! Oh, that you would follow in the footsteps of your parents so far as they followed Christ! These daughters of Zelophehad seem to me to turn preachers—and I stand here to speak for them, and all five of them say to you—"We gained our inheritance by seeking for it through a mediator. Young women, brothers and sisters, you shall gain it, too, by seeking it through a Savior."

And does not this text also speak to another class—to *orphans*? These good girls had lost their parents, or otherwise the question would not have arisen. Father and mother had passed away and, therefore, they had to go to Moses for themselves. When the parents could not come to Moses for them, they came for themselves. Think of the skies a moment, some of you. Perhaps this morning you were in a very different place, but think of the skies a minute. No, I do not mean the meteoric stones! I do not mean the stars, nor yon bright moon—but I want you to think of your mother, who is yonder. Do you remember when she gave you the last kiss, bade you farewell and said, "Follow me, my children. Follow me to the skies"? Think of a father who is there. His voice, doubtless, helping to swell the everlasting hallelujah! Does he not beckon you from the battlements of Heaven and cry, "Children of my loins, follow me, as I followed Christ"? Some of us have an honored grandfather there, an honored grandmother there. Many of you have little infants there, young angels whom God lent you for a little time and then took them to Heaven to show you the way, to lure you to go upwards too! You all have some dear friends there with whom you walked to God's House in company. They have gone, but I charge you, by the living God, to follow them! Break not your households in two! Let no solemn rifts come into the family, but, as they have gone to their rest, God grant unto you by the same road to come and rest eternally too. Jesus Christ is ready to receive sinners! He is ready to receive you! And if you trust Him, the joy and bliss which your friends now partake of shall also be yours! Daughters of godly parents, children of those who have gone before to eternal Glory, I entreat you, look to Jesus! Go and present your suit to Him now. It shall surely prosper. If the question was once doubtful, it has now become "a statute of judgment." The Lord has commanded it! May God bless these counsels and exhortations to you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 1.**

Genesis 1:1. *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth.* When that “beginning” was, we cannot tell. It may have been long ages before God fitted up this world for the abode of man, but it was not self-existent—it was created by God, it sprang from the will and the word of the all-wise Creator!

2. *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.* When God began to arrange this world in order, it was shrouded in darkness and it had been reduced to what we call, for lack of a better name, “chaos.” This is just the condition of every soul of man when God begins to deal with him in His Grace—it is formless and empty of all good things. “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way.”

2. *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* This was the first act of God in preparing this planet to be the abode of man—and the first act of Grace in the soul is for the Spirit of God to move within it! How that Spirit of God comes there, we know not. We cannot tell how He acts, even as we cannot tell how the wind blows where it wishes, but until the Spirit of God moves upon the soul, nothing is done towards its new creation in Christ Jesus!

3, 4. *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.* “Light be.” “Light was.” God had but to speak the word and the great wonder was accomplished! How there was light before there was any sun—for the sun was not created until the fourth day of the week—it is not for us to say. But God is not dependent upon His own creation. He can make light without a sun! He can spread the Gospel without the aid of ministers, He can convert souls without any human or angelic method, for He does as He wills in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

5. *And God called the light, Day, and the darkness, He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.* It is a good thing to have the right names for things. An error is often half killed when you know the real name of it—its power lies in its being indescribable! But as soon as you can call it, “darkness,” you know how to act towards it. It is also good thing to know the names of truths and the names of other things that are right. God is very particular in the Scripture about giving people their right names. The Holy Spirit says, “Judas, not Iscariot,” so that there should be no mistake about the intended person. Let us also always call persons and things by their right names—“God called the light, Day, and the darkness He called Night.” “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Darkness first and light afterwards. It is so with us spiritually—first darkness, then light. I suppose that until we get to Heaven, there will be both darkness and light in us. And as to God's Providential dealings, we must expect darkness as well as light. They will make up our first day and our last day, till we get where there are no days but the Ancient of Days.

6-8. *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.* “The firmament”—an expanse of air in which floated the waters which afterwards condensed and fell upon the earth in refreshing showers. These waters above were divided from the waters below. Perhaps they were all one steamy conglomeration before, but now they are separated. Note those four words, “and it was so.” Whatever God ordains always comes. You will find that it is true of all His promises, that whatever He has said shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall one day say of it all, “And it was so.” It is equally certain concerning all His threats that what He has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled—and the ungodly will have to say, “And it was so.” These words are often repeated in this Chapter. They convey to us the great lesson that the Word of God is sure to be followed by the deed of God. He speaks and it is done!

9-13. *And God said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land, Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself; upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.* Having attended to the air, God further exercised His power by setting the earth in order. Observe the remarkable fact that no sooner had God made the dry land appear, than it seemed as if He could not bear the sight of it in its nakedness. What a strange place this world must have been with its plains and hills and rooks and vales without one single blade of grass, or a tree, or a shrub! So at once, before that day was over, God threw the mantle of verdure over the earth and clad its mountains and valleys with forests and plants and flowers, as if to show us that the fruitless is uncomely in God's sight, that the man who bears no fruit unto God is unendurable to Him. There would be no beauty whatever in a Christian without any good works and with no graces. As soon as ever the earth appeared, then came the herbs, the trees and the grass. So, dear Brothers and Sisters, in like manner, let us bring forth fruit unto God and bring it forth abundantly, for herein is our heavenly Father glorified—that we bear much fruit.

14-19. *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that*

it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Whether the sun and moon are here said to be absolutely created, or whether they were only created so far as our planet was concerned by the dense vapors being cleared away so that the sun and moon and stars could be seen, is a matter of no consequence at all to us. Let us rather learn a lesson from them. These lights are to rule, but they are to rule by giving light. And, Brothers and Sisters, this is the true rule in the Church of God. He who gives most light is the truest ruler—and the man who aspires to leadership in the Church of God, if he knows what he is doing, aspires to be the servant of all by laying himself out for the good of all, even as our Savior said to His disciples, “Whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all.” The sun and moon are the servants of all mankind and, therefore, do they rule by day and by night. Stoop, my Brothers, if you wish to lead others! The way up is downward! To be great, you must be little. He is the greatest who is nothing at all unto himself, but all for others.

20-23. *And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the water brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.* There was no life in the sea or on the land until all was ready for it. God would not make a creature to be unhappy. There must be suitable food to feed upon and the sun and moon to cheer and comfort before a single bird shall chirp in the thicket or a solitary trout shall leap in the stream. So, after God has given men light, and blessed them in various ways, their spiritual life begins to develop to the glory of God. We have the thoughts that soar like fowl in the open firmament of heaven, and other thoughts that dive into the mysteries of God, as the fish dive in the sea. These are after-development, after-growths of that same power which at the first said, “Let there be light.”

24, 25. *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.* There is as much wisdom and care displayed in the creation of the tiniest creeping insect as in the creation of leviathan himself. Those who use the microscope are as much amazed at the greatness and the goodness of God as those are who use the telescope. He is as great in the little as He is in the great. After each day's work, God looks upon it—and it is well for us, every night, to review our day's work. Some men's work will not bear looking at and tomorrow becomes all the worse to them because today was not considered and its sin repented of by them. But if the errors of today are marked by us, a repetition of them may be avoided on the morrow. It is only God who can look upon any one day's work and say of it, as a whole, and in every part,

that it is “good.” As for us, our best things need sprinkling with the blood of Christ which we need not only on the lintels and side posts of our house, but even on the altar and the Mercy Seat at which we worship God!

26-28. *And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.* God evidently meant the two persons, male and female, to complete the man, and the entireness of the manhood lies in them both. The earth is completed now that man has come upon it, and man is completed when the image of God is upon him, when Christ is formed in him the hope of Glory, but not till then. When we have received the power of God and have dominion over ourselves and over all earthly things in the power of God's eternal Spirit, then are we where and what God intends us to be.

29, 30. *And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.* Now you see God's commissariat. He has not made all these creatures in order to starve them, but He has supplied them with great variety and abundance of food, that their needs may be satisfied. Does God care for the cattle and will He not feed His own children? Does He provide for ravens and sparrows and will He allow you to lack anything, O you of little faith? Observe that God did not create man until He had provided for him—neither will He ever put one work of His Providence or of His Grace out of its proper place—but that which goes before shall be preparatory to that which follows after.

31. *And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.* Taken in its completeness, and all put together, God saw that it was very good. We must never judge anything before it is complete.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE RED HEIFER

NO. 527

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 30, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“This is the ordinance of the law, which the Lord has commanded, saying,
Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring you a
red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish and upon
which never came yoke: and you shall give her unto
Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth
without the camp and one shall slay
her before his face.”
Numbers 19:2, 3.***

THE true heading of all the books of Moses is to be found in the words of Jesus, “Moses wrote of Me.” Take the Lord Jesus Christ with you as a key, and however difficult the riddles of Leviticus or Numbers may at first sight appear, there is not one enigma in the whole collection which will not speedily open and yield instruction. To the Israelites themselves, these rites and ceremonies must have been rather an exercise of faith, than a means of instruction. “I cannot perfectly understand why this heifer is slain, or why yonder lamb is offered,” said the pious Israelite, “but though I cannot understand, I believe there is virtue in it all and I reverently do, even to the smallest particular, that which God, through His servant Moses, has commanded me to do.”

To us, the types are not a dark mystery to perplex our faith, but an open vision to delight our eyes. Having believed in Christ Jesus, having received Him as the Father’s Sent One and being reconciled unto God by His death, we look back to the ceremonies of the old Law as the patterns of heavenly things. We endeavor to discover some new light in which the Savior’s beauties may be set and to behold Him from some different point of view, so that we may love Him the better and may trust Him more. Now, the particular point to which the red heifer referred, concerning Christ and His work, is just this—the provision which is made in Christ Jesus for the daily sins and failings of Believers.

In order to bring out our point clearly, we shall remark, first, *that even true Israelites are in daily danger of defilement.* Secondly, *that there is a provision made in the Covenant of Grace for the removal of the daily defilement of sin.* And thirdly, *that the red heifer most beautifully sets forth Christ as being the constant purification of His people, that they, having their consciences purged from dead works, may have power to worship acceptably the living and true God.*

I. It is undoubtedly true, that even THE TRUE ISRAELITE, THE TRUE BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS THE SUBJECT OF DAILY DEFILEMENT. My Brothers and Sisters, we who have believed in Christ are free from sin before the Divine judgment seat. The moment that we believe in Christ, our sin is no longer ours. It was laid upon Christ and cannot be in two places at one time. And therefore are we perfectly clean from sin before the eyes

of a holy God. This is *justification*, full, complete, everlasting. But we are all aware, that in the matter of sanctification, we are not, as yet, delivered from evil.

Sin dwells, though it reigns not in our mortal bodies. And since there is sin within, there is the capability of the defilement of sin without. Who has lived for a single day in this base world without discovering that in all his actions he commits sin? Who does not realize that in everything to which he puts his hand, he receives, as well as imparts, some degree of defilement? How is it, my Brothers and Sisters, that this is the case? The answer is easy, and it is to be found in the chapter before us.

Some of our defilement arises from the fact that *we do actually come into contact with sin*, here imaged in the corruption of death. Read the eleventh verse—"He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." We actually touch that dead thing and sin, by overt acts of transgression. The best man living still pollutes himself with evil. We have met with a few vain and ignorant persons who have boasted that they were perfect, but we never believed in their perfection, except so far as to concede that they were perfect in self-conceit, in boastful arrogance, and infamous impudence.

"If any man says he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him." The best of men are men at the best and while they are men, they will sin. We find the Apostle Paul crying out because of corruption and even using such strong language as this—"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We are in close connection with sin, because sin is *in* ourselves. It has dyed us through and through, staining the very warp and woof of our nature. Until we lay aside these bodies and are admitted to the Church of the First-Born above, we shall never cease very close and intimate connection with sin.

Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, we need to be constantly cleansed, because we are always defiling ourselves. In fact, we are always defiled because we are always touching the body of this death. Moreover, we get defilement, not only from our own actual sins, but *from companionship with other sinners*. You will read farther on in this chapter, "When a man dies in a tent: all that come into the tent and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean." The mere *being* with sinners defiles us. Christ could walk with publicans and sinners and yet incur no danger. The great Physician could walk the leper house of this world untainted by contagion, but this is not possible with us.

Even if the most honest and laudable motives shall lead us into the company of the ungodly, though our only aim may be to bring them to Jesus, yet their unhallowed conversation will not only vex, but defile. It is not possible to look upon another man's sin, even to look upon it with abhorrence, without receiving some degree of contamination, because the thought of evil is sin. Our hatred of evil always lacks in intensity—we do not detest it as we ought—and a failure here is a sin of omission which pollutes. You may say you can go into evil company and get no defilement—my Brothers and Sisters—I doubt it.

It may be absolutely necessary for you in your calling, and more especially in your desire to bless others, to mingle with the ungodly, but you

might as well attempt to carry fire in your bosom and not be burnt, or handle pitch and not be blackened, as to dwell in the tents of Kedar without receiving uncleanness. This dusty world must leave some mark upon our white garments—let us travel as carefully as we may. “I am black because the sun has looked upon me,” must ever be the confession of the bride of Christ. This world is full of the spiritually dead, and since we live, we must be often rendered unclean among the sinful. And therefore we need a daily cleansing to fit us for daily fellowship with a holy God.

Reflect, dear Brothers and Sisters, again, that one reason why we are so constantly defiled, is *our want of watchfulness*. You will observe that everything in the tent of a dead man was defiled except vessels that were covered over. Any vessel which was left open was at once unclean. You and I ought to cover up our hearts from the contamination of sin. It were well for us if we kept our heart with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life. Good Mr. Dyer says, “The Christian should lock up his heart in the morning and give God the key, lest any evil should come in. And then when He unlocks it at night, a sweet perfume of prayer will rise at eventide.”

But alas, we forget to lock up our hearts. We do not keep our Graces covered up. I believe that a man might go into the most sinful places under Heaven without receiving defilement if he exercised a sufficient degree of watchfulness. But it is because we do not watch that the poisoned arrows wound us. I noticed the other day an allegory of a candle in a lantern, with the motto, “One weak point is too much.” An enemy outside the lantern tried to blow out the candle. He blew all around, but it was well-secured, until, at last, he found a single crack and then through it he sent the destroying breath and soon the flame of the candle was extinguished.

This is what the devil does with us. We may be guarded in nine points out of ten, but our strength is to be measured, mark you, by the strength of the *weakest* point. The devil will find out, sooner or later, some crack through which he will attack us to our soul’s evil. Watch, my Brothers and Sisters, watch carefully. It is because you and I fail here that we acquire this daily defilement and need daily to be purified.

A yet more striking thought is suggested by this chapter—sin is so desperately evil that *the very slightest sin defiles us*. He who touched a bone was unclean. It was not necessary to put your hand upon the clay-cold corpse to be defiled. The accidentally touching with the foot a bone carelessly thrown up by the grave digger. Even the touching it by the plowman as he turned up his furrow—even this was sufficient to make him unclean. Sin is such an immeasurably vile and pestilent a thing, that the slightest iniquity makes the Christian foul—a thought, an imagination, the glancing of an eye. We may have shut out all the world from our closet, and yet find we have not shut out sin.

We may make a covenant with our eyes and with our hands and with our feet and with our lips, but still our wanton hearts will go after evil. We have heard of some perfumes of which it is said that the thousandth part of a grain would leave a scent for ages in the place where it had been. And certainly it is so with sin—about its merest bone there is an eternal pest—one sin of *thought* would be enough to destroy forever all communion with

God. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, we are defiled and need to be daily cleansed.

I must not fail to remind you, also, that *sin, even when it is not seen, defiles*, for you will observe in the chapter that a man was defiled who touched a grave. The bones might be buried deep down so that he could not discern them. And over those bones the grass might have grown in green hillocks, decked with a few sweet flowers and yet, if the Israelite did but touch that *grave* with his foot, or with his hand, he was defiled. Oh, how many graves there are of sin—things that are fair to look upon, externally admirable but internally abominable!

Such-and-such a custom is tolerated, no, it has become fast fixed in society and who shall find fault with it? Yet, many of our customs are but the graves of sin and many of our actions, which we think so admirable, have loathsome rottenness within. Too much, even of our sanctuary services, is comparable to a whitewashed sepulcher. Those sweet hymns, the unanimous and hearty shout of praise, the earnest prayer, the reverent deportment—all those, I say, may be but the whitewashed sepulcher. For our thoughts may be going abroad after all sorts of mischief, and so our very sanctuary services may be but the green sods which conceal the loathsomeness of sin.

O dear Friends, this is enough to startle us! We sin enough to our own knowledge, but how much of sin we commit of which we are not aware who shall possibly tell? Sins unknown! I have often reminded you of the expression in the Greek liturgy, “Your unknown sufferings.” It is such a blessing that there are unknown sufferings for these unknown sins. We are ignorant of the heights and depths of Jesus’ love. Thank God that there is a vast atonement whose vast efficacy we must leave in ignorance, just as there are sins of ignorance utterly undiscoverable by us.

Only one more thought here. I would have you notice, dear Friends, that the Jew was not only in danger of defilement in his tent and when he walked the roads, but he was in *danger in the open fields*. For you will observe that it says that if he touched a body that had been slain in the open fields, or a bone, he should be unclean. For all he knew, there might have been a battle there. Perhaps he thought, “Well, this is out of the way of men. I see no footprints, no tracks here,” and he walks carelessly across the green fields. But, though he knows it not, there lies in his way the corpse of old who had been killed by misadventure, or murdered by his fellow in strife. He stumbles upon the body and lo, he is unclean!

You may go where you will, but you cannot escape from sin. If you take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the sea, sin is there. If you make your bed in Hell, it is there it reigns. If you seek the cover of midnight, is not midnight the very noon and carnival of evil? If you enter the Church of God, you shall find it there—high and low, rich and poor, polite and uncivilized—you shall search all ranks and positions of men, but sin is everywhere. And until we mount with eagles’ wings to dwell before the Eternal Throne, we shall have to complain that we are daily in danger of defilement.

II. This brings us now to change the subject, by observing THAT A PURIFICATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED. A constant expiation is prepared. As Hart puts it—

***“If guilt removed, return and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again.”***

The ransomed Church of God needs daily to be washed in the Fountain and the mercy is that the precious blood shall never lose its power, but its constant efficacy shall abide till they are, everyone of them, “Saved to sin no more.” Beloved, there is a propitiation provided for daily defilement, for first of all, *if it were not so, how melancholy were your case and mine!*

Suppose we were Israelites, true Believers, and then to have sinned, as we certainly should do? Then, Beloved, at once we should be cut off from all privileges. The unclean person had no right to go up to the house of the Lord. He had no participation in its solemn worship. For him there was no glory of sacred praise and no prevalence of earnest prayer. You and I would have no right to Christ, no adoption, no justification, no sanctification—for the unclean person has no right to any of these. And as we should have no privileges, so we could have no communion with God.

God cannot immediately commune except with perfectly holy beings. He does now commune with the imperfect—but then it is through a perfect Savior—and He cannot commune directly with you and me while sin abides in us. He has to look upon us as purified through Christ Jesus and being, therefore, wholly clean—or else it were not possible for Him to walk with us, and to manifest Himself to us. The ultimate result in the Israelites’ case would have been death. You observe that he who did not purify himself was cut off from Israel. First, cut off by excommunication, so as no longer to be a sharer in the citizenship of Israel.

And then probably cut off, either by the executioner, or else by the sudden judgment of God through plague, or fiery serpent, or some other terrible means. And certainly if you and I, though Believers, could live for a season without being purified, carrying about with us the daily defilement of sin—before long it must end in spiritual death and in utter destruction. But thanks be unto God, He has provided against these terrible consequences.

But think again, Beloved, the Lord must provide a daily cleansing for our daily defilement, for *if not, where were His wisdom, where His love?* He has provided for everything else. There is not a lack a saint can know, but God has furnished a supply. Out of the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus, our necessities are all supplied. But if this, this glaring, this soul-destroying need had not been provided for, how could we call Him our Father and trust in Him? How could we know Him to be the only wise God, our Savior? A failure would have occurred in a most important point. Beloved, the love, the wisdom, the *complete* wisdom of God *demand*s that there should be such a purification supplied.

The work of our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of this. What is there opened for the house of David, for sin and for uncleanness? A cistern? A cistern that might be emptied, a water pot, such as that which stood at Cana’s marriage feast and might be drained? No, there is a *fountain* open for sin and for uncleanness. We wash, the fountain flows. We wash again, the fountain still flows. From the great depths of the Deity of Christ, the

eternal merit of His passion comes everlastingly welling up. Wash! Wash! It is inexhaustible, for it is fountain-fullness. Is it not said in Scripture, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate”? Why is Christ an Advocate today? Only because we need an Advocate *every* day.

Does He not constantly intercede yonder before the Eternal Throne? Why does He do that? Because we *need* daily intercession. And it is because we are constantly sinning that He is constantly an Advocate—constantly an Intercessor. He Himself has beautifully set forth this in the case of Peter—after Supper the Lord took a towel and girded Himself and then, taking His basin and His water, He went to Peter and Peter said, “You shall never wash my feet.” But Jesus told him, “If I wash you not, you have no part in Me.” He had been washed once. Peter was free from sin in the high sense of justification, but he needs the washing of *purification*. When Peter said, “Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my head and my hands,” then Jesus replied, “He that *is washed*”—that is, he who is pardoned—“needs not, save to wash his feet, for he is clean every whit.”

The *feet* need constant washing. The daily defilement of our daily walk through an ungodly world brings upon us the daily necessity of being cleaned from fresh sin, and that the mighty Master supplies to us. Methinks I see Him at this very day still girded with that towed, still with that basin and flowing water, going round to all His saints, coming round to us, Brothers and Sisters, and saying, “I have washed your feet, I, your Master and your Lord. And you are clean every whit.” There is a provision then. The work of Jesus Christ just meets the case.

Moreover, Beloved, *the work of the Holy Spirit also meets the case*, for what is His business but constantly to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us—constantly to quicken, to enlighten and to comfort? Why all this, but because we are constantly in need, perpetually being defiled, and therefore needing perpetually to have the purification applied? Best of all, *facts show that there is a purification for present guilt*. The saints of old fell into sin, but they did not remain there. David cries, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” Peter denies his Master, but he does not always remain a blaspheming, ungrateful coward.

No, he comes back again to his Lord and Master and makes the avowal, “You know all things. You know that I love You.” You and I, I hope, can give a better proof, still, that *we have tried it ourselves*. We remember that dear hour when first we came to Christ. Oh, it was no fiction, no dream. We were weighed down with a thousand sins, but one look at Jesus took them all away. And since that time we have often been cast down. There may be some of you who escape from doubts and fears. If you do, I greatly envy you, but I think that most of us get, at times, in such a position that we cry with David, “My soul lies cleaving unto the dust.” You feel as if you dare not come into the Lord’s Presence. You cannot hope that He will hear your prayer.

You cannot grasp the promises, they seem too good for such as you. You cannot look up to Christ to call Him Brother. “Abba, Father,” falters on your tongue. But, have you not known what it is to look to your Redeemer again just as you did at first? And then your love and joy have

come back to you again once more, as if it had been a new conversion. And you have gone on your way rejoicing—you that only yesterday were hanging your harps upon the willows and refusing to sing to the praise of your Lord!

My dear Friends, if this were not a great Truth of God, some of us would die in despair. I am sure if I might not still come to Jesus as a sinner and still rest in Him, expecting to be cleansed from all defilement, I do not know that there would be anything in the Bible which could yield comfort to me. I must have a remedy as broad as the disease. I must have a supply as deep, as wide, as constant as my needs, and, thanks be unto God, here is just such a supply! The foulest sins Jesus takes away and when our hearts have backslidden from God He does bring us back. Why, some of us have appeared in our own consciences to have gone into the very belly of Hell, and yet the Lord has brought us up again to the gates of Heaven.

Ah, it does not take many minutes to work this change. Sometimes I have felt all God's waves and billows rolling over me till I was ready to despair under a sense of my own unworthiness. And yet the next moment I have been able to read my title clear to mansions in the skies. And believing on Christ, I have had full fellowship with Him! This is the power of purification—thus is it that the application of the precious blood of sprinkling always works, when faith, through the Holy Spirit, brings it to the conscience. May you and I know this by our daily constant experience of it—that there is a daily purification for daily defilement.

III. But now, Beloved, I bring you to the chapter itself. THE RED HEIFER SETS FORTH, IN A MOST ADMIRABLE MANNER, THE DAILY PURIFICATION FOR DAILY SIN. It was a *heifer*—an unusual thing for a sacrifice to be a female. And we scarcely know why it should be in this case, unless indeed, to make the *substitution* more evident. This red heifer stood for all the house of Israel—for the whole Church of God. And the Church is always looked upon and considered in Scripture as being the spouse—the bride—always feminine.

Perhaps, to make the substitution obvious and complete, to show that this heifer stood in the place of the whole seed of Israel, it was chosen rather than the customary bullock. It was a *red* heifer. Some think because of its rarity, for it was very difficult to find one that was red without a single spot—for if there were one white or black hair it was always rejected—it must be wholly and entirely red. Some think that this was to signify how unique and unrivalled is the Person of Christ. How extraordinary—the only One of His Father—the only Redeemer of souls. Of such matchless virtue and of such glorious pedigree, that no angel can match with Him, neither any of the sons of men, for a moment, be compared with Him.

Probably, however, the red was chosen only from its bringing to the mind of the Israelites the idea of blood, which was always associated with atonement and putting away of sin. Surely, my Brothers and Sisters, when we think of Christ, we always associate Him with the streaming gore, when we are under a sense of sin. At other times we think of Him as white and ruddy, as Perfection itself. But there is no point about Jesus

which the trembling conscience loves to rest upon so much as that red crimson blood of His.

We have heard complaints sometimes made of our theology, that there is too much blood in it. "The blood is the life thereof." If there were no blood in our preaching, there were no life in it, no joy, no true power. It is just because we love to extol that precious blood, that God is pleased to honor the Word and make it comfortable to saints and make it the Word of quickening to sinners. I am sure, dear Brothers and Sisters, sometimes when we have sung that verse—

**"His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads over His body on the Tree,"**

in the presence of that blood-red mantle, we have felt the next lines to be no imagination, but a sober fact—

**"Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me."**

My Master, His face covered with bloody sweat, with ruby drops of blood around His head. My Lord with His back like a river of gore, where the accursed whips have beaten Him—His hands streaming with founts of crimson, and His feet flowing with rills of scarlet, and His side giving forth a rich waterfall of His heart's blood—He never seems so lovely as when thus I see him arrayed in "a vesture dipped in blood." "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, *mighty to save*. Why are You red in Your apparel and Your garments like He that treads in the wine vat?"

This is the glorious Savior, mighty to save and never seen so mighty to save as when He is robed in crimson. Let it be the *red* heifer. It shall ever bring to the mind of the pious Believer the remembrance of Him who trod the winepress alone. It was a heifer *without spot*. This denotes the perfection of Christ's Character—"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Born without any human defilement, conceived immaculately through the Holy Spirit. "That holy Thing which is conceived in you," said the angel to the Virgin. Without any natural defilement such as we receive, He felt not the taint of original sin.

Then the heifer must be without blemish. Our Christ, as He had no spot of original sin, has no blemish of actual sin. "The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me." He became like unto us in all points, but always with this exception—"yet without sin." Observe that this red heifer was one *where there never came a yoke*. Perhaps this sets forth how willingly Christ came to die for us. Not forced from Heaven, but freely delivering Himself for us all. "Lo, I come to do Your will. In the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O God." Not dragged to His death. "I lay down My life of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. No man takes it from Me." The free Son of God wears no yoke, except that yoke which was easy to Him and that burden which was light, the yoke of love which constrained Him to lay down His life for His people.

An interesting circumstance about this red heifer is that it was not provided by the priests. It was not provided out of the usual funds of the sanctuary, nor yet by the princes, nor by any one person. *The children of*

Israel provided it. Why? Why, that as they came out of their tents in the desert, or their houses in Jerusalem and saw the priests leading the red heifer, every man and every woman and every child might say, "I have a share in that heifer. I have a share in that victim which is being lead out of the city to be consumed." Brethren, I wish—oh, I would to God I dare *hope* that every man and every woman here could say, "I have a share in Jesus Christ," for that is the meaning of this national provision, to let us see how Christ shed His blood for all His people. And they have all a part and all an interest in Him.

If you believe in Him, though you are the weakest of all His children, you have as good a share as the strongest. He is as much your Christ as He is the Christ of an Apostle, or of a martyr who went to Heaven in a chariot of fire. I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that you see this and are assured that you have an interest in Him. As we noted what this victim was, there is yet to be observed *what was done with it*. Again, let me beg you to refer to your Bibles, to see what became of this red heifer.

First, *it was taken out of the camp*. Herein it was a picture of Christ. That He might sanctify His people with His own blood, He suffered without the camp. Without the camp was the place of uncleanness. There the lepers dwelt. There every defiled person was put in quarantine. Jesus Christ must be numbered with the transgressors and must suffer upon Mount Calvary, outside the city gates, upon that General Tyburn of criminals, "the place of a skull." The people of God are to be a separate people from all the rest of the world. They are not to be numbered with the dwellers in this world's city. They are to be strangers and pilgrims and sojourners, as all their fathers were. Therefore, Christ, to set them an example of separation, suffers Himself without the camp.

When taken without the camp, the red cow *was slain*. A *dying* Savior that takes away our sins. Brethren, we love Christ the Risen One, we bless Christ the living, pleading Intercessor, but after all, the purification to your conscience and to mine comes from the bleeding sacrifice. See Him slain before our eyes. Let us sing with Watts—

***"My soul looks back to see
The burdens You did bear
When hanging on the cursed Tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."***

When the heifer was slain, *Eleazar dipped his finger in the blood* as it flowed gurgling forth. He dipped his finger in the warm blood and sprinkled it seven times before the door of the Tabernacle. Seven is the number of perfection—to show that there was a perfect offering made by the sprinkling of the blood. Even so, Jesus has perfectly presented His bloody sacrifice.

Now mark, all this does not purify. I am not yet come to that point. Atonement *precedes* purification—Christ must die and offer Himself a victim, or else He cannot be the Purifier. All this is necessary, but the vital part of the purification comes presently. They then took the body of the slain heifer, which was an unclean thing and made everybody unclean who touched it, and laid it upon a pile prepared for its burning. They consumed it utterly—its skin, its flesh, its blood, even to its dung—not a single thing must be left. This sets forth the pangs of the Savior, His great

and terrible agony upon the Cross. His real death, His real forsaking by God. It sets forth how God accounted Him unclean, how our Master was compelled to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

The heifer does not burn on the altar, it never smoked within the holy place as did the bullock which was God's offering. This was a foul and guilty thing. The man who killed it became foul. He that gathered the ashes was unclean, and even the priest himself had to wash his garments. This sets forth how Christ was numbered with the transgressors, how the iniquity of His people was laid upon Him, and how the Lord, "made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." You will say, "A strange thing that those who touched the *sacrifice* should be made unclean." Yes, but types, like other emblems do not run upon all fours.

Therefore you must look at it in the light intended—who was it that put Christ to death? Were they not unclean? Were not the Roman soldiers unclean? That ribald mob who shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"—those eyes that gloated themselves with the agonies of His tortured body? And are not you and I, who helped to put Him to death—are not we ourselves unclean? No, I go farther. If I today gather the ashes and bring them before you—if I seek today to be as the man who sprinkled that purifying water, am I not unclean? Do I not feel that even when I am speaking best of my Master, I am sinning still, for I cannot speak of Him as I would?

And, my Brothers and Sisters, what makes you feel so unclean as contact with Christ? Is it not true that the very same Christ who takes your sins away, first makes you feel your sins? "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced and they shall weep and mourn for their sins." The same Savior who takes tears away when we look to Him by faith, first brings those tears to our eyes when we look and see Him die. It was right, therefore, that He should first make those unclean who touched Him and then afterwards should make them clean through another touch of His purifying power.

When the whole was fully burnt, or while burning, we find *the priest threw in cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet*. What was this? According to Maimonides, the cedar wood was taken in logs and bound round with hyssop and then afterwards the whole enveloped in scarlet. So what was *seen* by the people was the *scarlet* which was at once the emblem of sin and its punishment—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Everything you see still continues of the red color, to set forth atonement for sin.

Inside this scarlet there is the hyssop of faith, which gives efficacy to the offering in each individual. And within this is the cedar wood that sent forth a sweet and fragrant smell, a perfect righteousness, giving acceptance to the whole. One delights to think of this—in connection with Christ—that, as there is a daily witness of our defilement, so there is a daily imputation of His perfect righteousness to us. So that we stand every day accepted in the Beloved by a daily imputation, by which not only is daily sin covered, but daily righteousness given to us. We are, therefore,

every day as much accepted as we shall be in that last great day when He shall receive us to His glory everlasting.

The essence of the matter lies in the last act, with the remains of the red cow. The cinders of the wood, the ashes of the bones and dung and flesh of the heifer, were all gathered together and carried away and laid by in a clean place. According to the Jews there was not another heifer killed for this purpose for a thousand years. They say, but then we have no reason to believe them, that there have never been but nine red heifers offered at all. One in the days of Moses, the next in Ezra's time, and the other seven afterwards, and that when Messiah comes He is to offer the tenth, by which they let out the secret that they do look upon the Messiah as coming in His own time to complete the type.

Our own belief is that a red heifer was always found when ashes were wanted, and as there were hundreds and thousands of persons defiling themselves, the place where the ashes were kept was much frequented and much of the purifying matter required. The ashes were to be put in a vessel with running water and the water was sprinkled over the unclean person who touched a body or a bone. By this process the ashes would require to be renewed much oftener than once in a thousand years, in order that everyone might have his portion. Does not this storing up suggest that there is a store of merit in Christ Jesus? There was not only enough to make us free from sin by justification, but there is a store of merit laid up that daily defilement may be removed as often as it comes—

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

From all the sins I shall ever commit there is a purification laid by to cleanse me. The seven times sprinkled blood has put these sins away before the Judgment Seat of God and the ashes which are laid by shall put my sin away from my conscience, purging it from dead works.

The ashes were to be *put with running water*. Running water is ever the sweet picture of the Holy Spirit—“He leads me beside still waters.” The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. Purification is made in Heaven by the finger of Christ—seven times He sprinkled His own blood—but on earth, in our conscience, it is made by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must make Christ precious and efficacious to us. What is Christ on the Cross? What is Christ in the grave? Nothing to any man till the Holy Spirit makes Him Christ in the *heart*. You will hear many complain that there is no beauty in Christ that they should desire Him—it is to them dull work to hear of Jesus. Ah, Beloved and well it may be—but when the running water comes, when the Spirit of God gives quickening and cleansing to the heart and makes us love things Divine, then there is nothing so precious, so inexpressibly desirable as the ashes of a slaughtered Savior.

Observe that it was applied *by hyssop*. The hyssop was dipped in water, and then the unclean was sprinkled. Hyssop is always a type of faith. “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” Our faith, like a little sprig of hyssop, is dipped into the blood, or dipped into this cleansing water which flowed from the side of Jesus, and so the remedy is applied. Brothers and

Sisters, believe in Jesus more fully than you have done and you will feel the power of His propitiation. He is God. He became Man. He suffered—those sufferings are able to take away sin. You need have no guilt on your conscience, but be clean, rejoicing in Him and accepted in the Beloved. May the Lord give us to know more fully the mysteries of this red heifer and the joy of pardoned sin.

I will close by remarking that if there is any Believer here who has fallen into sin, if there is one who has lost the Presence of the Lord—if you have grown cold and dead, if you are conscious of having backslidden, if you have begun to doubt whether you are a child of God at all—here is in Christ just what you want. Ah, but you say, you have fallen so often, sinned so constantly. Yes, but here are ashes for every day, cleansing for every hour, for every moment. Look upon your Lord and Savior. God is intending to forgive you not once only, but to cleanse you every day. He has taught you to forgive your brother not seven times, but seventy times seven—and do you think He will not do what He tells *you* to do? Ah, He will forgive you a countless number of times, yes, every day.

If you will seek daily cleansing in Christ, you shall have communion with Him. You shall stand in His presence and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is no privilege reserved for the few, for all of us have—every child of God has—an interest in this. Let us come, therefore, boldly and pray the Master now to apply again this purification of Christ, that we may again live near to God and delight ourselves in His society.

And as for you that have never believed in Jesus, let me remind you that this is not for you. You need to be washed for the *first* time in the blood. O Soul! What a loathsome being you are out of Christ! Why, you are all over black from head to foot and black within as well as without. What you need first is washing in the blood. You shall have the washing of water, of which we speak, another day. The blood of Jesus can cleanse you from all sin. Trust to Him and He shall save you. Trust Him now. Come now. May the Spirit help you to come that you may be saved, both now and forever. Amen.

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TWO WILDERNESS INCIDENTS

NO. 3214

A SERMON
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“And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and He called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water and our soul loathes this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died.”
Numbers 21:1-6.

OUR text is a long one, but we must have it all in order to get the sense of the passage, so as to contrast the two wilderness incidents which are here mentioned and to learn how we may use them to our own spiritual profit.

I. So, in the first place, LET US CONTRAST THESE TWO WILDERNESS INCIDENTS.

First of all, let us examine the details of the first incident. We learn, from this part of the narrative, that *the children of Israel were in real danger*. They were attacked by a ferocious foe who, being probably aware that he was doomed to destruction, determined to anticipate the contest by fighting against the Israelites while they were unprepared, and so injuring them as much as he could. Arad appears to have been a king of some considerable power and his skill in warfare is proved by the fact that he was at least partially successful against the Israelites, for he, “took some of them prisoners.” So that the people were in real danger. And have you not noticed, dear Friends, that God’s people often behave best when they are in their worst case? Usually, when they are in imminent peril, they cry to their God to deliver them, and so they soon obtain relief—but when they make trouble for themselves by a willful fretfulness

of spirit—then it is that they lose their confidence in God and, instead of playing the man, they play the fool!

You must have noticed how often accidents happen to people when they are engaged in play rather than when they are at work. I always warn our friends to be especially careful when they are leaving for a holiday, for I have observed how frequently they come back with signs of having suffered injuries of one kind or another, though they have been perfectly well while occupied with their usual avocations. It is very much the same in spiritual things. While we are hard at work for the Lord, watching against temptation, striving against sin, or bravely enduring trial, we behave ourselves well. But full often when we are engaged in what ought to be mere child's play, getting rid of self-invented and unreasonable fears, we stumble and fall and bring disgrace upon ourselves and upon our Christian profession. I think that if a Christian is to grow to the full stature of a man in Christ, he must be subjected to the strong winds of trial and temptation. The dross must be separated from the gold by the fierce heat of the furnace. I have heard such a remark as this many a time, "I never knew what a Christian, So-and-So was until he lost his property, or his wife, or his children, or until he was stretched upon the bed of sickness and death." There is something in the keen wintry air that braces us and strengthens us for work—but the soft summer zephyrs make us feel faint and languid and unfit for vigorous exertion. So, in a spiritual sense, the summer zephyr of ease often weakens us, while the sharp, stern trials of our seasons of adversity make us strong to endure in the time of testing—

***"Often the clouds of deepest woe
So sweet a message bear.
Dark though they seem, 'twere hard to find
A frown of anger there.
It needs our hearts be weaned from earth,
It needs that we be driven,
By loss of every earthly stay,
To seek our joys in Heaven."***

It was, therefore, for good rather than for evil that the Israelites were allowed by the Lord to be placed in circumstances of real danger. Notice what they did—*they resorted to their God by simple faith*. They did not depend upon their own prowess in war. God had enabled them to rout the Amalekites and to defeat many other adversaries. But when this new foe appeared, they did not rely upon their own swords, or spears, or bows—they went at once to the Lord and spread their case before Him. In humble, earnest prayer, they sought His aid and then *they registered their solemn vow* that if God would give them the victory over these Canaanites, they would execute His judgments upon them and utterly destroy their cities. This is still the right way for the Believer to go to God in times of real peril and trial! And this is the way in which he does go *when the Spirit of God guides him*. He comes to God, no longer resting in any carnal confidence, or depending upon his own wit or strength, but realiz-

ing that, “blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Like Hezekiah, when he spread Sennacherib’s letter before the Lord, the Believer pleads with God for His name’s sake, for His Son’s sake, for His promise’s sake, to deliver him out of all his troubles. And it may be that he is moved to add a solemn vow unto the Lord, for although vows are never to be made wantonly or wickedly, there are times when a vow may be incumbent upon us. Many an important step which I have taken, and which God has blessed, has been taken because of a vow that I have made to Him when my soul was in trouble. And I sometimes think that trouble is, in my own case, always a preparation for entering upon some new path of duty, or beginning some new enterprise for my dear Lord and Master. Should it not be so with all of us who are, indeed, children of God by faith in Jesus Christ? Let us, each one, say, “Lord, if You will deliver me out of this trial, then, whatever service I may have rendered to You in the past, I will add something more to it in the future. I will seek to add a few more acres to the fields which I have, up to now, attempted to plow, sow and reap for You. Or, if I cannot increase my sphere of service, I will try to serve You better in it than I have ever done before.” You are not to make such vows as these as though they were a sort of bribe to the Most High, for you know that your best resolutions are only empty words unless His Grace enables you to follow them with corresponding deeds. Still, if you do it in humble dependence upon Him and in sincere gratitude for anticipated favors which your faith causes to be present to you, you may make such vows and expect God’s blessing upon them!

So you see, dear Friends, that the Israelites were in real peril, but they took their case to the Lord and, therefore, *He gave them speedy and complete deliverance!* “The Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites.” They seem to have marched straight out to meet their foes and to have routed them at once. So, Beloved, put your case in the hands of God and your difficulties will soon be over. Or if the trial is not removed, you will receive Grace and strength to bear it. The word, “impossibility,” seems to block your road, but there are no impossibilities with God! With Him all things are possible. A man left to himself would break his back under the crushing burden that rests upon him, but that would not have happened to him if he had cast his burden upon the Lord. Many have lost their reason because they tried to carry their cares, themselves, instead of casting all their care upon Him who could easily have carried them. Brother, Sister, is it night with you? Then wait God’s time to make the sun to rise again upon you. Is it ebb-tide with you? Wait a little while and God will again bring the silver streams up from the sea till the mud and filth are covered by the rising waters. What is there that He cannot do? If there is anything that you can do, work as if everything depended upon you—and then trust in God remembering that everything *really* depends upon Him!

The action of the Israelites, in appealing to the Lord, not only brought them prompt deliverance, but it also advanced them in the path of duty. They were brought out of Egypt on purpose to smite and exterminate these Canaanites—a race upon which God’s long-suffering could no longer be exercised—and the Israelites, as the Lord’s executioners, “utterly destroyed them and their cities.” Ah, my dear Friends, our troubles will help us to advance in the path of duty if we will but take those troubles to God! There is much to be learned in the furnace of affliction. There are some of God’s writings that can only be read by light from a furnace. God has been pleased to write some of His promises in sympathetic ink which can only become visible as it is held close to the fire! You can see the stars in the daytime if you go to the bottom of a deep well—and you can see many a starry promise shining brightly when you are at the bottom of the well of trouble! The Lord sends trials to bring us to Himself, as Joseph sent the rumbling wagons to bring Jacob and all that he had to him in Egypt. And if we only know how to use them aright, we shall find that—

***“Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer!
Trials bring us to God’s feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there.”***

This, then, is the first of the two wilderness incidents. Now, turning to the second, I want you to note that there was no real cause for distress whatever. “The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way,” but there was nothing that need have discouraged them if they had looked upon the way with the eye of faith. It is true that God had led them a long way roundabout, but then that was because of their unbelief. And it is also true that God had “led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” It is true that the sun was hot, but then the cloudy pillar always shielded them in the daytime. It is true that they had to wander in the wilderness, but then God gave them bread from Heaven to eat and water out of the Rock to quench their thirst. It is true that they had no means of buying new clothes and new shoes, but then Moses was able to say to the whole nation before he left them, “Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your feet swell, these forty years.” It is true that many trials befell them in the wilderness, mostly through their own sin, yet were they the most highly-favored people upon the face of the earth! As Balaam “saw Israel abiding in his tents, he took up his parable and said, How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, and your tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are, they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord has planted and as cedar trees beside the waters.” Yet, with all these privileges, “the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” It is true, dear Friends, that there are many troubles in the world, but probably the worst are those that we make for ourselves—or that we only imagine when there really are none! Last week I saw my dear old grandfather who

is about 87 years of age, and I said to him, "I suppose, Grandfather, you have had many troubles in your long life." And he replied "Well, I have had none too many, except those that I have made for myself." And I expect that is true of the most of us! We have a little (or big) trouble factory somewhere in our home, or we carry it about with us wherever we go, and the suits we make there last as long as a suit in Chancery—they seem as if they would never wear out! And those home-made suits fit us very badly and are most uncomfortable. But if we would only leave ourselves in God's hands, we would be much more free from anxiety and trouble—

***"Eternal God, we look to You,
To You for help we fly.
Your eyes, alone, our needs can see,
Your hands, alone, supply."***

When the Israelites became discouraged because of the way, did they take their trouble to God as they had done with the former one? Oh, no! It would have been a far happier thing for them if they had done so, but they, "*spoke against God, and against Moses,*" saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loathes this light bread." Often, when professors of religion fancy they are in trouble, they begin to rail at God—and at what they imagine to be the second causes of their troubles, as the Israelites "*spoke against God, and against Moses.*" They say, "If my father had been a more prudent man," or, "if So-and-So had given me wiser advice," or, "if my husband were not such a spendthrift, I would not have been in such trouble." These Israelites sinned doubly in speaking against God and against Moses, for the Lord had delivered them with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm. And Moses, also, had done them real service. He had taken the iron yoke from their necks and led them out of the house of bondage. Yet they talked as if he had been their enemy, or had deceived them! They said, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all, but this manna before our eyes." Thus do men often murmur against their best friends and frequently the murmuring against man is only a covert way of murmuring against God! Some grumble at the minister when they really mean that they do not like the Gospel that he preaches! Talking against Moses, it was not surprising that the Israelites also "*spoke against God.*"

Further, these people were in such a sad state that *they ignored the mercies they were then enjoying.* They said, "There is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread." So there *was* bread, after all! That bread of which the Psalmist afterwards wrote, "Man did eat angels' food"—the best possible food for them in the wilderness! And there was water continually gushing out from the Rock that followed them. We, too, meet with many who can talk glibly enough of their mise-

ries, but who are silent concerning their mercies! I daresay some of you know old Mrs. Complaint. If you ever go to see her, the moment you sit down she beams to tell you how she has been tormented all the week with rheumatism and then she says troubles never come alone, for that son of hers gives her constant anxiety and her neighbors are continually slandering her—and so on, and so on! You give her some relief and others give her relief, but she is never satisfied. When I have visited such a person, I have usually thought it well to say to her, “Well, Sister, you have told me about your troubles, now let us hear about your mercies! Surely you have some mercies for which you desire to praise the Lord.” If you will talk thus to those who complain to you, it may be that after a little while, the conversation will take a more profitable turn. There are other grumblers beside that miserable old woman. There are other friends, in business, who try to persuade us that they are always losing money, yet they appear to live in considerable comfort—and we would like to have for the Lord’s work some of the money that they spend upon luxuries of various kinds. So, when they complain of the hard times, and the keen competition in business, and the losses they are continually making, we are not greatly impressed by the sad story with which we are now fairly familiar! Then there are our farming friends who are far too often found in the ranks of the grumblers. If they do not actually speak against God, they frequently complain of the weather which He sends! It is either too wet or too dry, too hot or too cold! When crops are plentiful, prices are low—there is generally something or other which gives them an excuse for complaining, and so they sin against the Most High as the Israelites did in the wilderness!

What did those people get as the result of their murmuring? Did the way become any shorter because their soul was much discouraged? Did the sharp stones become any smoother? Did the thorns and thistles of the wilderness become changed into vines and olive trees? Did their adversaries all sheathe their swords and flee from them in terror? No, the way was just as long as ever, the stones just as sharp, the brambles just as plentiful, their enemies just as fierce and each day was just as wearying as all those that had gone before! And now, in addition to all their previous troubles, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died.” They complained when they had no reason for complaining—but now they had good ground for complaint or something to make them truly sorrowful! Their discontent, like a fire which never has sufficient fuel, was as a burning fever within them, so now fiery serpents set their veins aflame with their deadly poison! They were, indeed, rightly punished. They would not be content with the mercies which the Lord showered so abundantly upon them, so they were made to smart for their ingratitude! And our experience will be similar to theirs if we act as they did. We shall not be delivered from our troubles as the result of our complaining, but the Lord will chastise us

with His rod of correction until He brings us humbly to confess our sins and to seek, for the future, to walk in His ways.

So you see, dear Friends, the contrast between these two wilderness incidents. In the first case, real trouble carried to God in prayer was turned into an advantage. And in the second case, foolish and wicked discontent, for which there was no reason, was allowed to spend itself in murmuring against the Most High—and so brought down upon the people fiery serpents which bit them until many of them died.

II. Now, secondly, LET US LEARN HOW WE MAY USE THESE TWO INCIDENTS TO OUR OWN SPIRITUAL PROFIT.

Fellow Believer in Christ, you may do one or other of these two things—you may either cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you—or you may be like the bullock that is unaccustomed to the yoke and that kicks against the sharp goad and so angers his master and injures himself! Remember that *true faith is a holy thing, but murmuring is sin*. Do not think that it is a light thing to murmur against God, or to complain of His Providential dealings with you. No, it is really setting up your fallible judgment or your self-will against the Infinite Wisdom of the Most High! It is high treason against the King of kings to seek to—

***“Snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God.”***

Are you, poor feeble mortal, able to drive the chariot of the sun? Can you control the whirlwind and put a bit into the mouth of the storm when it is raging in all its fury? You know that it is God, alone, who can say to the mighty ocean, “To here shall you come, but no further: and here shall your proud waves be stayed.” How dare you, then, set up your feebleness against His Omnipotence, and your ignorance against His Omniscience, and your folly against His consummate Wisdom? Bow down in the dust before Him lest your murmuring should bring upon you His righteous wrath and He should send upon you, if not fiery serpents, some other punishment that shall make you wring your hands in agony for many a day to come!

Further, *to trust in the Lord is both helpful and pleasant*. It is said that if a man would lie quite still in the water, he would float—that it is his kicking and struggling that causes him to drown. Whether it is *literally* so, I cannot tell, but I know that it is most delightful and most blessed—

***“To lie passive in God’s hands
And know no will but His.”***

It is the kicking and struggling against the will of God that bring us trouble and increased suffering! God would use the knife very gently upon us, but we dash ourselves against the sharp instrument and then there is a great gash which need never have been made if it had not been for our own folly! Who are the happiest men in the whole world? Are they not those who tell the Lord all their trouble, and cast all their cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for them? And who are the most miserable people in the world? Are they not those who are constantly complaining

of their miseries and who never seem to realize how many mercies they have received? If you need to make yourself miserable, you will not have much difficulty in doing so! He who is looking for sorrow will probably not have to look far before he finds it, but it is a great pity that he is not rather looking for signs and tokens of God's Providential care and of His forgiving mercy! Happy is he who can sing with Faber—

***“I bow to Your will, O God,
And all Your ways adore.
And every day I live I'll seek
To please You more and more!
I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Thine—
I live in triumph, too, for You
Have made Your triumphs mine.”***

Again, dear Friends, I think you can easily make a wise choice if I remind you that *to trust in the Lord honors Him*. For a child of God to repose in Him in full confidence must be pleasing in His sight. But for any child of His to be fretting, worrying, complaining, questioning must be dishonoring to Him. How would you feel if it were the case of one of your own children? If you heard him complaining that he did not know whether he would have any breakfast tomorrow morning, or where he would get any new clothes when his were worn out, you would say, “Trust me, my Child, and I will provide for you.” But when your child says, “I know that my father will provide for me—no care about that matter ever crosses my mind,” he is honoring you by his confidence! And it is the Christian who trusts God most who honors Him most.

Remember, also, that *it is to your own honor to trust in the Lord*. This was the Master's own words to His disciples, “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or, What shall we drink, or, How shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek). For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Any worldling can fret and fume about food, drink and clothing—but will you, a child of God, thus misbehave yourself? Why should you be groveling in the dust with the children of this world, when you should be soaring upward like the eagle, far above the mists and clouds of earth? Rise, Believer, to the dignity of your new-born nature, and cast all your care upon your God, who cares for you!

Besides that, *believing in Jesus will be likely to make you more useful*. We are hardly likely to bring sinners to Christ if we carry about with us a long and care-worn countenance! That will not be the way to recommend the Gospel to others. There are some professors who seem to think that the more wretched they can be, the more communion will they have with Christ, but they are greatly mistaken if they do! They appear to aim at being altogether unbearable in society and to be utterly miserable in retirement. If they imagine that in leading such a life as that, they are reflecting credit upon their Master, nothing could be more erroneous! You

would not like your servant—I will go further than that and say—you would not like your horse or dog to be so lean that you could count his bones! It would be no credit to you to have such a servant, or horse, or dog—people who saw them would think they must have a sorry kind of master! The God of Love no more wishes to have miserable servants and followers than we do! Many of His servants have good reasons for being sad, but no true servant of God who is in his right senses, thinks it is his duty to *make* himself sad! Paul was Inspired when he wrote to the Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.” And I believe it is the cheerful Christian, and especially the Christian who can be happy in sickness, patient under adversity and joyous even in the hour of death who will win fresh adherents for the Lord Jesus Christ!

For all these reasons, then, I would have you follow the example of the children of Israel in the first of the two wilderness incidents we have been considering—but not in the second.

But, Beloved, suppose and alas, we need not put it as a supposition, for it is only too true—some of us have been murmuring and God has sent a fiery serpent to bite us? We were discontented because of some fancied trouble and now we have a real trouble—what then? You remember how the narrative continues. “Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make you a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.” So, when they sincerely repented of their sin in murmuring against the Lord and prayed to him through Moses as their representative and mediator, He revealed the remedy by which they could be healed. You remember when you first looked to Him of whom that bronze serpent was a type, and how you were immediately healed? So you must again look unto Him and He will cure the suffering which you have brought upon yourself by your murmuring! God loves you too well to let you perish despite your ingratitude and unbelief! He abides faithful and before our eyes He holds up, once again, His well-beloved and only-begotten Son, and bids you look unto Him even as you did at the first! Happy is the Christian who is always “looking unto Jesus.” Believer, if you have lost your evidences. If through your murmuring against God you have been so sorely chastened that you cry out in agony! And if you are now walking in darkness and can see no light, remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever! So still look to Him! Say to Him, “Just as I am, as once I came to You, O Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I come to You again! Though stained once more with my own wanton wickedness in murmuring against You when Your many mercies ought to have comforted me and made me rejoice, I still come to You and I believe that You can pardon, and relieve,

and succor, and save, and sanctify me, now, even as You did at the first.”—

**“Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward Grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty Sinner, come!
‘The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.’
Rejoicing saints re-echo, Come!
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come!
Your Savior bids you come.”**

If any of you have never come to Jesus, come now! If you have never looked to Him who hung upon the Cross, sin-bitten Sinner, look to Him, now, and you shall be saved at once! If you have looked to Him, before, look again, now, and never take your eyes off Him until they are closed in death! And even then, the eyes of your soul shall still continue looking unto Jesus—only they shall look upon Jesus sitting upon the Throne of God as now, by faith, you look upon Him hanging on the Cross!

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 21:1-9; JOHN 3:1-15.**

Numbers 21:1-4. *And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and He called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.* They were not allowed to go through the land of Edom. They had, therefore, to turn around and go right away from the land where they one day hoped to dwell. And the road was a particularly trying one, over hot and burning sand, “and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” Sometimes God’s own people, when they find that they are not so far advanced in the Divine Life as they thought they were, when they find old sins reviving and when troubles multiply upon them, get “discouraged because of the way.” If this is our experience, let us not fall into the sin into which these Israelites fell, but even in our discouragement let us turn to our God.

5. *And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.* One gets tired, in reading of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, of this parrot cry, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt?” For nearly 40 years, this was their cry whenever they met with any sort of difficulty.

How weary God must have been of their cry—and of them, too! And now it was raised because they had been fed with “angels’ food” which they called “light bread.” It was easy of digestion, healthful and the very best kind of food for them in the wilderness—but they wanted something more substantial, something that had a coarser flavor about it, more of earth and less of Heaven! There is no satisfying an unregenerate heart. If we had all the blessings of this life, we would still be vying for more.

6. *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against you; pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.* Like a true mediator, he was always ready—even when they had most insulted him and grieved his meek and quiet spirit—still to bow the knee and intercede with the Lord on their behalf. The people implored him to ask that the serpents might be taken away from them, but apparently they still continued to trouble them. However, if God does not answer prayer in one way, He does in another. The fervent prayer of a righteous man may not prevail in the particular direction in which it is offered, but it “avails much” in some direction or other! Just as when the mists ascend, they may not fall upon the very spot from which they rose, but they fall *somewhere*. And true prayer is never lost—it comes back in blessing, if not according to our mind, yet according to Another mind that is kinder and wiser than our own!

8, 9. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Make you a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.* [See Sermons #285, Volume 5—MAN’S RUIN AND GOD’S REMEDY and #1500, Volume 25—NUMBER 1500—OR, “LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT”—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

John 3:1-3. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God is with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* [See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] There must be a new birth because a new nature is absolutely necessary for the discernment of spiritual things. The natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things—they must be spiritually discerned. The new birth is therefore necessary that we may have a Spirit within us which can see or understand the Kingdom of God. But until a man is born-again, “he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

4, 5. *Nicodemus said unto Him, how can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and*

of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. We understand the passage to mean, “Water, that is, the Spirit,” but it may refer to the purifying influence of the Word as symbolized by water. I do not think that Baptism is referred to here at all.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Parents may be the most devout people who ever lived, but that which is born of them is only flesh.

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* It is only then, as we are born of the Spirit of God that there is any spiritual life in us whatever.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* [See Sermon #1356, Volume 23—THE HEAVENLY WIND—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He undergoes a mysterious change. He becomes a new man and he enters into a new life which others cannot comprehend. Though they hear the sound of it, they cannot tell from where this man’s new life comes, or where it goes. He has become a spiritual person, not comprehended of natural men.

9-10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* “So learned in the Law of God, are you ignorant of the Spirit of God? Have you read the Law so many times and yet not found out that natural births and outward washings are of no use in spiritual things?”

11, 12. *Verily, verily I say unto you, We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* “If, at the very entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven, you say, ‘How can these things be?’ what will you say if I take you into the central metropolis of the Truth of God and introduce you to the great King, Himself?”

13-15. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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A SONG AT THE WELLHEAD

NO. 776

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 10, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And from there they went to Beer, which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, ‘Gather the people together, and I will give them water.’ Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it—The princes dug the well, the nobles of the people dug it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves.”
Numbers 21:16-18.*

WE have remarked in our reading that the children of Israel were continually changing their places and that there was usually a great difference between one station and the next. So, also, we are constantly varying in *our* experience, and the variations are sometimes exceedingly remarkable. You observe, in the neighborhood of the text, that the people pitched their tents at one time by the brooks of Arnon. There appears to have been an exceedingly abundance of water where they then were, but nevertheless they removed into the wilderness where there was not a single drop to quench their thirst.

So is it with us. At one time we are abounding in every good thing, rejoicing “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” And at another time we discover how great our weakness is—faith is at a very low ebb—and joy seems as though the frost of doubt had nipped its root. But, great as the changes of our experience certainly are, our necessities never change. Whether they found water or not, the people always needed water. The great camp must always have a supply, or perish for the lack of it. So, at all hours, and in all places, Believers need the Divine Grace which only their Lord can give them. They carry no stores with them—they are daily dependent upon their God. “All my springs are in You,” said David, and every heir of Heaven must experimentally learn this Truth of God.

Now there is one thing certain, that although our experiences vary and our necessities remain the same, yet there is something that does not change, namely, the supply which God has provided for our needs. Our experience may be high or low, bright or dark, but JEHOVAH-JIREH is still the name of our God. In the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen, and in the valley, too, that the Lord will provide. As our day, so shall our strength be. If great our needs, great shall be our supplies!

Israel found it so, for when they came to this particular place where there was no natural water, they soon discovered a *supernatural* supply. They arrived at a spot that was all arid sand, but that was the very place

of which God had spoken, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Believer, your supplies shall never vary, and your greatest necessities shall only illustrate the fullness of the Lord your God! Be not afraid, but go forward. Though it is dark and dreary in the prospect, yet if God bids you advance, tarry not, for He has surely taken care to provide your necessities when they arise.

The particular text before us has four things in it which I think may be instructive to us. These people needed supplies just as we need Grace. There was, first, a promise concerning the supply. Secondly, there was a song. That song viewed in another light, was, in the third place, a prayer. And when this promise, song, and prayer were attended by the effort, then the blessing came.

I. To begin, then, these people required water as we greatly need Divine Grace and there was A PROMISE GIVEN CONCERNING THE SUPPLY. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Gather the people together, and I will give them water.' " Beloved, we have a promise. A promise? No, a thousand promises! God's people were never in any plight whatever but what there was a promise to meet that condition. There is not a single lock of which God has not the key. You shall never be placed in a difficulty without some provision being made for that difficulty which God foresaw, and for which His heavenly wisdom had devised a way of escape.

Now, the supply promised here was a Divine supply: "I will give them water." Who else could satisfy those flocks and herds? By what mechanism or by what human toil could all those multitudes of people have received enough to drink? "I will give them water." God can do it and He will. Beloved, the supply of Grace that you are to receive in your time of need is a Divine supply! You are not to look to *man* for Grace. God forbid that we should ever fall into the superstitions of some idiots in these modern days who suppose that God has given His Grace only to bishops and to priests—the most graceless of all men if they profess to have any grace to give away—for if they had true Grace at all they would not act after that fashion.

If you want Divine Grace, Beloved, you must go to God for it. You shall get it there, and nowhere else. As for even the ablest of God's sent ministers—they are but broken cisterns if we trust in them. They shall have Grace enough to get to Heaven themselves, but they will be to themselves great wonders when they arrive there. Wise virgins always say to the foolish ones who apply to them for oil, "Not so, lest there is not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

There is a Divine supply for you, Christian! Therefore, knowing the attributes of God, you will understand that however much you may require there will be an all-sufficient supply! However long you may require it, there will be an everlasting supply! At whatever hours you may want it, there will be an available supply. It is not possible for your needs to out-

last that which will be treasured up for you. "I will give them water." And, you thirsty ones, go and drink, for there is no fear of exhausting *this* well-head!

As it was a Divine supply, so, also, it was a suitable one. The people were thirsty and the promise was. "I will give them water." At another time He had given them bread. He had also given them flesh to eat. But water was what they just now required and water was what they received. We do not always get that form of Grace which we think we need. We sometimes fancy that we require comfort, when *rebuke* would be much more healthful for us. And it is the rebuke which we obtain, and not the comfort. God is not to be dictated to by our whims and wishes. Like a father, He understands His children better than His children understand themselves. And He gives, not according to their foolish guesses of what they need, but according to His wise apprehension of what they require. "I will give them water."

What do you want tonight? Go and lay open your needs before the Lord. Tell Him what it is you require, if you know, and then add to your prayer, "And what I know not that I need, yet give me, for You are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I can ask or even think—not according to my apprehension of my necessities, but according to Your perception of my needs, deal with Your servant, O Lord, and grant me that which is most suitable to my case." "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."

Observe, too, that the supply promised was an abundant supply. The Lord did not mock the people by sending them just enough to moisten their tongues but not to quench their thirst. We cannot be sure how many people there were, but it is probable and almost certain, that there were nearly three million of them, and yet, when God said, "I will give them water," He did not say, "I will give *some* of them water. The princes shall have a supply but the poorer ones must go without." Oh, not so! "I will give *them* water."

It included every child of Israel, every babe that needed it as well as every strong man that thirsted after it. Hear this, child of God? "I will give them water." Whatever you need, you who are the most obscure in the world, you who have the least faith, you who stand in the back of the crowd not able to push to the place where you hear that the water flows—here is provision for you! It shall be with Divine Grace as it was of old with the manna—there shall be enough for all that go out to gather it—he that gathers much shall have nothing over and he that gathers little shall have no lack. There shall be—

***"Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough forevermore."***

No child of God shall be left to perish for lack of the necessary supplies—

"I will give them water."

I may observe, once more, that it was a Divine supply, a suitable supply and an abundant supply. And also it was a *sure* supply. "I will give them water." It is not, "I may, perhaps, do it. Possibly there shall be refreshment for them." No, "I will give them water." Oh, the splendor of the Lord's "shalls" and "wills!" They never fail. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" Search the Book of the Lord and read and see if any of His words have fallen to the ground—if one of His promises has lacked its mate! You will have to say, Believer, as Joshua did, "There failed not anything of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel—all came to pass."

We do not go forward upon the strength of "ifs," and "buts," and "perhapses." We advance confidently, invigorated and inflamed as to our courage, by "wills" and "shalls." God must un-deify Himself before He can break His promises. He would lose His Character, and that can never be! His honor is the bright jewel of His crown and He will keep His promise to all His people. "I will give them water."

I thought, as I was coming up to this house once again to have the unspeakable pleasure of addressing you, "What am *I* that there should be any supply for the people when they are gathered together?" And this text seemed to come to me—*you* "gather the people together, and *I* will give them water." It is my business to be here, occupying my place, and it is your business to be gathered here at the time set apart for prayer, "and I will give them water." The lad may have only his barley loaves and a few small fishes, but the Master will multiply them! There may seem to be little enough in our hand, only perhaps a cruse of water, not enough for one—but He who formed the sea and holds it in the hollow of His hands can give enough to all the thirsty ones!

You are now gathered together, Beloved, and I pray the Master to be as good as His promise, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Here is the promise! A blessed thing to work upon, this. We shall build well enough upon so good a foundation!

II. And now, secondly, observe THE SONG. These people had not been singing for years. Ever since the day when they had sung at the Red Sea, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," the minstrelsy of Israel had been hushed—save and except when they danced before the calf of gold. But for their God they had had little or no music. But now they come together to the digging of the well, and the children of Israel sang this song, "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it."

Observe, then, that this song may be looked upon, in the first place, as the voice of cheerfulness. There was no water but they were still in good spirits. Supplies were short but their courage was still great. It is very easy to be happy and cheerful in heart when you have all that heart can wish. It is not very difficult for us to maintain our spirits when all things go just as we would have them go. But it is rather difficult to begin to sing

when the mouth is dry and the lips are parched, and the tongue almost refuses to do its duty! Cheerfulness in need, cheerfulness upon the bed of pain, cheerfulness under slander—singing like the nightingale, in the night, praising God when the thorn is at the breast—this is a high Christian attainment which we should seek after and not be content without.

I like, too, the look of these children of Israel, singing to the Lord *before* the water came, praising Him while they were yet thirsty! They were living, for a little while, upon the recollections of the past. They were believing that He who smote the rock and the waters gushed out, and who gave them bread from Heaven would surely supply their needs. Let us pitch a tune and join with them, however low our estate may be!—

***“Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near,
And for my relief will surely appear!
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform.
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.”***

Note again that this song was the voice not so much of *natural* cheerfulness as of cheerfulness sustained by *faith*. They *believed* the promise, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” They sang the song of *expectation*. I think this is one of the peculiar enjoyments of faith, to be the substance of things hoped for. The joy of hope—who shall measure it? Those who are strangers to it are certainly strangers to the sweetest matter in spiritual life. With the exception of present communion with Christ, the joy of a Believer in this present state must be mainly the joy of hope. “It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.”

We thank God that we shall be satisfied when we wake up in the likeness of Jesus! The anticipation of Heaven makes earth become endurable! And the sorrows of time lose their weight when we think of the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.” Sing before the well begins to spring! Sing confidently, “Spring up, O well!” You cannot make it spring, but sing as if you could, for God is with you! Say, “Down with my sin.” You cannot cast it down, but God can, and therefore speak as one who speaks in God’s name! Say, “Begone, unbelief!” You cannot make it go, but God’s Spirit can, and therefore sing as knowing God is with you! “Spring up, O well!” Make that your song! Sing of the mercy yet to come which your faith can see, although as yet you have not received it!

This song, also, was no doubt greatly increased in its volume and more elevated in its tone when the water did begin to spring. After the elders of the people had dug for awhile, the flowing crystal began to leap into the air. They saw it run over the margin of the well—the multitude pressed around to quench their thirst, and then they sang, “Spring up, O well! Flow on, flow on, perennial fount! Flow on, you wondrous stream Divinely given! Flow on and let the praises of those who drink flow also! Sing unto it, and you that drink lift up your songs, and you that mark your

neighbors as their eyes flash with delight as they receive the needed refreshment, let your song increase as you see the joy of others.”

All you who have received anything of Divine Grace, sing unto it! Bless God by singing and praising His name while you are receiving His favors. I think we would be more conscious of God’s blessing coming to us if we were more ready to praise Him. Brethren, we receive so many of God’s mercies at the backdoor—we ought to stand at the door and take them in ourselves. Presents from a great king ought not to be unacknowledged, stowed away in the dark, forgotten in unthankfulness. Let us magnify the name of the Lord! But I must not detain you longer upon this point.

There was a promise and then the children of Israel made a song out of the promise *before* it was accomplished. Then, as it was fulfilled to their delight and joy, they made the song yet more sweet and more loud. So let our hearts sing of the promises of God! You are very poor, yet still sing, “Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.” And when the mercies come, then lift the song yet higher. “Bless the Lord who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” “Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it!”

III. But we remark in the third place, that the song was A PRAYER. “Spring up, O well,” was virtually a prayer to God that He would make the well spring up—only it was faith’s way of *singing* her prayer. We would remark of this prayer that it went at once to work and sought for that which was required. What was needed? Not a well, but water! Not merely digging in the sand, but the obtaining and the *drinking* of the water. Beloved Believer, let me remind you that it is very easy for us to forget *what* it is that we need and to be satisfied with something short of it.

Now what we need is not the *means* of Divine Grace, but the Grace of the means! The means of Grace are excellent when they bring us Grace, but the means of Grace are not the ultimata. It is not these that we seek, but Divine Grace itself. To show you what I mean—“Spring up, O well,” was the prayer—it did not ask for the *well*, but for the well to spring up. So tonight, or some other evening, when you are retired for your private devotions and you have opened the Bible and begun to read, do not be satisfied with merely reading through a chapter.

Some good people read through two or three chapters—stupid people, as stupid as they are good for doing such a thing! It is always better to read a *little* and *digest* it than it is to read much and then think you have done a good thing by merely reading the letter of the Word. For profit you might as well read the A B C backwards and forwards, as read a chapter of Scripture unless you meditate upon it and seek to comprehend its meaning. Words are nothing: the letter kills. The business of the Believer with his Bible open is to pray, “Here is the well: spring up, O well! Lord, give me the meaning and spirit of Your Word while it lies open before me.

Apply Your Word with power to my soul—threat or promise, doctrine or precept, whatever it may be—lead me into the soul and marrow of Your Word.” The Rabbis say that whole worlds of meaning hang upon every word of Scripture, but only he will find out the meaning who waits upon God with the prayer, “Spring up, O well!”

Or, perhaps you are about to kneel down to pray. I beseech you, do not be satisfied with getting through 50 or 100 choice sentences which look as if they were devout. That prayer has not benefited you which is not the prayer of the *soul*. You have need to say, “Spring up, O well! Lord, give me the spirit of prayer. Help me to feel my need deeply, to perceive Your Promise clearly, to exercise faith upon that promise, and then, by wrestling importunity to hold You fast, and say, ‘I will not let You go except You bless me.’ ” It is not the *form* of prayer, it is the *spirit* of prayer that shall truly benefit your souls. In vain might you open a book and read through 10,000 prayers—the best that were ever composed—it would be no benefit to you.

“Spring up, O well!” Come, Holy Spirit, come and help my infirmities, for I know not what to pray for as I ought! You make intercession for me with groans that cannot be uttered. You need in prayer not the well so much as the springing up of the well. And it is just the same when you go to the ordinances. For instance, Baptism can be of no service to the Believer unless he devoutly perceives the meaning of it. He must know what it is to be dead with Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ, and before he comes to the ordinance this should be his prayer, “Spring up, O well! Lord, give me to enjoy that which the outward emblem teaches me. Give me true fellowship with Christ!”

And so at the Lord’s table—of what good is it to eat bread and drink wine? Oh, but when *Jesus* comes, and your soul feeds upon *Him*, and He makes you aware of it, like the chariots of Amminadib when the well springs up—oh then the table is better than the banquets of kings! And is it not the same when you come to the public assembly? The Prayer Meeting may be dull enough, unless the Spirit, the Comforter, is poured out upon us. We have been singing just now—how many were singing? Some were making melody with their lips, but not with their hearts. But, oh, when the hymn breaks out in richest blessings, like living waters—when you get through the shell of the hymn and get at the soul and life of it—then, blessed be God, what a wellspring we often get in sacred songs!

And further, with regard to the preaching of the Truth of God—often and often does my soul groan out to God that He would give me liberty in the ministry—that He would lead me into the essence of His Truth. O Brothers and Sisters, I sometimes feel, in preaching, like the butcher who cuts off meat for others but does not get a mouthful for himself—it is hard work, indeed! I dare say you very often sit and hear God’s Word but it has lost its savor. You cannot enjoy it—you do not *seem* to get into it. The

babe at home in the cradle, or that ledger, or that bad debt, or something that has occurred in the family before you came here distracts you. You cannot get into the spirit of worship.

“Spring up, O well!” This is what we want. So let our prayer be like the song of the text—direct and to the point. Lord, do not put me off with the husks of ordinances and means of Grace. Give me Yourself! I had rather be a doorkeeper and really be in Your House, than sit in the seats of the Pharisees in the synagogue and yet not see my Master. Strive after vital godliness, real soul-work, the life-giving operation of the Spirit of God in your hearts, or else, Beloved, you may have the well, but you will not have any springing from it. Remember, then, it went direct to the point.

And notice, also, that this prayer was the prayer of faith, like the song. Now “without faith it is impossible to please God.” This is emphatically true with regard to prayer. He who pleads with God in unbelief really insults Him, and will get no blessing. Faith gives wings to our prayers so that they fly Heaven-high! But unbelief clogs and chains our prayers to earth. Many prayers never go beyond the ceiling of the room in which they were uttered because there was no faith mingled with them. Oh, how lacking our prayers are in this one essential element! If we had more faith what large blessings would come down to the Church!

When I listen to some prayers, I cannot help thinking, “Well, what is there left to pray for after that? Everything has been included in the petition that one could well conceive of. Now if we could but get the answer.” We ought to do so! And if we did, what a different state of affairs we should have! We need, indeed, more faith to make our poor words real genuine wrestling with God so as to prevail with Him, and come off more than conquerors. God is not slack concerning His promises. We never yet put Him to the test and found Him lacking. The history of the Church speaks through all ages with but one voice on this point—all things conspire to urge us to faith in God in connection with prayer to Him in time of need. If you want, then, some wells to spring up to supply the needs of yourself or your family, pray in faith! The rock, if needs be, shall flow with rivers of water. The driest wilderness shall send forth floods of refreshment. Have faith in God and call upon His name. “Pray without ceasing.” “Spring up, O well!”

You will please notice, further, that it was *united* prayer. All the people prayed, “Spring up, O well!” I dare say that was a Prayer Meeting at which everybody prayed for they were all thirsty! And therefore they all said, “Spring up, O well!” What blessed meetings those are when the souls of all present are in it! I hope we shall have some noble enquirers’ meetings in the Tabernacle during the next month and for many more afterwards. Mr. Nivens was asked by someone whether he had had any enquirers’ meetings. “No,” he said “we have not had any lately, for I do not think we have

many enquiring *saints* among us!" "What?" said the other, "I never heard of that."

"Oh, but," Mr. Nivens said, "we must always have enquiring saints before we shall have enquiring sinners. 'For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel.' You see, saints must enquire, and then God will do it for them. And as soon as ever the saints begin to enquire, 'Will you not revive us again?' then sinners begin to enquire, 'What must we do to be saved?' Oh, if we could have a meeting where *all* should be enquirers—the saints enquiring—'When will You save my wife? When will You bless my husband? When will You look in Grace on my children? When will You convert my neighbor?' And the sinners enquiring—'Lord, when will You meet with us and give us to taste of Your salvation?'"

I say the prayer was a unanimous one—"Spring up, O well!" Brothers and Sisters, may God touch you all with the heavenly fire so that you may *all* be unanimous in the one great desire that God would visit us, make our wells to spring up, and cause the whole Church to be revived and sinners to be saved!

IV. I cannot, however, tarry here but must now conclude with the fourth head, which is this—they began with a promise—they turned the promise into a song and into a prayer, and they did not stop there but **THEN THEY WENT TO WORK.** "God helps them that help themselves," is an old proverb and it is true with God's people as well as true of Providence. If we want to have God's blessing we must not expect to receive it by lying passive. The first blessings of Divine Grace come to passive *sinners*, but when the Lord quickens His people He makes them *active*.

So here in this place. "I will give them water." But "the princes *dug* the well, the nobles of the people *dug* it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves." Here was *effort* used, reminding us of a parallel passage in that famous song, "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools." They must dig the wells! The water does not come from below—it comes from above—the *rain* fills the pools. God fills the pools, but we must dig them. And, observe that when God intends to bless a people, effort is always esteemed to be honorable. "The *princes* dug the well, the *nobles* of the people dug it."

They were not ashamed of the work. And when God shall bless a Church and people, they must all feel that it is a very great honor to do anything in the service of God. No matter though they may be very learned, they must feel it an honor to teach a class in a Sunday school for Christ. They may be rich, but they must feel it an honor to open the pew-doors, or the place-doors, or do anything for the Master. They may be very famous and very much esteemed, but they must feel it to be an honor to wait upon the most humble enquiring soul. And what an honor it really is! Why, princes are not so honored as those are who are allowed by God to be "workers together" with Him in the economy of Divine Grace!

Brothers and Sisters, covet earnestly the best gifts in this matter. Seek after usefulness as hunters seek after their game and as miners hunt after their treasure. Seek to serve God! You will be princes in this way. They are the princes who dig the wells! They are the true nobles who use their staves in the Master's service! Before man sinned he worked for God. Adam was put into the garden to till it and to dress it. He was not made to lead an idle, useless life. His state of innocence was one of service to his Maker. When men shall be once more in a state of purity, their highest honor will be—"His servants shall serve Him." Heaven is a place where they serve Him day and night in His temple.

Idleness is sin and shame to us. It is our duty to labor and our highest dignity is to be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the princes of old and the nobles helped to dig the well. It was effort which they all felt to be honorable. Well has our poet put it—

***"All may of You partake,
Nothing so small can be,
But draws when acted for Your sake,
Greatness and worth from You.
If done beneath Your laws,
Even servile labors shine.
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,
The meanest work, Divine."***

But it was also effort which was accomplished by very feeble means. They dug the well and they dug it with their staves—not very first-class tools. Would not the mattock and the spade have been better? Yes, but they did as they were told. They dug with their staves. These, I suppose, were simply their rods, which, like the sheiks in the East, they carried in their hands as an emblem of government—somewhat similar to the crook of the shepherd. These they used as they were commanded.

Well, dear Friends, we must dig with our staves! We must dig as we can. We must use what abilities we have. It is every Christian's duty to try to know as much and get as much talent as he can. And if you have but *one* talent, *use* that one talent. Go to trade for Christ with it. If you cannot do what you wish you could, do what you *can*, remembering that the Lord saves not by the mighty, and works not His greatest things by the mighty ones! He has chosen the "base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are." I should look very much like a fool if I went a well-digging with a stick—and yet if God told me to do so—then I should be *wise* in doing it. Go, Christian, with such talent as God has given you, and God will bless you and make your lamps and trumpets to be as mighty for the overthrow of Midian as they were in the hands of Gideon of old!

Here was honorable effort with feeble means. And, observe, it was effort in God's order. They dug the well "by the direction of the lawgiver." We

must not serve God according to our fancies. The Westminster Assembly's Catechism well lays down idolatry to be "not only the worship of a false god, but the worship of God, the true God, in a way which He has not prescribed." Consequently, *all* ceremonies that are not commanded in Scripture are flat idolatry—it matters not what they are! Every mode of worshipping God which is not commanded by God is neither more nor less than flat idolatry.

The children of Israel, in their apostasy, did not set up another god. It is clear to every reader of the story of the golden calf that they did not worship another god when they fell down before it. They worshipped Jehovah under the form of that golden calf, but it was a way of worship which God had never ordained, for He said He allowed no similitude nor likeness of Himself to be attempted to be made and therefore it was idolatry. And, mark you, when men adore pieces of bread as they are fools enough to do nowadays—even though they tell you they worship Christ under the form of that bread—it is idolatry! It is a glaring breaking of the Second Commandment and we doubt not will bring destruction upon those who fall into it.

We must not forget in everything we do for God to go to work in God's way. I hold that in revivalism I have no right to adopt anything which I cannot go before God with, and justify at the Throne of God. I must not adopt a mode of procedure which I may think suits the *place* or is adapted to the *times*. Is it right? Let it be done. Is it wrong? Let it not be so much as *thought* of among the saints. We are never to "do evil that good may come," nor to run over and above, or counter to the current of Scripture in order to work some doubtful good. We must dig the well according to the direction of the lawgiver. "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Let us keep close to the good old paths which are laid down in Holy Writ, and, digging the well we shall get the water.

And then, in the last place, it was effort made in faith. They dug the well, but as they dug it they felt so certain that the water would come that they sang at the work, "Spring up, O well!" Brethren, this is the true way to work if we would get a blessing. We must preach in faith believing that the Word cannot return unto our Master void. We must teach in the Sunday school in faith believing that the children will be led to seek Christ early, and to find Him. We must distribute tracts in faith believing that if we cast our bread upon the waters we shall find it after many days. You must take care that you have this faith.

You must not ask from God a blessing upon your work in a spirit of doubt, for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed—let not that man expect to receive anything of the Lord—but believe the promise, believe that God will bless you if you seek His glory, and go about His work in His way, and you shall see the blessing—so great a

blessing that when you have proved your God, you shall not have room enough to receive it! I want all the dear members of this Church, especially, to join with me in breathing the prayer, day by day, and hour by hour, that the well would spring up in our midst.

Conversion work is not pausing, I hope. I have been so long removed from you, now, that I am longing to see some great work done by the Master! O that He would now make bare His arms! We have seen what the Gospel can do in the salvation of souls and in making God's people cleave close to Him. Let us ask for a renewal of those blessed seasons and the continuance of our long prosperity. Let us pray for ourselves that our religion and our piety may spring up like a well, "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life." And let us pray that the ministry may be greatly blessed among us, and for all our works—in the classes of the Sunday school, and everywhere else. "Spring up, O well," and God give us all to drink of the living waters till He leads us to the mount of God where we shall feed on the green pastures and lie down by the river of life forever and ever.

There have been some things said, I trust, which may be blessed to you who do not know the Lord. I pray they may. Remember, trust in Christ is that which saves you. Rest alone in Jesus. It is the mount of Calvary that is the mount of your hope. Fly to the Savior, and you are saved. God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

THE FIRST SETTING UP OF THE BRONZE SERPENT NO. 1722

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.’ And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us.’ And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Make you a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.’ And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”
Numbers 21:4-9.

I HAVE frequently expounded to you the type of the bronze serpent as our Lord interprets it in the third of John. I thought it meet, tonight, to take that type in its connection and look at the *original* circumstances which led to the setting of it up—for while the general doctrine of looking for salvation to Christ as the bronze serpent is always to be preached and is most usefully set forth in the midst of the unconverted—yet I take it that its original institution teaches us much which ought not to be overlooked. It is very clear that this type has its first voice to the people of God, for it was among Israel—among the nominal people of God—that this bronze serpent was first needed and first set up. And while the instruction which it gives is wide as the universe, for whoever looks shall live, nevertheless it has an inner circle to which it, first of all, addresses itself—the professed members of the Church of God.

The Book of Numbers might be called, without any impropriety, “Moses’ Pilgrim’s Progress.” It contains a full account of the progress of the pilgrims through the wilderness until they came to the promised land. And, like Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress,” it is not only a history of any one per-

son or nation, but it is the picture of the life of all God's people. Probably no one among us will pass through all the troubles of the Israelites, so as to become in one person an epitome of all wilderness experience, and yet even this may be, for so it was with David, and so it has been with others by whom the Lord would instruct His Church. This, however, is exceptional. But, take the whole of us together as the Church of God, and you will find that our lives are mirrored, pictured and foreseen in the travels of God's chosen people from the land of Egypt to Canaan.

I am afraid that many of us can see ourselves even in the passage before us. Yes, not only those of us who are young and raw in spiritual things, but certain of us who have been, for many years, following in the Divine track, and are hoping, by-and-by, to enjoy our portion in the better country. If even Moses and Aaron erred on the road, I fear there are very few of us who can read the story without crying, "I remember my faults this day!" The passage before us occurred almost at the end of Israel's wanderings. They had been, now, for 40 years in the wilderness, and they had come within sight of the Promised Land. They had only to cross the mountains of Edom and to get through the passes of Seir, and they would have been at once in the land which flows with milk and honey!

But the Edomites would not permit them the privilege of passing along the highway and so, as Israel must not fight his brother Esau, they were called upon to go around his border and to come down to an arm of the Red Sea by a long and weary march, when they seemed to be on the border of their covenanted inheritance! If this happened at the end of their marches, let none of us presume upon our experience and knowledge. May the Holy Spirit help us while we learn caution from this Inspired history, for these things happened to them for our instruction.

I. I call your attention, first of all, to their DISCOURAGEMENT—"The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Assuredly there are times when God's servants become discouraged. To their shame, let us say it. To our shame let us confess it. It is by faith that we live, but as discouragement is the opposite of faith, it does not help our life. It is generally the fruit of unbelief and so, by discouragement, we cease to live a healthy and vigorous life—and we begin to faint. Even those of God's children who have had much experience in the Divine way, at times, give way to discouragement.

The reason may be found in various things. Occasionally it springs out of disappointment. It was a serious disappointment to the Israelites to see the land over there within a day's march, or less, and yet for Edom to say, "I will come out against you with the sword. You shall not pass through my border." It seemed like having the cup at the lips and being denied a drink! It was a grievous trial, after all those years, to have come so close, and then to be forced to march back to the Red Sea! How tantalizing to see the land, as through a wall of crystal, and yet to be unable to put foot upon it! It was a bitter disappointment and there may be like trials in store for us.

Possibly some of my Master's servants have entertained the notion that they have made amazing progress in the Divine life and, just then, an event has occurred which showed them their weakness—and they have

been forced to weep in secret places and upbraid themselves, saying, “After all this, am I no better than to be cast down about a trifle? Have I suffered so much, and yet is my progress so small?”—

***“I thought that in some favored hour,
My Lord would answer my request,
And, by His love’s subduing power
Would slay my sins and give me rest.
Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part.”***

We ask to have our waters purified and lo, we are stirred till all the mud which was quiet in the bottom of our soul is made visible and pollution appears everywhere! Yet may not this be the nearest and surest way to purity? This making us see the secret depravity of our hearts?

Yet what a disappointment! I thought I was something and now I perceive that I am nothing! I had half hoped that I was perfect and now I see my secret imperfections and lusts more clearly than ever—

***“The truth is easy to repeat;
But when my faith is sharply tried
I find myself a learner yet,
Unstable, weak, and apt to slide.”***

We thought that we were climbing into full assurance, and lo, we descend into the valley of humiliation! Yes, we did taste of the honey of bold confidence, and we said, “I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” But now we hardly know whether we are the people of God at all! We have, with trembling, to repeat our first step and turn our eyes to the bleeding Savior, hoping, as poor sinners, to find salvation in Him!

This need of progress is a dreadful thing, and yet it has happened to many till they have dropped all idea of boasting, and have said with the Apostle, “Not as though I had already attained.” They have felt like men beginning a race, although they have been running that race for many a patient year! Such disappointment often costs the child of God much discouragement because of the way. It was not, however, merely disappointment—it was much more. It was the unfriendliness of those who ought to have been most brotherly. Surely Edom ought to have granted his brother, Israel, the small privilege of passing through the country, seeing it was the nearest way to Canaan.

It would not have cost Esau anything. Israel promised to pay if they even drank of the water of his wells. But, no, they must submit to this unkindness. I have known people of God much discouraged by the unfriendliness of those whom they thought to be their Brothers and Sisters in Christ. They went to them for sympathy and they received rebuffs! They looked to them for help in the time of depression and it was denied them. They said, “Surely, my Brethren will comfort me,” but they cried in the end, like Job, “Miserable comforters are you all.” Then have they sighed, “It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it; but it was one who was my equal, my acquaintance. We went to the house of God in company.”

You know the story of David’s desertion by his friends and of our Lord’s betrayal by Judas. And you are well aware how often heartbreak has come

to the best of men through the unfriendliness of those whom they looked upon as sure to render them kindness. The people were much discouraged because of the way, for it was blocked up by an unbrotherly brother. May the Lord's people learn great tenderness to one another, for sometimes we may say thoughtlessly that which will inflict a ragged wound. Let us be loving and tender as a nurse with a child, remembering the gentleness of the Father and the tenderness of Jesus, and the compassion of the Holy Spirit. Alas, that it should be often true that the souls of the people of God may be much discouraged because of the absence of Christian love! Resolve that it shall not be your fault.

Undoubtedly, however, the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the length of the way. The nation had been on the march 40 years! They had stopped for considerable periods at different encampments, but still, they never knew how long they would be in one spot. They were like swallows, always on the wing. It is true their life was full of mercy, but at the time mentioned in our text they were not in the humor to notice mercy—they were more inclined to notice discomfort and to complain that the way was so long that they were downright weary of it. They had hoped, years before, to have reached the goodly land, and now they must change their direction and go all round the Edomite country! This was tiresome and tried their patience till it quite failed.

To certain of God's people, old age has brought much of heaviness by reason of its infirmities and afflictions. They often sigh, "Why are His chariots so long in coming?" They are willing, in the spirit, to abide the Master's will, but the flesh is weak and they wonder whether the Lord has quite forgotten them. Why has He not taken them Home? Why does He keep them lingering in this banishment, so far off from the dear Father's house? Do you not hear them mournfully sing—

***"O when shall we at once go up,
Nor this side Jordan longer stop
But the good land possess?
When shall we end our lingering years,
Our sorrows, sins, and doubts, and fears—
A howling wilderness"?***

Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if your length of years has become a burden, God grant that you many not be discouraged! May you be "such an one as Paul the Aged," and bear up under all the growing weaknesses of your years, bringing forth fruit in your old age. Be not cast down, for the Master will come, and will not tarry. He has not forgotten His servants! He will give them their penny at sundown. The ripe sheaf shall not be left in the field too long. Your Lord will come and receive you unto Himself, that where He is you may also be. Quietly hope and patiently wait for the salvation of God. And yet, no doubt, the length of the way has discouraged full many a true pilgrim.

Then, there was the fatigue of the way, for journeying through that wilderness was by no means an easy business, especially along the shore of the gulf. Very rugged to this day is the pathway there. The road is full of hills and valleys, and rugged ravines and sharp stones, and weary sands. Traveling there is as bad as traveling can be. To some of God's own children life is no parade upon a level lawn, but rough marching and deep

wading. They have to take the bleak side of the hill; the wind blows upon them and the sleet is driven in their eyes, and their home is but a cold harbor to them. Even their bed seems to have a stone for its pillow. We know certain of God's people who, what with poverty and ill-health, with ungenerous relations, with persecution, with hard labor and with short commons, find, from day to day, that the pathway to Heaven lies through briars and thorns, over dark mountains and through black forests.

Do you marvel that their souls are discouraged because of the way? I think I hear somebody saying, "Well, now, I don't like all this. I do not get discouraged and I do not find the road to be rough." Dear Brother, be thankful that you do not, but let me warn you not to judge others. If you are like great bullocks, full of strength, do not get to pushing with horn and shoulder those who happen to be the weak cattle, for the Lord takes note of haughty looks and proud words. When any of His saints grow so strong and stomach-full that they despise the tried ones, they are likely, themselves, to smart for it. The rule of our God and King is this—"He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty." This I know both by observation and experience—that there are many true pilgrims who will enter the King's country triumphantly at the last, who, nevertheless, are occasionally much discouraged because of the way.

And yet, Brothers and Sisters, I am not going to make any excuse for discouragement in myself, nor would I try to make it for you. You do not want to have any excuse made for you, do you? After all, these Israelites were a highly favored people. What if they were driven to wind around the land of Edom? Yet the Lord went before them and is not that man happy who marches where Jehovah leads? Tell us that God has chosen the way and we do not want to know more about it. "He led them forth by a right way." Depend upon that! There could be no mistake where infinite Wisdom led the van.

Now, Brother, you are discouraged, you say, because of the way, but whose way is it? Have you chosen your own way and willfully run against your duty and against the Providence of God? Well, then, I say nothing about the consequences of such conduct, for they must be terrible! But if you have endeavored to follow the Lord fully and if you have tried to keep the path of His statutes, then it must be well with you. Why are you discouraged? Judge not by the sight of the eyes, nor by the hearing of the ears—let Faith sit on the judgment seat and I am sure she will give forth this verdict—"If the Lord wills it, it is well. If Jehovah leads the way, the road must be right."

Besides that, not only did God lead them, but God *carried* them. He says, Himself, that He bore them on eagle's wings, for though the way was often rough, yet it is wonderful to remember that their feet did not swell, neither did their garments wax old upon them, all those 40 years! Though it was a wilderness, yet their bread was daily given them and though it was a land of drought, yet the smitten Rock with its waters followed them, and they knew nothing of drought. How could they be better off than to have Heaven for their granary, the rocks for their wine cellars, and God, Himself, for their Provider?

They were gentlemen commoners upon the bounty of Jehovah! They were honorable pensioners of the King of kings! What could they desire which He had not supplied? What city was lit up at night with a pillar of fire, as their great canvas city was enlightened? With what other people did God dwell? Where else did He walk in the midst of their abodes and manifest Himself as He did to Israel? Instead of being discouraged, they had every cause to be doubly grateful and glad. Led of God, fed of God, taught of God, guarded of God—what better lot could they imagine? Besides, dear Friends, though they were so very long in getting to Canaan, yet they would get there if they would only believe their God. God would surely bring them in. To every faithful one He would say, “You shall stand in your lot in the end of the days.”

Though the unbelievers among them perished and their carcasses fell in the wilderness, yet even to such of them as repented, there was this sweet thought, that though nothing more than God’s work might appear unto His servants, yet His glory would be seen by their children—and the next generation should surely enter into the land. Come, let us be of good comfort, then, for the same reasons! We, also, shall reach our Father’s house in due time! We shall get home and our homecoming shall not be too late for the marriage supper of the Lamb! The Lord knows the way of the righteous. He is steering us from day to day by Infallible Wisdom and, despite these stormy seas, we shall yet cast anchor in the fair havens where our Lord has gone.

“So shall we be forever with the Lord! Comfort one another with these words.” The Lord is doing us no hurt. The Lord is denying us no good. He is making even evil things to work together for good—for *our* good—and we have no proper ground for discouragement. Apparent ground for fear there is in plenty, but real ground there is none—

***“Your harps, you trembling saints,
Down from the willows take!
Loud to the praise of Love Divine—
Bid every string awake.”***

II. In the case of the Israelites this discouragement came to a great head, for it led to COMPLAINT—and that is our second point. “And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.” This was a bitter and wicked complaint! We are in a sad case, dear Brothers and Sisters, when our discouragements reach such a point that we begin to complain against God, for the complaints that come at these times are such as God is not likely to bear with! When God’s people are in real trouble, He is long-suffering and tender towards His afflicted—but with the obstinate He shows Himself obstinate.

When the people complained of thirst, the Lord sweetened the waters of Marah for them. When they were hungry, He gave them bread from Heaven. But when, having nothing justly to complain of, they merely grumbled because they were discouraged, He dealt with them severely and sent the fiery serpents among them which bit many of them, so that much people of Israel died. Beware of a murmuring spirit! God will pity our

needs, but He will punish our whims. Some of us have need to be cautioned against letting the spirit of discouragement hurry us on to quarrelling with God and questioning His love. It is evil for a saint to strive with His Savior!

When these people made their first complaint, it was an amazing one! It was a complaint about having been brought out of Egypt. “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” Well, but first of all, they ought not to complain of being brought up out of Egypt, for that was a land of bondage where their male children had to perish in the river and where they, themselves, longed to die, for life had become intolerable! And yet, you see, they are complaining that they were brought up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, as they said. Is it not possible that our rebellious hearts may even complain of God’s *mercy*? For lack of something to murmur about, discouraged ones will pick holes in the goodness of God! What a pity that it should be so!

Brothers and Sisters, if we are Believers in Christ, we have been redeemed from bondage! We have been brought into a separated condition and made to be the people of God! Shall we ever complain of that? Suppose it brings upon us derision, loneliness, unkindness? Suppose it entails upon us loss and self-denial? Suppose it involves us in many difficulties—are we going to flinch because of these? God forbid! Did we not count the cost when first we started out from Egypt? And having counted the cost, will we now draw back from the fight? No, but in the name of God we will struggle until we have won the victory! And it shall never be a complaint against God that He brought us up out of Egypt. He will not let us die in the wilderness. We cannot believe it, and we will not let our soul say so!—

***“Determined to save,
He watched over my path
When, Satan’s blind slave,
I sported with death!
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”***

I cannot believe it. Lie down, O dog of doubt! Lie down, O cur of unbelief! If you have no better bark than this, be quiet! Oh, for God’s Grace to stop complaining at once! Our God never forgave a soul to let that soul fall from Grace. Christ never bought a soul with His blood to make it one of His and then to let it slip through His fingers into Hell! The Lord has never led us through so many trials and temptations to suffer us, after all, to be shipwrecked and cast away! If He had meant to destroy us, He would not have showed us such things as these. Let us not become so peevish as to talk about dying in the wilderness when, in fact, the Lord is making signs and wonders of us by causing us to *live* in the wilderness!

Next, look at their complaint of having no food—“There is no bread, neither is there any water.” It was a great lie! There *was* bread—they had to admit that fact in the next breath—but then they did not call the manna, “bread.” They called it by an ugly name in the Hebrew. The water, too, was not muddy and thick like the water of the Nile—it was bright, clear, pure water from the Rock and, therefore, they would not call it water. They wanted water with substance in it which would leave grit between their

teeth—and as the stream which leaped from the flinty Rock was pure crystal they would not call it water. Have you not known people to whom God has given great mercy, and yet they have talked as if they were quite deserted?

Unbelief is blind just as surely as faith is far seeing. Unbelief enjoys nothing, just as faith rejoices in everything. He that believes, finds sweetness in the manna—“the taste thereof was as wafers made with honey.” But he that has no faith finds nothing pleasant even in “the corn of Heaven,” but says, “there is no bread.” Only think of anybody saying, “Our soul loathes this light bread”! It was a diet that was very easy to digest and kept them in good health—and yet they pined for heavy, lumpy food! They began to wish for leeks, garlic and onions—something rank and strong—and less refined than “angels’ food.” They sighed for the meat that they ate in Egypt! They hankered after a coarse and dangerous diet!

God knew that it was not proper food for them in the blazing desert and He gave them, instead, the best possible nourishment! And now they cry, “Oh, there is nothing substantial in it. It does not make you feel as if you were full.” They found fault with that which they ought to have commended. Men really need that which is sufficient, that which will sustain the frame, that which will enable them to continue in health and strength—but these grumblers remembered the rough stuff they used to eat among the brick kilns and they wished to feel full and overblown as they had now and then felt in Egypt. Thus they fell to complaining against God without excuse! Are there any here in that state? Are you so discouraged that you do not want to live by faith any longer—it seems too unsubstantial? Are you tired of praying, “Give us day by day our daily bread”?

You would like a nice lump sum in the bank, instead, and plenty of the cares and snares of wealth! And is it so that you are no longer content with the old Gospel? It is so easy of digestion that you pine for a hard morsel—a piece of cast-iron philosophy to lie on your mind for years to come. You want a bit of indigestible modern thought that will remain within you like the cucumbers of Egypt which were not so soon gone as the manna of Heaven! You crave for leeks, garlic and onions—something sensational, remarkable, though by no means comfortable to the pure taste of those who are born of the Spirit of God!

Is it not strange how men who call themselves Christians run after that kind of meat? And of the real good Gospel, which is able to save the soul, and to build it up, they begin to say, “It is worn out! We have heard this one thing so often. You see it is just the same old-fashioned manna! We need more variety. We demand that which is novel, which will commend itself to our advanced intellectual condition by its metaphysical subtlety.” That is the style! I see the spirit everywhere, and it comes across us all in some form or other—complaining of what God provides in Providence, complaining of what God provides in the Bible, complaining of what the Holy Spirit provides in His Divine operations! We look out, like the Athenians, for some new thing—we do not know what we want.

When the grumbling humor is on us, we complain of anything and everything, as did these Israelites! They complained of God; they complained of Moses; they complained of the manna. They would have been ready to

complain of Aaron, but, fortunately for him, he had been dead a month or so, and so they poured the more gall upon Moses! To men in this state, nothing is right—nothing *can* be right, The whole world is turned upside down and if it were again turned the other way it would be just as wrong—perhaps more wrong than ever! You smile, I see, at this. Well, you may smile if you like, Brothers and Sisters, but it is a thing to *weep* over, for I remember a text that says, “The Lord heard their murmuring.”

That is the solemn point in the matter. We are pleased that God should hear our *prayers*. It is that which we long for—but is it not terrible that God should hear our murmuring? There are two things that God always hears. Mark this! The first is the voice of faith and the second is the voice of unbelief! For, as much as God loves faith, so as much does He loathe unbelief! When we are strong in faith, the Lord can do anything with us and for us, and He can make us equal to all difficulties, so that we can say with the Apostle, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” But when we give way to unbelief, Christ Himself can do nothing with us, as it is written—“He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

Do you not feel sorry, then, that you ever murmured and complained, since your God heard it all? What is more, as the Lord usually answers the prayers of faith, so He often answers the prayers of incredulity. I have heard a Brother cry out because of his small and bearable trouble. And I have known the Lord answer his impatience with great trials. If children cry for nothing, they ought to have something to cry for! And, if we get discouraged when there really is no reason for it, we shall probably be answered with astonishing tribulations! If we begin complaining when we ought to be singing, it is likely enough that we shall have grave cause for crying out, for is it not written concerning the Lord, “With the froward You will show Yourself froward”?

When we walk tenderly, submissively and quietly—and when we say with David, “My soul is even as a weaned child,” then the Lord walks very gently and comfortably toward us and our path is smoothed by His love. But the Lord has said, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” Why, Brothers and Sisters, if we are discouraged in any way, let us pray that we may not venture further in that evil way, nor begin to rail against the Lord and His Providence! May we go back to confidence and joy and faith—and not go on till we fall into the ditch of murmuring—and be waiting there for yet worse things.

III. The Lord, before long, sends upon murmurers, PUNISHMENT. This is our third head. We read that as soon as the people found fault with Moses, and with God, and with the manna, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.” Fiery serpents were ready at the Divine call—the Lord never lacks means of chastisement. There was no interval between the sin and the suffering, for the fault was wanton and inexcusable. Will God send fiery serpents among His own people? These were the tribes that ate of the manna, and the people that “drank of the Rock that followed them, which Rock was Christ.” These were the Lord’s visible Church in the wilderness,

and though not all *spiritually* His children, yet they were types of His chosen, representatives of the whole believing family.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord, in fatherly anger, may send fiery serpents among a doubting and quarrelsome people, and so those who bite with fault-finding may find themselves bitten! These fiery serpents come in different forms. Sometimes they may be new trials. The Israelites, as far as I know, had never seen these seraphs, or burning ones, before. They seemed to fly up out of the sand and bite them before they were aware of it! And then the venom entered into their blood and made it scald them till they seemed to be a mass of fire from head to foot, burning with fierce pain and ready to die. It was dreadful to be marching through the midst of fiery flying serpents! The Lord deliver us from that.

But He may send to us, if we grow peevish, a fresh and novel affliction, a crooked trial which will twist and wriggle about us—a sudden grief which will poison the fountain of our life—and this may hastily fly at us, as a chastisement for not having believed in God under much happier circumstances. In some Christians these fiery serpents may be the uprisings of their own corruptions. I have known the corruptions of a child of God to be quiet and still for a long period. They have been there, but they have been forced to hide away like thieves that dare not come out in daylight and, the child of God has, therefore, enjoyed rest.

But the good man has been discouraged and has fallen to complaining—and then these inward corruptions have broken forth upon him and compassed him about like bees—innumerable and quick to sting! Some of us know what this means. We have been put to a dead stand with our lively inbred sins which we thought were dead—suddenly they have revived within us and we had to fight against them for dear life! Or, it may be that God will let Satan loose upon us if we disbelieve. Truly we cannot want any worse fiery serpents than the suggestions and insinuations of the devil! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you have ever met Satan and fought him foot to foot, you know by your scars what a terrible adversary he is!

Why, he will insinuate thoughts into our breasts which never came from our own minds and never would have come—blasphemous thoughts of an infernal kind—and these he would have us accept as ours! He will throw his bombs into our souls and then tell us that these are of our own making! He will make us doubt the existence of God, the Inspiration of Scripture, the Deity of Christ, the Truth of the Gospel, the fact of the Resurrection—in fact, he will make us doubt doctrines for which we would lay down our lives! These are his impieties and not our own thoughts at all—but, like serpents of fire, their sting is terrible! All the while our enemy will beat the great Hell drum concerning our past sins and try, if he can, to drown the voice of mercy and of that precious blood which “speaks better things than that of Abel.” Thus he would drive us to despair.

Ah, these fiery serpents! Brothers and Sisters, it is much better to be tried with poverty and pain than to be molested by the infernal thoughts that come from Satan! It were better for us to lie down crushed like the very dust beneath our feet and every particle a pain, than to be filled with the desperate thoughts that Satan is able to inject into the mind! Beware, I pray you, of complaining, you that are getting to be at all discouraged!

Return to your child-like faith. “Cast not away your confidence which has great recompense of reward,” lest you slide, by your unbelief, down into complaining and then by your complaining hatch fiery serpents out of the ground on which you tread!

IV. But now, fourthly, here comes the REMEDY. What is to be done when Israel is bitten with fiery serpents? Well, the first thing is confession. They went to Moses and cried, “We have sinned.” Oh, that is a sweet art—that art of confession—it empties the bosom of most perilous stuff! Nothing seems to me to be more hideous than to confess your sins to a man like yourselves. I should think that to sit down at a priest’s ear and to pour into it all the filth of your soul, and answer every question that he may care to propound to you must be one of the most fearful ordeals through which a human mind can pass!

I know that Satan is very ingenious as to the means by which to deprave men and rob them of the last particle of modesty, so as to make them capable of every crime! But I should think that the papist “confession” is his last and darkest invention for depraving the soul beyond all common defilement! It must be the most fearful process of saturating with evil through which the mind can pass! But to confess sin into the ear of Christ is quite another thing! To get alone with Him and to tell Him all our transgressions and temptations—this is as great a blessing as the other is a curse. There is no fear that we can pollute Him—and every blessing comes of emptying out ourselves before Him who is able to take away all sin by reason of His precious blood! Our first business is to hasten away to our great High Priest and tell *Him* that we have sinned.

The second help was that Moses prayed for the people. So our great cure against fiery serpents—horrible thoughts and temptations—is intercession! “If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” If we have grown discouraged, and have sinned by unbelieving utterances, let us go with our poor, little, trembling faith and ask the blessed go-between, the Divine Interposer, to stand before God on our behalf and pray for us that our transgressions may be blotted out! Oh, what a sweet thing it is to have this Advocate! Come, you that are the Lord’s people and yet are transgressors, come and rejoice in this—that He makes intercession for transgressors and that He is, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost!

But now comes the great remedy. After their confession and the prayer of their mediator, the Lord bade Moses make a bronze serpent and lift it up, that they might look upon it and live. Beloved, when I first came to Christ as a poor sinner and looked to Him, I thought Him the most precious object my eyes had ever lit upon! But this night I have been looking to Him while I have been preaching to you, in remembrance of my own discouragements, my own complaining—and I find my Lord Jesus dearer than ever! I have been seriously ill and sadly depressed—I fear I have rebelled—and, therefore, I look anew to Him and I tell you that He is fairer in my eyes, tonight, than He was at first!

It is a delightful thing that there should be a Fountain open for sinners to wash in, but I will tell you something that is more charming, still—there is a Fountain for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jeru-

saalem for sin and uncleanness. That Fountain is not for outcasts, only, but for the saints, for the citizens of Jerusalem, for the house of David! “If we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship one with another”—do we still sin? Yes, that we do, even then, but—“the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” In our lowest condition this is our cleansing! In our highest condition this is *still* our cleansing!

The first time a poor sinner comes up out of the ditch, with his own clothes abhorring him, he is made white through Christ’s blood the moment he believes in Jesus! And mark this, when he enters Heaven and stands before the blaze of the supernal glory, it shall *still* be said of him and of his fellows, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The bronze Serpent healed me when I first saw the Lord—and the bronze serpent heals me tonight—and shall do so till I die! “Look and live” is for saints as well as for sinners. For you, you ungodly ones—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

But equally true is this for you who belong to Jesus but have grieved His Holy Spirit. You that have gone aside from your faith and have begun disputing with your God and complaining of Providence—there is life for you, too, in the Savior lifted up! There are *not* two ways of salvation—one for sinners and another for saints. There are *not* two grounds on which we stand—the ground of the sinner saved and the ground of the saint saved. No, the same basis is under each foot—we each sing—

**“Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!”**

This is the language of the man who has served his God for half a century and preached the Gospel like a Luther or a Calvin, just as certainly as it must be the language of the trembling sinner, guilty and condemned before the living God!

Do you not see where the bronze serpent fitly comes in according to Scripture? At the end of the pilgrimage, just before they are going to cross the Jordan, *then* Israel sees the serpent of brass! *Then* the people sin and *then* is there revealed to them in all its splendor that blessed type of Christ—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” “Should not perish!” As if even a Believer had about him that which would make him perish if he did not, still, look to the appointed cure! Jesus is lifted up that saints might not perish, but might persevere in Grace unto everlasting life!

How is our spiritual life rendered everlasting but by the continuance of that look? We are to still be looking to Jesus as long as we live! “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.” Always looking! Always looking! God keep us looking if we have looked, and bring us to look to Jesus if we have never looked—and to His name be praise forever and ever, Amen!

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MAN'S RUIN AND GOD'S REMEDY

NO. 285

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 20, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“And the LORD said unto Moses, Make you a fiery serpent
and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass
that everyone that is bitten,
when he looks upon it, shall live.”
Numbers 21:8.*

I DO not propose this morning to explain again the mystery of the brazen serpent. As many of you well remember, not long ago I preached upon that subject and endeavored to expound it in all its lengths and breadths. I have a somewhat similar object at the present time, the details may indeed be different, but after all, the moral will be the same.

Man has very many wants and he should be grateful whenever the least of them is supplied. But he has one want which overtops every other—it is the want of bread. Give him raiment, house him well, decorate and adorn him—yet if you give him not bread, his body faints, he dies of hunger. Hence it is that while the earth, when it is tilled is made to bring forth many things that minister unto the comfort and luxury of men, yet man is wise enough to understand that since bread is his chief want, he must be most careful concerning corn.

He therefore sows broad acres with it and he cultivates more of this, which is the grandest necessity, than he does of anything else in his husbandry. I feel that this is the only excuse I can offer you for coming back again constantly and continually to the simple doctrine of the salvation of the sinner through Christ Jesus. There are many things which the soul wants—it needs instruction, it needs comfort, it needs knowledge of doctrine and enlightenment in its experience. But there is one grand need of the soul, which far surmounts every other—it is the want of salvation, the want of Christ.

And I do feel that I am right in repeating again and again and again, the simple announcement of the Gospel of Christ for poor perishing sinners. At any rate, I know I seldom feel more happy than when I am preaching a full Christ to empty sinners. My tongue becomes something like Anacreon's harp—it is said of it, it resounded love alone—and so my tongue longs to resound Christ alone and give forth no other strain but Christ and His Cross. Christ uplifted, the salvation of a dying world. Christ crucified, the life of poor dead sinners. I pray that this morning many here present, who have no clear views of the plan of salvation, may now see for

the first time how men are saved through the lifting up of Christ, just, as the poor Israelites in the wilderness were saved from the fiery serpents by lifting up the brazen serpent on the pole.

Solemnly addressing you this morning, I shall need your attention to two things. First—and here, remember, I am about to speak to sinners dead in trespasses and sins—I want your attention to your ruin and next I shall want your faithful consideration of your remedy.

I. First of all, oh unregenerate Man, you who have heard the Word, but have never felt its power, let me entreat you, lend me your ears while I talk to you of a solemn subject that much concerns you. MAN, YOU ARE RUINED! The children of Israel in the wilderness were bitten with fiery serpents, whose venom soon tainted their blood and after intolerable pain, at last brought on death. You are much in the same condition. You stand there, healthy in body and comfortable in mind and I come not here to play the part of a mere alarmist. But I do beseech you, listen to me while I tell you, neither more nor less than the simple but dreadful Truth of God concerning your present estate, if you are not a Believer in Christ.

Oh Sinner! There are four things that stare you in the face and should alarm you. The first thing is your sin. I hear you say, “Yes, I know I am a sinner as well as the rest of mankind.” But I am not content with that confession, nor is God content with it, either. There are multitudes of men who make the bare confession of sinnership, the general confession that all men are fallen, but there are few men who know how to take that confession home and acknowledge it as being applicable to them.

Ah, my Hearers, you that are without God and without Christ, remember, not only is the *world* lost, but you are lost yourself. Not only has sin defiled the *race*, but *you* yourself are stained by sin. Come now, take the universal charge home to yourself. How many have your sins been! Count them, if you can. Stand here and wonder at them. Like the stars of midnight, or as the sands by the sea shore, innumerable are your iniquities. Twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty, perhaps more than fifty years have rolled over your head and in any one of these years your sins might out-count the drops of the sea.

How innumerable, then, have they become in ALL your life! And what if you should say they are but little ones, yet since they are so many, how great has the mountain become! Though they were but as grains of sand, yet are they so many that they might make a mountain that would soar above the stars. Pause, I beseech you, and let your conscience have play for a moment. Count over your iniquities. Turn over the pages of your history and number the blots, if you can, and count the mistakes. But no, you are committing fresh sins while you are recounting these and the denial of your innumerable sins is but the multiplication of them. You are increasing them, perhaps, even while you are counting them.

And then think how aggravated they have been. I will not venture to mention the grosser sins into which some of you have fallen. It may be that I have here those who have cursed God to His face—who have asked Him to blast their limbs and to destroy their souls. I may have those here who have ventured even to deny God's existence, though they have been walking all their lives in the midst of His works and have even received the breath in their nostrils from Him. I may have some who have despised His Word—laughed at everything sacred—made a jest of the Bible, made a mockery of God's ministers and of His servants.

Recall, I beseech you, these things to your remembrance, for though you have forgotten them, God has not. You have written them in the sand but He has engraved them as in eternal brass and there they stand against you. Every crime that you have done is as fresh in the memory of the Most High as though it were committed yesterday. And though you think that the repentance of your gray old age might almost suffice to blot out the enormities of your youth—be not deceived—sin is not so easily put away. It needs a greater ransom than a few expressions of regret or a few empty tears. Oh recall, you great Sinners, recall to your remembrance, the enormities you have committed against God! Let your chambers speak, let your beds bear witness against you and let the days of your feasting and your hours of midnight rioting—let these things rise up to your remembrance.

Let your oaths roll back from the sky against which they have smitten and let them return into your bosom, to awake your conscience and bestir you to repentance. But what am I saying? I have been talking of some men who have committed great iniquity. Ah, Sinner, be you whosoever you may, I charge you with great sin. Brought up in the midst of holy influences, nurtured in God's House, it may be that some of my unregenerate hearers this morning may not be able to remember a single instance of blasphemy against God. It may be that you have never outwardly done despite to any sacred thing.

Ah, my Hearer, remember, your sin may be even greater than that of the profligate, or the debaucher, for you have sinned against light and against knowledge. You have sinned against a mother's prayers and against a father's tears. You rebelled against God's Law, knowing the Law. When you were sinning, conscience pricked you and yet you did sin. You knew that Hell was the portion of the ungodly and yet you are ungodly still. You know the Gospel of Christ. You are no ignoramus. Your mother took you in her arms to the House of God and here you are even now. Every sin you have committed receives a greater aggravation on account of the light you have received and the privileges you have enjoyed.

Oh, my Hearer, think not that you can escape in this thing. Your sin has bitten you with a terrible bite. it is no flesh wound as you dream, but the venom has entered into your veins. It is no mere scratch upon the

surface, but the leprosy lies deep within. You have sinned. You have sinned continually. You have sinned with many aggravations. Oh, may God convict you of this charge and help you to plead guilty to it. Can you not, some of you, if you are honest to yourselves, call to remembrance peculiar sins that you have committed. You remember your sick bed and your vow you made to God—where is it now? You have returned like the dog to its vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

You remember that prayer that you offered in the time of your distress? You remember, too, that God graciously delivered you, but where is the thanksgiving that you promised to Him? You said you would give Him your heart. But where is it? In the black hand of the devil still! You have been a liar to God, you have deceived Him, or you have pretended at least that you would give Him your soul and you have not done so. And think, too, of certain special sins you have committed after receiving special warning. Do you not remember going out from the House of God with a tender conscience and then running into sin to harden it again? Do you not remember, some of you, how after being alarmed and startled, you have gone your way and gone to your evil companions and laughed away the impressions that you have received?

This is no mean sin—to strive against the striving Spirit and to resist the influence that was drawing you to the right path. I beseech you, call to remembrance your sins. Come, don't be cowards. Don't shut up the book—open it! Look and see what you have been and if you have been that which you are ashamed of, I beseech you look it in the face and acknowledgment and confess it. There is nothing to be gotten by hiding your sins. They'll spring up, Man. If you dig deep as Hell to hide them, they'll spring up. Why not now be honest and look at them today, for they'll look at you by-and-by, when Christ shall come in the clouds of judgment. If you look not at them, they'll stare you in the face with a look that will wither your soul and blast it into infinite torment and unutterable woe. Your sin, your sin, should make you tremble and feel alarmed.

But I go further. Sinner, you have not only your sin to trouble you, but there is a second thing—there is the sentence of condemnation gone out against you. I have heard some ministers talk of men being in a state of probation. No such thing—no man has a state of probation at all. You are condemned already. You are not today, my unregenerate Hearers, prisoners at the bar about to be tried for your lives. No, your trial is *over*, your sentence is past already and you are now this day condemned. What though no officer has arrested you, though death has not laid his cold hand upon you, yet Scripture said, "He that believes not is condemned already because he believe not on the Son of God."

Man, the black cap is on the judge's head. He even now declares you lost. No, more than this—if you would rightly know your own estate, you

are standing—mark that, my careless Hearer—you are standing under the gallows, with the rope on your neck and you have but to be cast off from the ladder by the hand of death and you are swinging in eternity lost and ruined. If you only knew your position, you would discover that you are criminals with your necks on the block this morning and the bright axe of justice is gleaming in this morning's sunlight.

God alone knows how long it is before it shall fall, or rather how soon you shall feel its keen edge and its edge shall be stained with your blood. You are condemned already. Take that home, Man. Your sentence is signed in Heaven and sealed and stamped and the only reason why it is not carried out is because God in mercy respites you. But you are condemned and this world is your condemned cell from which you shall soon be taken to a terrible execution.

Now you do not believe this. You think that God is putting you on your trial and that if you behave as well as you can, you will get off. You think that in some future day you may yet blot out your sin. But when the criminal is condemned, there is no room left for good behavior to alter the sentence. When a capital sentence is passed upon him that sentence is not to be moved by anything that he can do. And your sentence is passed—passed by the Judge of all the earth—and nothing you can do can alter that sentence. The Law leaves no room for repentance. Condemned you are and condemned you must be, unless that one way of escape, that I am forthwith about to explain, shall be opened to you by God's rich grace—you are condemned already.

Now let me ask you one question before I leave this point. Sinner, you are condemned today. I ask you this, whether you do not deserve it? If you are what you should be and what I hope the Lord will make you, you will say, "Deserve it, yes, that I do!" If I never committed another sin, my past sins would fully justify the Lord in permitting me to go down afire into the pit. The first sin you ever committed condemned you beyond all hope of self-salvation—but all the sins you have committed since then have aggravated your guilt and surely now the sentence is not only just—but more than just. You will have one day, if you repent not, to put your finger on your lips and stand in solemn silence, when God shall ask you whether you have anything to plead—why the sentence should not be carried into execution. You will be compelled to feel that God condemns you to nothing more than you deserve, that His sentence is just—a proper one on such a sinner as you have been.

Now, these two things are enough to make any man tremble, if he did but feel them—his sin and his condemnation. But I have a third to mention. Sinner, there is this to aggravate your ease and increase your alarm—your helplessness, your utter inability to do anything to save yourself—even if God should offer you the chance. You are today, Sinner, not only condemned, but you are dead in trespasses and sins. Talk of per-

forming good works—why, Man, you cannot. It is as impossible for you to do a good work while you are what you are, as it would be for a horse to fly up to the stars.

But you say, “I will repent.” No, you cannot. Repentance is not possible to you as you are, unless God gives it to you. You might force a few tears, but what are those? Judas might do that and yet go out and hang himself and go to his own place. You cannot repent of yourself. No, if I had to preach this morning salvation by faith apart from the Person of Christ, you would be in as bad a condition as if there were no Gospel whatever. Remember, Sinner, you are so lost, so ruined, so undone, that you can do nothing to save yourself. Your wound is so bad that it cannot be cured by any mortal hand. Your inability is so great that unless God pulls you up out of the pit into which you have fallen, you must lie there and rot for all eternity. You are so undone that you can neither stir hand, nor foot, nor lip, nor hearts, unless grace help you.

Oh, what a fearful thing it is to be charged, tried, condemned and then, moreover, to be bereft of all power! You are today as much in the hand of God's justice as a little moth beneath your own fingers. He can save you if He will, He can destroy you if He pleases, but you, yourself are unable to escape from Him. There is no door of mercy left for you by the Law and even by the Gospel there is no door of mercy which you have power to enter—apart from the help which Christ affords you. If you think you can do anything, you have yet to unlearn that foolish conceit. If you fancy that you have some strength left, you have not yet come where the Spirit will bring you—for he will empty you of all creature pretension and lay you low and dash you in pieces and bring you in a mortar and pound you—till you feel that you are weak and without strength and can do nothing.

Now have I not indeed described a horrible position for a sinner to be in? But there is something more remaining, a fourth thing. Sinner, you are not only guilty of past sin and condemned for it, you are unable—and even if you were able—you are so bad that you would never be *willing* to do anything that could save yourself. And even if you had no sins in the past, yet are you lost, Man, for you would go on to commit sin for the future. For this know—your nature is totally depraved. You love that which is evil and not that which is good. “No,” says one, “I love that which is good.” Then you love it for a bad motive. “I love honesty,” says one. Yes, because it is the best policy. But do you love God? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? No, and you cannot do this, for your nature is too vile.

Why, Man, you would be as bad as the devil, if God were to withdraw all restraint and let you alone. Were He but to take the bit out of your mouth and the bridle from your jaws, there is no sin that you would not commit. Do you deny this? Do you say, “I am willing. I am willing to be holy and to be saved.” Then God has you so. For if not, you would never

be so by nature. If you should go out of this hall and say, "I hate such preaching as that." I should but reply, "I knew you did." Though one should say, "I will never believe that I am so lost as that," I should say, "I did not think you ever would—you are too bad to believe the Truth of God." And if you should say, "I will never be saved by Christ. I will never bow so low as to sue for mercy and accept grace through Him," I should not be surprised, for I know your nature. You are so desperately bad that you hate your own mercy.

You despise the grace that is offered to you—you hate the Savior that died for you, for if not, why do not you turn now, Man? If you are not so bad as I say you are, why not now down on your knees and cry for pardon? Why not now believe in Christ? Why not now surrender yourself to Him? But if you should do this, then I would say, "This is God's work, He has made you do it for if He had not done it you would not have been humble enough to bow yourself to Christ." Let Arminianism go to the winds. Let it be scattered forever from off the face of the earth—man is totally unable to feel his misery or seek relief—if he were able, he is totally unwilling.

The sinner could not help the Holy Spirit, even if the Holy Spirit wanted the help of man to perfect His own operations. What? Can it be possible that any man will say the creature is to help the Creator—that an insect of an hour is to be yoked with the Ancient of Days—the Eternal—that the clay is to help the potter in its own formation? Why, even if we grant the power, where would be the sympathy or the willing hand? Man hates to be saved. He loves darkness and if he has the light, it is because the light thrusts itself upon him. He loves death with a fatal infatuation and if he is made alive, it is because the Spirit of God quickens him, converts his wicked heart, makes him willing in the day of His power and turns him unto God.

Have I not now this morning made a most awful indictment against you? Mark, I mean it for every living man, woman and child in this Hall who has not faith in Christ. You may be fine gentlemen or grand ladies. You may be respectable tradesmen and very upright in your business, but I charge you before Almighty God with being sinners, condemned sinners, sinners that cannot save yourselves and sinners, moreover, that would not save yourselves if you could, unless grace made you willing. You are sinners unwilling to be saved. What a fearful indictment is this read in the face of high Heaven! May some sinner as he hears it be compelled to say, "It is true, it is true, it is true of me. O Lord, have mercy upon me!"

II. Having thus set before you the hard part of the subject—THE SINNER'S RUIN—I now come to preach of HIS REMEDY.

A certain school of physicians tell us that "like cures like." Whether it is true or not in medicine, I know it is true enough in theology—like cures like. When the Israelites were bitten with the fiery serpents, it was a ser-

pent that made them whole. And so, you lost and ruined creatures, are bid now to look to Christ suffering and dying and you will see in Him the counterpart of what you see in yourselves. While you are looking to Him, may God fulfill His promise and give you life. A remedy to be worth anything must reach the entire disease.

Now Christ on the Cross comes to man as man is. Not as he may be made, but as he *is*. And it does this in the four several respects which I have already described. I charge you with sin. Now in Christ Jesus behold the sinner's Substitute—the sin-offering. Do you see yonder Man hanging on the Cross? He dies an awful death. In Him prophecy receives a terrible accomplishment—of Him Almighty vengeance makes a tremendous example. Jehovah has cast off and abhorred Him. He has been angry with his Anointed. The terrors of the Lord are heavy on His soul. And why does that Man, Christ Jesus, die?—not as Himself a sinner, but as numbered with transgressors.

O soul if you would know the terrors of the Law, behold Him who was made the curse of the Law. If you would see the venom of the fiery serpent's bite, look to yonder brazen serpent. And if you would see sin in all its deadliness look to a dying Savior. What makes Christ die? Sin! Though not His own. What makes His body sweat drops of blood? Sin! What nails His hands? What rends His side? Sin! Sin does it all. And if you are saved it must be through yonder sin-offering, yon dying, bleeding Lamb. "But," says one, "my sins are too many to be forgiven." Stop awhile. Turn your eye to Christ. Sometimes when I think of my sin I think it is too great to be washed away, but when I think of Christ's blood, oh I think there can be no sin great enough for that to fail in cleansing it every whit.

I seem to think, when I see the costly price, Christ paid a very heavy ransom. When I look at myself I think it would need much to redeem me, but when I see Christ dying I think He could redeem me if I were a million times as bad as I am. Now remember, Christ not only paid barely enough for us, He paid more than enough. The Apostle Paul says, "His grace abounded—"superabounded," says the Greek. It ran over. There was enough to fill the empty vessel and there was enough to flood the world besides. Christ's redemption was so plenteous, that had God willed it, if all the stars of Heaven had been peopled with sinners, Christ need not have suffered another pang to redeem them all—there was a boundless value in His precious blood. And, Sinner, if there were so much as this, surely there is enough for you.

And then again, if you are not satisfied with Christ's sin-offering, just think a moment—God is satisfied—God the Father is content and must not you be? The Judge says, "I am satisfied. Let the sinner go free, for I have punished the Surety in his stead." And if the Judge is satisfied, surely the criminal may be. Oh, come, poor Sinner, come and see if there is enough to appease the wrath of God there must be enough to answer all

the requirements of man. "No, no," says one, "but my sin is such a terrible one that I cannot see in the substitution of Christ that which is like to meet it." What is your sin? "Blasphemy." Why, Christ died for blasphemy—this was the very charge which man imputed to Him and therefore you may be quite sure that God laid it on Him if men did.

"No, no," says one, "but I have been worse than that. I have been a liar." It is just what men said of Him. They declared that He lied when He said, "If this temple is destroyed I will build it in three days." See in Christ a liar's Savior as well as a blasphemer's Savior. "But," says one, "I have been in league with Beelzebub." Just what they said of Christ. They said that He cast out devils through Beelzebub. So man laid that sin on Him and man did unwittingly what God would have him do. I tell you, even *that* sin was laid on Christ. Come, Sinner, there is not a sin in the world with one exception which Jesus did not bear in His own body on the tree.

"Ah, but," says one, "when I sinned, I sinned very greedily. I did it with all my might. I took a delight in it." Ah, Soul and so did Christ take a delight in being your Substitute. He said, "I have a Baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened until it is accomplished"! Let Christ's willingness respond to the suggestion that your greediness in sin can make it too heinous to be forgiven. "Ah," cries another, "but, Sir, I acted ever with such a bad heart—my heart was worse than my actions. If I could have been worse, I would. Among all my companions in vice there was not one who was so greedy of it and black in it as I." Yes, but, my dear Hearer, if you have sinned in your heart, remember, Christ suffered in His heart. His heart-sufferings were the heart and soul of His sufferings. Look and see that heart all pierced and the blood and water flowing there from and believe that He is able to take away even your heart of sin, however black it may be.

"Yes," I hear another self-condemned one exclaim, "but I sinned without any temptation. I did it deliberately in cold blood. I had become such a wicked, beastly sinner, that I used to sit down and gloat over my sin before I committed it." Ah, but Sinner, remember before Christ died He thought of it. Yes, from all eternity He meditated on becoming your Substitute. It was a matter of premeditation with Him and, therefore let His forethought put aside your forethought. Let the greatness of His previous thought upon His sacrifice, put away the grievousness of your sin, on account of its having been committed in cold blood.

Does there yet come up some sobbing voice—"I have been worse than all the rest, for I did my sin by reason of a covenant which I made with Satan. I said, 'If I could have a short life and a merry one, I would be content.' I made a covenant with death and I made a league with Hell." And what if I am commissioned to tell you that even this bite is not incurable? Remember, Jesus the Son of God made a covenant on your account. It was a greater covenant than yours, not made with death and Hell, but

made with His Father on the behalf of sinners. I want, if I can, to bring out the fact that whatever there is in your sins there is its counterpart in Christ. Just as when the serpent bit the people, it was a serpent that healed them, so if you are bitten by sin, it is, as it were, your sin's Substitute. It is your sin laid on Christ that heals you. Oh, turn your eyes, then, to Calvary and see the guilt of sin laid upon Christ's shoulders and say, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," and looking to Him you shall live.

Secondly, here is a remedy for the condemnation. I said, you were not only sinners, but condemned sinners. Yes, and Christ is not only your Substitute for sin, but He is your condemned Substitute, too. See Him. He stands at Pilate's bar, is condemned before Herod and Caiaphas and is found guilty. No, He stands before the awful bar of God and though there is no sin of His own put upon Him, yet inasmuch as His people's sins were laid on Him, Justice views Him as a sinner and it cries, "Let the sword be bathed in His blood." Christ was condemned for sinners that they might not be condemned.

Look up, look away from the sentence that has gone out against you, to the sentence that went out against Him. Are you cursed?—so was He. "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." Are you condemned?—so was He and there was one point in which He excelled you. He was executed, and that you never shall be, if you look to Him now and believe that He is able to save you and if put your trust in Him.

In regard to the third particular. Our utter helplessness is such, that as I told you, we are unable to do anything. Yes, and I want you to look at Christ—was not He unable, too? You, in your father, Adam, were once strong, but you lost your strength. Christ, too, was strong, but He laid aside all His omnipotence. See Him. The hand that poises the world hangs on a nail. See Him. The shoulders that supported the skies are drooping over the Cross. Look at Him! The eyes whose glances light up the sun are sealed in darkness. Look at Him! The feet that trod the billows and that shaped the spheres are nailed with rude iron to the accursed tree. Look away from your own weakness to His weakness and remember that in His weakness He is strong and in His weakness you are strong, too.

Go see His hands. They are weak, but in their weakness they are stretched out to save you. Come view His heart. It is rent, but in its cleft you may hide yourself. Look at His eyes. They are closing in death, but from them comes the ray of light that shall kindle your dark spirit. Unable though you are, go to Him who Himself was crucified through weakness, and remember that NOW, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." I told you—you could not repent, but if you go to Christ He can melt your heart into contrition, though it is as hard as iron. I said you could not believe, but if you sit down and look at Christ, a sight

of Christ will make you believe, for He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.

And then the fourth thing. "Oh," cries one, "you said we were too estranged to be even *willing* to come to Christ." I know you are. And therefore it is He who *comes down* to you. You would not come to Him, but He comes to you this morning and though you are very evil, He comes with sacred magic in His arms to change your heart. Sinner, you are unwilling—but guilty Sinner—Christ stands before you this morning, He that was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, a Man and a Brother born for adversity. And He puts His hand today in your hand and He says, "Sinner, will you be saved? Then trust in Me."

Ah, if *I* preach the Gospel, you will reject it! But if *He* preaches it, you cannot. Methinks I see the Crucified One finding His way in that thick crowd under the gallery and going between the ranks seated here, and above, and everywhere—and as He goes along, He stops at each broken-hearted sinner and says, "Sinner, will you trust Me? See, here I am, the Son of God, yet I am Man. Look at My wounds. See, still, the nail marks and the prints of the crown of thorns. Sinner, will you trust Me?" And while He says it, He graciously works in you the grace of faith.

But are there any who, looking Him in the face, can reply, "You Crucified One we cannot trust You, our sins are too great to be forgiven"? Oh, nothing can grieve Him so much as to tell Him that! You think that you are humble saying it—you are proud. You are despising Christ while you think you are despising yourself. And is there one in all this great assembly who says, "This is all twaddle, I care not to hear such preaching as this"? No I do not ask you to care for what I speak.

But Jesus, the Crucified One, is standing by your side and He asks you, "Sinner, have I ever done anything to offend you? Have I ever done you a displeasure? What hurt have you ever suffered at My hands? Then why do you persecute your wife for loving Me—then why hate your child for loving One that did you no hurt? Besides," says He and He takes the veil from His face, "did you ever see a face like this? It was marred by suffering for men—for men that hate Me, but whom I love. I need not have suffered. I was in My Father's house, happy and glorious—love made me come down and die. Love nailed me to the tree and now will you spit in My face after all that?"

"No," says a young man to me this last week, "I found it hard to love Christ, but," said he, "once upon a time I thought 'Well, if Christ never died for me and never loved me, yet I must love Him for His goodness in dying for other people.'" And methinks if you did but know Christ, you must love Him. You would say to Him, "You dear, You suffering Man, did You endure all this for those that did hate You? Did You die for those that murdered You? Did You shed Your blood for those that drew it from Your veins with cursed iron? Did You dive into the depths of the grave that You

might lift out rebellious ones who scorned You and would have none of You? Then dissolved by Your goodness I fall before Your feet and I weep. My soul repents of sin—I weep—Lord accept me, Lord have mercy upon me.”

Did you think I had run away from my point? So I had, but I have brought you back to it. You know I was to show that Christ could overcome our depravity. And He has done it in some of you while I have been speaking. You hated Him, but you do not hate Him now. It may be you said you would never trust Him, but you trust Him now. And if God has done this in your heart, this is the true end of preaching. The best way of keeping to the subject is for the subject to be brought home to the heart.

Ah, dear Hearers, I wish I had a better voice this morning. I wish I had more earnest tones and a more loving heart, for I do feel when I am preaching about Christ, that I am a poor dauber. When I want to paint Him so beautifully, I am afraid you will say of Him, He is not lovely! No, no. It is my bad picture of Him. But He *is* lovely. Oh, He is a loving Lord. He has a heart of compassion. He has a heart overflowing with the most tender affection. And He bids me tell you—and I do tell you—He bids me say, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”

And He bids me add His kind invitation, “Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest to your souls.” Do not believe what the devil tells you. He says that Christ is not ready to forgive. Oh, He is more willing to forgive than you are to be forgiven. Do not believe your heart, when it says that Christ will shut you out and will not pardon you. Come and try Him, come and try Him!

And the first one that is shut out, I will agree to be shut out with him. The first soul that Christ rejects after it has put its trust in Him—I risk my soul's salvation with that man. It cannot be. He never was hard-hearted yet and He never will be. Only believe and may He Himself help you to believe. Only look to Him and may He Himself open your eyes and enable you to look and this shall be a happy morning. For though I may have spoken feebly, as I am too conscious I have, God will have worked powerfully. And unto Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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**END OF
VOLUME FIVE**

**NUMBER 1500—OR,
“LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT”
NO. 1500**

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”
Numbers 21:9.*

THIS discourse, when it shall be printed, will make 1,500 of my sermons which have been published regularly, week after week. This is certainly a remarkable fact. I do not know of any instance in modern times in which 1,500 sermons have thus followed each other from the press from one person and have continued to command a large circle of readers. I desire to utter most hearty thanksgivings to God for Divine help in thinking out and uttering these sermons, sermons which have not merely been printed, but have been read with eagerness and have also been translated into foreign tongues. These sermons are publicly being read on this very Sabbath in hundreds of places where a minister cannot be found. These sermons God has blessed to the conversion of multitudes of souls.

I may and I must joy and rejoice in this great blessing which I most heartily ascribe to the undeserved favor of the Lord! I thought the best way in which I could express my thankfulness would be to preach Jesus Christ, again, and set Him forth in a sermon in which the simple Gospel should be made as clear as a child’s alphabet. I hope that in closing the list of 1,500 discourses, the Lord will give me words which will be blessed more than any which have preceded them, to the conversion of those who hear it or read it. May those who sit in darkness because they do not understand the freeness of salvation and the easy method by which it may be obtained be brought into the light by discovering the way of peace through believing in Christ Jesus! Forgive this prelude. My thankfulness would not permit me to withhold it.

Concerning our text and the serpent of brass. If you turn to John’s Gospel you will notice that its commencement contains a sort of orderly list of types taken from Holy Scripture. It begins with the creation. God said, “Let there be light” and John begins by declaring that Jesus, the eternal Word, is “the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world.” Before he closes his first chapter, John has introduced a type supplied by Abel, for when the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” Nor is the first chapter finished before we are reminded of Jacob’s ladder, for we find our Lord declaring to Nathanael, “Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

By the time we have reached the third chapter we have come as far as Israel in the wilderness and we read the joyful words, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We are going to speak of this act of Moses this morning, that we may, all of us, behold the bronze serpent and find the promise true, “everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon the bronze serpent, shall live.”

It may be that you who have looked before will derive fresh benefit from looking again, while some who have never turned their eyes in that direction may gaze upon the lifted up Savior and, this morning, be saved from the burning venom of the serpent, that deadly poison of *sin* which now lurks in their nature and breeds death to their souls. May the Holy Spirit make the word effectual to that gracious end!

I. I shall invite you to consider the subject, first, by noticing THE PERSON IN MORTAL PERIL for whom the bronze serpent was made and lifted up. Our text says, “It came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” Let us notice that the fiery serpents, first of all, came among the people because *they had despised God’s way and God’s bread*. “The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” It was *God’s way*—He had chosen it for them and He had chosen it in wisdom and mercy—but they murmured at it.

As an old Divine says, “It was lonesome and loathsome,” but, still, it was God’s way and, therefore, it ought not to have been loathsome—His pillar of fire and cloud went before them and His servants, Moses and Aaron, led them like a flock—and they ought to have followed cheerfully. Every step of their previous journey had been rightly ordered and they ought to have been quite sure that this compassing of the land of Edom was rightly ordered, too. But no, they quarreled with God’s way and wanted to have their own way. This is one of the great standing follies of men—they cannot be content to wait on the Lord and keep His way—they prefer a will and way of their own.

The people, also, quarreled with God’s food. He gave them the best of the best, for “men did eat angels’ food,” but they called the manna by an opprobrious title, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it and, even in our translation, conveys the idea of contempt. They said, “Our soul loathes this light bread,” as if they thought it unsubstantial and only fit to puff them up because it was easy of digestion and did not breed in them that heat of blood and tendency to disease which a heavier diet would have brought with it. Being discontented with their God, they quarreled with the bread which He set upon their table, though it surpassed any that mortal man has ever eaten before or since.

This is another of man’s follies—his heart refuses to feed upon God’s Word or believe God’s Truth. He craves for the flesh-meat of carnal reason, the leeks and the garlic of superstitious tradition and the cucumbers of speculation! He cannot bring his mind down to believe the Word of God, or to accept a Truth of God so simple, so fitted to the capacity of a child. Many demand something deeper than the Divine, more profound than the infinite, more liberal than Free Grace. They

quarrel with God’s way and with God’s bread and, therefore, there comes among them the fiery serpents of evil lusts, pride and sin.

I may be speaking to some who have, up to this moment, quarreled with the precepts and the doctrines of the Lord and I would affectionately warn them that their disobedience and presumption will lead to sin and misery. Rebels against God are apt to wax worse and worse. The world’s fashions and modes of thought lead on to the world’s vices and crimes. If we long for the fruits of Egypt, we shall soon feel the serpents of Egypt! The natural consequence of turning against God like serpents is to find serpents waylaying our path. If we forsake the Lord in spirit, or in doctrine, temptation will lurk in our path and sin will sting our feet.

I beg you carefully to observe, concerning those persons for whom the bronze serpent was specially lifted up, that *they had been actually bitten by the serpents*. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them, but it was not the serpents being among them that involved the lifting up of a bronze serpent—it was the serpents having actually *poisoned* them which led to the provision of a remedy. “It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.” The only people who looked and derived benefit from the wonderful cure lifted up in the midst of the camp were those who had been stung by the vipers.

The common notion is that salvation is for *good* people; salvation is for those who fight against temptation and salvation is for the spiritually healthy. But how different is God’s Word! God’s medicine is for the sick and His healing is for the diseased! The Grace of God, through the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is for men who are *actually* and *really* guilty. We do not preach a sentimental salvation from fancied guilt, but real and true pardon for actual offenses! I care nothing for sham sinners—you who never did anything wrong, you who are so good in yourselves that you are all right, I leave you—for I am sent to preach Christ to those who are full of sin and worthy of eternal wrath!

The serpent of brass was a remedy for those who had been bitten. What an awful thing it is to be bitten by a serpent! I dare say some of you remember the case of Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens. It happened in October, 1852, and therefore some of you will remember it. This unhappy man was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia and, according to the account of many, he had a few drinks with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin and though he would probably have been in a great passion if anyone had called him drunk, yet reason and common sense had evidently become overpowered.

He went back to his post at the gardens in an inebriated state. He had, some months before, seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians and play with serpents! First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not arouse it so as to bite. The assistant keeper cried out, “For God’s sake put the snake back,” but the foolish man replied, “I am inspired.” Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, “Now for the cobra.”

This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night and, therefore, the rash man placed it in his bosom till it revived and glided downward till its head appeared below the back of his waistcoat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down with his other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror!

And, as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was “in a maze.” When assistance arrived, Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, “I am a dead man.” They put him in a cab and took him to the hospital. First his speech went—he could only point to his poor throat and moan. Then his vision failed him and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck, he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over his body and he was a dead man.

I tell you that story that you may use it as a parable and learn never to play with sin and also, in order to bring vividly before you what it is to be bitten by a serpent. Suppose that Gurling could have been cured by looking at a piece of brass—would it not have been good news for him? There was no remedy for that poor infatuated creature, but there is a remedy for you! For men who have been bitten by the fiery serpents of sin, Jesus Christ is lifted up—not only for you who are, as yet, playing with the serpent; not only for you who have warmed it in your bosom and felt it creeping over your flesh—but for you who are actually bitten and are mortally wounded! If any man were bitten so that he has become diseased with sin and feels the deadly venom in his blood, it is for *him* that Jesus is set forth today. Though he may think himself to be an extreme case, it is for such that Sovereign Grace provides a remedy!

The bite of the serpent was painful. We are told in the text that these serpents were “fiery,” a word which may, perhaps, refer to their color, but more probably has reference to the burning effects of their venom. It heated and inflamed the blood so that every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish. In some men that poison of asps which we call sin has inflamed their minds. They are restless, discontented and full of fear and anguish. They write their own damnation—they are sure that they are lost—they refuse all tidings of hope. You cannot get them to give a cool and sober hearing to the message of Grace. Sin works in them such terror that they give themselves over as dead men. They are in their own apprehension, as David says, “free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom God remembers no more.”

It was for men bitten by the fiery serpents that the bronze serpent was lifted up and it is for men actually envenomed by sin that Jesus is preached. Jesus died for such as are at their wits’ end—for such as cannot think straight, for those who are tumbled up and down in their minds, for those who are condemned already—for such was the Son of Man lifted up upon the Cross! What a joyful thing that we are able to tell you this. *The bite of these serpents was, as I have told you, mortal.* The

Israelites could have no question about that, because in their own presence, “much people of Israel died.” They saw their own friends die of the snakebite and they helped to bury them. They knew why they died and were sure that it was because the venom of the fiery serpents was in their veins. They were left without an excuse for imagining that they could be bitten and yet live.

Now, we know that many have perished as the result of sin. We are not in doubt as to what sin will do, for we are told by the Infallible Word that, “the wages of sin is death,” and, yet again, “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” We know, also, that this death is endless misery, for the Scripture describes the lost as being cast into outer darkness, “where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” Our Lord Jesus speaks of the condemned going away into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. We ought to have no doubt about this! But most of those who profess to doubt it are those who fear that it will be their own portion—they know that they are going down to eternal woe themselves and, therefore, they try to shut their eyes to their inevitable doom.

Alas, that they should find flatterers in the pulpit who pander to their love of sin by piping to the same tune. We are not of their order! We believe in what the Lord has said in all its solemnity of dread and, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to escape from them. But it was for men who had endured the mortal bite, for men upon whose pallid faces death began to set his seal, for men whose veins were burning with the awful poison of the serpent within them—for *them* it was that God said to Moses, “Make you a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it shall live.”

There is no limit set to the stage of poisoning. However far gone, the remedy still had power! If a person had been bitten a moment before, though he only saw a few drops of blood oozing forth and only felt a little smart, he might look and live! And if he had waited, unhappily waited, even for half an hour and speech failed him and the pulse grew feeble, yet if he could but look he would live at once! No boundary was set to the virtue of this Divinely ordained remedy, or to the freedom of its application to those who needed it. The promise had no qualifying clause, “It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.”

And our text tells us that God’s promise came to pass in every case, without exception, for we read—“It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” Thus I have described the person who was in mortal peril.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE REMEDY PROVIDED FOR HIM. This was as singular as it was effectual. *It was purely of Divine origin* and it is clear that the invention of it and the putting of power into it was entirely of God. Men have prescribed several medicines, decoctions and operations for serpent bites—I do not know how far any of them may be depended upon, but this I know—I would rather not be bitten in order to try any of them, even those that are most in vogue! For the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness there was no remedy whatever, except

this which God had provided and, at first sight, that remedy must have seemed to be a very unlikely one.

A simple look to the figure of a serpent on a pole? How unlikely to be a cure! How and by what means could a cure be worked through merely *looking* at twisted brass? It seemed, indeed, to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent? Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of Divine origin—for when God ordains a cure He is, by that very fact, bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure, nor prescribe a mockery! It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if He ordains, it must accomplish the promised result.

We need not know how it will work, it is quite sufficient for us that God's mighty Grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls. This particular remedy of a serpent lifted on a pole was exceedingly instructive, though I do not suppose that Israel understood it. We have been taught by our Lord and know the meaning. It was a serpent impaled upon a pole. As you would take a sharp pole and drive it through a serpent's head to kill it, so this bronze serpent was exhibited as killed and hung up as dead before all eyes. It was the image of a dead snake. Wonder of wonders that our Lord Jesus should condescend to be symbolized by a dead serpent!

The instruction to us, after reading John's Gospel, is this—our Lord Jesus Christ, in infinite humiliation, deigned to come into the world and to be made a curse for us. The bronze serpent had no venom of itself, but it took the form of a fiery serpent. Christ is no sinner and in Him is no sin. But the bronze serpent was in the form of a serpent and so was Jesus sent forth by God, “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” He came under the Law and sin was imputed to Him and, therefore, He came under the wrath and curse of God for our sakes. In Christ Jesus, if you will look at Him upon the Cross, you will see that sin is slain and hung up as a dead serpent—there, too, is *death* put to death, for, “He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light”—and there is also the curse forever ended because He has endured it, being “made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.”

Thus are these serpents hung up upon the cross as a spectacle to all beholders, all slain by our dying Lord. Sin, death, and the curse are as dead serpents now. Oh, what a sight! If you can see it, what joy it will give you! Had the Hebrews understood it, that dead serpent dangling from a pole would have prophesied to them the glorious sight which this day our faith gazes upon Jesus slain and sin, death and Hell slain in Him! The remedy, then, to be looked to, was exceedingly instructive and we know the instruction it was intended to convey to us.

Please remember that in all the camp of Israel there was but one *remedy* for a serpent bite and that was the bronze serpent—and there was but *one* bronze serpent, not two. Israel might not make another. If they had made a second, it would have had no effect. There was one and only one—and that was lifted high in the center of the camp, that if any man was bitten by a serpent he might look to it and live. There is one

Savior and only one! There is no other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved. All Grace is concentrated in Jesus, of whom we read, “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.”

Christ’s bearing the curse and ending the curse; Christ’s being slain by sin and destroying sin; Christ bruised as to His heel by the old serpent, but breaking the serpent’s head—it is Christ alone that we must look to if we would live. O Sinner, look to Jesus on the Cross, for He is the one remedy for all forms of sin’s poisoned wounds! There was but one healing serpent and that one was *bright and lustrous*. It was a serpent of brass and brass is a shining metal. This was newly-made brass and, therefore, not dull, and whenever the sun shone on it, there flashed forth a brightness from this bronze serpent. It might have been a serpent of wood or of any other metal if God had so ordained, but He commanded that it must be of brass, that it might have brightness about it.

What brightness there is about our Lord Jesus Christ! If we do but exhibit Him in His own true metal He is lustrous in the eyes of men. If we will but preach the Gospel simply and never think to adorn it with our philosophical thoughts, there is enough brightness in Christ to catch a sinner’s eye—yes, and it does catch the eyes of thousands! From afar the everlasting Gospel gleams in the Person of Christ. As the bronze standard reflected the beams of the sun, so Jesus reflects the love of God to sinners and, seeing it, they look by faith and live!

Once more, this remedy was *an enduring one*. It was a serpent of brass and I suppose it remained in the midst of the camp from that day forward. There was no use for it after Israel entered Canaan, but, as long as they were in the wilderness, it was probably exhibited in the center of the camp, hard by the tabernacle door, upon a lofty standard. Aloft and open to the gaze of all hung this image of a dead snake—the perpetual cure for serpent venom! Had it been made of other materials it might have been broken, or have decayed—but a serpent of brass would last as long as fiery serpents pestered the desert camp. As long as there was a man bitten, there was the serpent of brass to heal him.

What a comfort is this, that Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them. The dying thief beheld the brightness of that serpent of brass as he saw Jesus hanging at his side and it saved him! And so may you and I look and live, for He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.”—

***“Faint my head, and sick my heart,
Wounded, bruised, in every part.
Satan’s fiery sting I feel
Poisoned with the pride of Hell.
But if at the point to die,
Upward I direct my eye,
Jesus lifted up I see,
I live by Him who died for me.”***

I hope I do not overlay my subject by these figures. I wish not to do so, but to make it very plain to you. All you that are *really* guilty, all you who are bitten by the serpent, the sure remedy for you is to look to Jesus Christ who took our sin upon Himself and died in the sinner’s stead,

“being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Your only remedy lies in Christ and nowhere else. Look unto Him and be you saved!

III. This brings us, in the third place, to consider THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY, or the link between the serpent-bitten man and the brass serpent which was to heal him. What was the link? It was of the most simple kind imaginable. The bronze serpent might have been, if God had so ordered it, carried into the house where the sick man was, but it was not so. It might have been applied to him by rubbing—he might have been expected to repeat a certain form of prayer, or to have a priest present to perform a ceremony. But there was nothing of the kind. He had only to *look!*

It was well that the cure was so simple for the danger was so frequent. Bites of the serpent came in many ways. A man might be gathering sticks, or merely walking along and be bitten. Even now in the desert serpents are a danger. Mr. Sibree says that on one occasion he saw what he thought to be a round stone, beautifully marked. He put forth his hand to take it up, when, to his horror, he discovered that it was a coiled living serpent! All day long, when fiery serpents were sent among them, the Israelites must have been in danger. In their beds and at their meals; in their houses and when they went abroad they were in danger.

These serpents are called by Isaiah, “flying serpents,” not because they fly, but because they contract themselves and then suddenly spring up so as to reach to a considerable height. A man might be well off his tent floor and yet not be beyond the reach of one of these malignant reptiles. What was a man to do? He had nothing to do but to stand outside his tent door and look to the place where gleamed afar the brightness of the serpent of brass! And the moment he looked, he was healed! He had nothing to do but to look! No priest was needed, no holy water, no hocus-pocus, no mass-book—nothing but a look!

A Romish bishop said to one of the early Reformers, when he preached salvation by simple faith, “O Mr. Doctor, open that gap to the people and we are undone!” And so, indeed, they are, for the business and trade of priestcraft are ended forever if men may simply trust Jesus and live. Yet it is even so! *Believe* in Him, you sinners—for this is the spiritual meaning of looking—and at once your sin is forgiven! And what, perhaps, is more, its deadly power ceases to operate within your spirit. There is life in a look at Jesus! Is not this simple enough?

But please notice how *very personal* it was. A man could not be cured by anything anybody else could do for him. If he had been bitten by the serpent and had refused to look to the serpent of brass and had gone to his bed, no physician could help him. A pious mother might kneel down and pray for him, but it would be of no use. Sisters might come in and plead; ministers might be called in to pray that the man might live; but he must die in spite of their prayers if he did not look. There was only one hope for his life—he must look to that serpent of brass!

It is just so with you. Some of you have written to me begging me to pray for you. And so I have, but it means nothing unless you, yourselves, believe in Jesus Christ. There is not beneath Heaven, nor in Heaven, any hope for any one of you unless you will believe in Jesus Christ! Whoever

you may be, however much bitten of the serpent and however near to die, if you will look to the Savior you shall live! But if you will not do this, you must be damned, as surely as you live. At the Last Great Day I must bear witness against you that I have told you this straight out and plainly—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned.”

There is no help for it. You may do what you will, join what Church you please, take the Lord’s Supper, be baptized, go through severe penance, or give all your goods to feed the poor—but you are a lost man unless you look to Jesus, for this is the only remedy! And even Jesus Christ Himself cannot, will not, save you unless you look to Him. There is nothing in His death to save you. There is nothing in His life to save you unless you will trust Him. It has come to this—you must look—and look for *yourself*.

And then, again, it is *very instructive*. This looking, what did it mean? It meant this—self-help must be abandoned and God must be trusted. The wounded man would say, “I must not sit here and look at my wound, for that will not save me. See there where the serpent struck me? The blood is oozing forth, black with the venom! How it burns and swells! My very heart is failing. But all these reflections will not ease me. I must look away from this to the lifted up serpent of brass.” It is idle to look anywhere except to God’s one ordained remedy. The Israelites must have understood as much as this, that God required us to trust Him and to use His means of salvation. We must do as He bids us and trust in Him to work our cure—if we will not do this, we shall die eternally.

This way of curing was intended that they might magnify the love of God and attribute their healing entirely to Divine Grace. The bronze serpent was not merely a picture, as I have shown you, of God’s putting away sin by spending His wrath upon His Son, but it was a display of Divine Love. And this I know because Jesus Himself said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” He was plainly saying that the death of Christ upon the Cross was an exhibition of God’s *love* to men and whoever looks to that grand display of God’s love to man, namely, His giving His only-begotten Son to become a curse for us, shall surely live.

Now, when a man was healed by looking at the serpent, he could not say that he healed himself, for he only looked and there is no virtue in a look. A Believer never claims merit or honor on account of his faith. Faith is a self-denying Grace and never dares to boast. Where is the great credit of simply believing the Truth of God and humbly trusting Christ to save you? Faith glorifies God and so our Lord has chosen it as the means of our salvation. If a priest had come and touched the bitten man, he might have ascribed some honor to the priest. But when there was no priest in the case; when there was nothing except looking to that bronze serpent, the man was driven to the conclusion that God’s love and power had healed him.

I am not saved by anything that I have done, but by what the Lord has done. To that conclusion God will have us all come—we must all confess

that if saved, it is by His free, rich, sovereign, undeserved Grace displayed in the Person of His dear Son.

IV. Allow me one moment upon the fourth head, which is THE CURE EFFECTED. We are told in the text that, “if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” That is to say, he was healed at once. He had not to wait five minutes, or five seconds. Dear Hearer, did you ever hear this before? If you have not, it may startle you, but it is true. If you have lived in the blackest sin that is possible up to this very moment, yet if you will now believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved before the clock ticks another time! It is done like a flash of lightning! Pardon is not a work of time.

Sanctification needs a lifetime, but justification needs no more than a moment. You believe, you live! You trust Christ, your sins are gone! You are a saved man the instant you believe! “Oh,” says one, “that is a wonder.” It is a wonder and will remain a wonder to all eternity. Our Lord’s miracles, when He was on earth, were mostly instantaneous. He touched them and the fevered ones were able to sit up and minister to Him. No doctor can cure a fever in that fashion, for there is a resultant weakness left after the heat of the fever is abated. Jesus works perfect cures and whoever believes in Him, though he has only believed one minute, is justified from all his sins. Oh the matchless Grace of God!

This remedy healed again and again. Very possibly, after a man had been healed, he might go back to his work and be attacked by a second serpent, for there were broods of them about. What had he to do? Why, to look again! And if he was wounded a thousand times, he must look a thousand times! You, dear child of God, if you have sin on your conscience, look to Jesus! The healthiest way of living where serpents swarm is never to take your eyes off the bronze serpent at all. Ah, you vipers, you may bite if you will, but as long as my eyes are upon the bronze serpent, I defy your fangs and poison, for I have a continual remedy at work within me! Temptation is overcome by the blood of Jesus! “This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith.”

This cure was of universal efficacy to all who used it. There was not one case, in all the camp, of a man that looked to the serpent of brass and yet died. And there never will be a case of a man that looks to Jesus who remains under condemnation! The Believer must be saved. Some of the people had to look from a long distance. The pole could not be equally near to everybody, but so long as they could see the serpent it healed those that were afar off as well as those who were near. Nor did it matter if their eyes were feeble. All eyes were not alike keen. Some may have had to squint, or had dimness of vision, or only one eye—but if they did but look, they lived!

Perhaps the man could hardly make out the shape of the serpent as he looked. “Ah,” he said to himself, “I cannot discern the coils of the bronze snake, but I can see the shining of the brass.” And he lived! Oh, poor Soul, if you cannot see the whole of Christ nor all His beauties, nor all the riches of His Grace, yet if you can but see Him who was made sin for us, you shall live! If you say, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief,” your faith will save you! A little faith will give you a great Christ and you shall find eternal life in Him.

Thus I have tried to describe the cure. Oh that the Lord would work that cure in every sinner here at this moment. I do pray He may! It is a pleasant thought that if they looked to that bronze serpent by any kind of light they lived. Many beheld it in the glare of noon and saw its shining coils and lived. But I should not wonder that some were bitten at night and by the moonlight they drew near and looked up and lived. Perhaps it was a dark and stormy night and not a star was visible. The tempest crashed overhead and from the murky cloud out flashed the lightning, cleaving the rocks asunder. By the glare of that sudden flame the dying man made out the bronze serpent and though he saw but for a moment yet he lived.

So, Sinner, if your soul is wrapped in tempest and if from out the clouds there comes but one single flash of light, look to Jesus Christ by it and you shall live!

V. I close with this last matter of consideration—here is A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEIR LORD. What ought we to do? We should imitate Moses, whose business it was to set the bronze serpent upon a pole. It is your business and mine to lift up the Gospel of Christ Jesus so that all may see it! All Moses had to do was to hang up the bronze serpent in the sight of all. He did not say, “Aaron, bring your censer and bring with you a score of priests and make a perfumed cloud.” Nor did he say, “I myself will go forth in my robes as Law-Giver and stand there.”

No, he had nothing to do that was pompous or ceremonial! He had but to exhibit the brass serpent and leave it naked and open to the gaze of all. He did not say, “Aaron, bring here a cloth of gold, wrap up the serpent in blue and scarlet and fine linen.” Such an act would have been clean contrary to his orders. He was to keep the serpent unveiled. Its power lay in itself—not in its surroundings. The Lord did not tell him to paint the pole, or to deck it with the colors of the rainbow. Oh, no! Any pole would do!

The dying ones did not need to see the *pole*—they only needed to behold the serpent. I dare say he would make a neat pole, for God’s work should be done decently, but still the serpent was the only thing to look at. This is what we have to do with our Lord. We must preach Him, teach Him and make Him visible to all! We must not conceal Him by our attempts at eloquence and learning. We must have done with the polished lancewood pole of fine speech and those bits of scarlet and blue in the form of grand sentences and poetic periods. Everything must be done that Christ may be seen and nothing must be allowed which hides Him. Moses may go home and go to bed when the serpent is once lifted up. All that is needed is that the bronze serpent should be within view both day and night. The preacher may hide himself so that nobody may know who he is, for if he has set forth Christ, he is best out of the way.

Now, you teachers, teach your children Jesus. Show them Christ Crucified! Keep Christ before them. You young men that try to preach, do not attempt to do it grandly. The true grandeur of preaching is for Christ to be grandly displayed in it. No other grandeur is needed! Keep self in the background and set forth Jesus Christ among the people, evidently crucified among them. None but Jesus, none but Jesus! Let Him be the sum and substance of all your teaching. Some of you have looked to the

bronze serpent, I know, and you have been healed. But what have you done with the bronze serpent since? You have not come forward to confess your faith and join the Church. You have not spoken to any one about his soul. You put the bronze serpent into a chest and hide it away. Is this right?

Bring it out and set it on a pole! Publish Christ and His salvation! He was never meant to be treated as a curiosity in a museum. He is intended to be exhibited in the highways that those who are sin-bitten may look at Him. “But I have no proper pole,” says one. The best sort of pole to exhibit Christ upon is a high one so that He may be seen the further. Exalt Jesus! Speak well of His name. I do not know any other virtue that there can be in the pole but its height. The more you can speak in your Lord’s praise, the higher you can lift Him up, the better! But for all other styles of speech there is nothing to be said. Lift Christ UP!

“Oh,” says one, “but I have not a long standard.” Then lift Him up on such as you have, for there are short people about who will be able to see by your means. I think I told you once of a picture which I saw of the bronze serpent. I want the Sunday school teachers to listen to this. The artist represented all sorts of people clustering round the pole and as they looked, the horrible snakes dropped off their arms and they lived! There was such a crowd around the pole that a mother could not get near it. She carried a little babe, which a serpent had bitten. You could see the blue marks of the venom. As she could get no nearer, the mother held her child aloft and turned its little head that it might gaze with its infant eyes upon the bronze serpent and live.

Do this with your little children, you Sunday school teachers! Even while they are yet little, pray that they may look to Jesus Christ and live, for there is no boundary set to their age. Old men, snake-bitten, came hobbling on their crutches. “Eighty years old am I,” says one, “but I have looked to the bronze serpent and I am healed.” Little boys were brought out by their mothers, though as yet they could hardly speak plainly, and they cried in child language, “I look at the great snake and it blesses me.” All ranks, sexes, characters and dispositions looked and lived! Who will look to Jesus at this good hour? O dear Souls, will you have life or not? Will you despise Christ and perish? If so, your blood be on your own head! I have told you God’s way of salvation! Lay hold on it. Look to Jesus at once! May His Spirit gently lead you to do so. Amen.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

NUMBER 1500, OR LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT NO. 1500

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”
Numbers 21:9.*

THIS discourse, when it shall be printed, will make 1,500 of my sermons which have been published regularly, week after week. This is certainly a remarkable fact. I do not know of any instance in modern times in which 1,500 sermons have thus followed each other from the press from one person and have continued to command a large circle of readers. I desire to utter most hearty thanksgivings to God for Divine help in thinking out and uttering these sermons, sermons which have not merely been printed, but have been read with eagerness and have also been translated into foreign tongues. These sermons are publicly being read on this very Sabbath in hundreds of places where a minister cannot be found. These sermons God has blessed to the conversion of multitudes of souls.

I may and I must joy and rejoice in this great blessing which I most heartily ascribe to the undeserved favor of the Lord! I thought the best way in which I could express my thankfulness would be to preach Jesus Christ, again, and set Him forth in a sermon in which the simple Gospel should be made as clear as a child's alphabet. I hope that in closing the list of 1,500 discourses, the Lord will give me words which will be blessed more than any which have preceded them, to the conversion of those who hear it or read it. May those who sit in darkness because they do not understand the freeness of salvation and the easy method by which it may be obtained be brought into the light by discovering the way of peace through believing in Christ Jesus! Forgive this prelude. My thankfulness would not permit me to withhold it.

Concerning our text and the serpent of brass. If you turn to John's Gospel you will notice that its commencement contains a sort of orderly list of types taken from Holy Scripture. It begins with the creation. God said, "Let there be light" and John begins by declaring that Jesus, the eternal Word, is "the true light, which lights every man that comes into the world." Before he closes his first chapter, John has introduced a type supplied by Abel, for when the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." Nor is the first chapter finished before we are reminded of Jacob's ladder, for we find our Lord declaring to Nathanael, "Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

By the time we have reached the third chapter we have come as far as Israel in the wilderness and we read the joyful words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We are going to speak of this act of Moses this morning, that we may, all of us, behold the bronze serpent and find the promise true, "everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon the bronze serpent, shall live."

It may be that you who have looked before will derive fresh benefit from looking again, while some who have never turned their eyes in that direction may gaze upon the lifted up Savior and, this morning, be saved from the burning venom of the serpent, that deadly poison of *sin* which now lurks in their nature and breeds death to their souls. May the Holy Spirit make the word effectual to that gracious end!

I. I shall invite you to consider the subject, first, by noticing THE PERSON IN MORTAL PERIL for whom the bronze serpent was made and lifted up. Our text says, "It came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Let us notice that the fiery serpents, first of all, came among the people because *they had despised God's way and God's bread*. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It was *God's way*—He had chosen it for them and He had chosen it in wisdom and mercy—but they murmured at it.

As an old Divine says, "It was lonesome and loathsome," but, still, it was God's way and, therefore, it ought not to have been loathsome—His pillar of fire and cloud went before them and His servants, Moses and Aaron, led them like a flock—and they ought to have followed cheerfully. Every step of their previous journey had been rightly ordered and they ought to have been quite sure that this compassing of the land of Edom was rightly ordered, too. But no, they quarreled with God's way and wanted to have their own way. This is one of the great standing follies of men—they cannot be content to wait on the Lord and keep His way—they prefer a will and way of their own.

The people, also, quarreled with God's food. He gave them the best of the best, for "men did eat angels' food," but they called the manna by an opprobrious title, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it and, even in our translation, conveys the idea of contempt. They said, "Our soul loathes this light bread," as if they thought it unsubstantial and only fit to puff them up because it was easy of digestion and did not breed in them that heat of blood and tendency to disease which a heavier diet would have brought with it. Being discontented with their God, they quarreled with the bread which He set upon their table, though it surpassed any that mortal man has ever eaten before or since.

This is another of man's follies—his heart refuses to feed upon God's Word or believe God's Truth. He craves for the flesh-meat of carnal reason, the leeks and the garlic of superstitious tradition and the cucumbers of speculation! He cannot bring his mind down to believe the Word of God, or to accept a Truth of God so simple, so fitted to the capacity of a child. Many demand something deeper than the Divine, more profound than the infinite, more liberal than Free Grace. They quarrel with God's way and

with God's bread and, therefore, there comes among them the fiery serpents of evil lusts, pride and sin.

I may be speaking to some who have, up to this moment, quarreled with the precepts and the doctrines of the Lord and I would affectionately warn them that their disobedience and presumption will lead to sin and misery. Rebels against God are apt to wax worse and worse. The world's fashions and modes of thought lead on to the world's vices and crimes. If we long for the fruits of Egypt, we shall soon feel the serpents of Egypt! The natural consequence of turning against God like serpents is to find serpents waylaying our path. If we forsake the Lord in spirit, or in doctrine, temptation will lurk in our path and sin will sting our feet.

I beg you carefully to observe, concerning those persons for whom the bronze serpent was specially lifted up, that *they had been actually bitten by the serpents*. The Lord sent fiery serpents among them, but it was not the serpents being among them that involved the lifting up of a bronze serpent—it was the serpents having actually *poisoned* them which led to the provision of a remedy. "It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." The only people who looked and derived benefit from the wonderful cure lifted up in the midst of the camp were those who had been stung by the vipers.

The common notion is that salvation is for *good* people; salvation is for those who fight against temptation and salvation is for the spiritually healthy. But how different is God's Word! God's medicine is for the sick and His healing is for the diseased! The Grace of God, through the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, is for men who are *actually* and *really* guilty. We do not preach a sentimental salvation from fancied guilt, but real and true pardon for actual offenses! I care nothing for sham sinners—you who never did anything wrong, you who are so good in yourselves that you are all right, I leave you—for I am sent to preach Christ to those who are full of sin and worthy of eternal wrath!

The serpent of brass was a remedy for those who had been bitten. What an awful thing it is to be bitten by a serpent! I dare say some of you remember the case of Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens. It happened in October, 1852, and therefore some of you will remember it. This unhappy man was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia and, according to the account of many, he had a few drinks with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin and though he would probably have been in a great passion if anyone had called him drunk, yet reason and common sense had evidently become overpowered.

He went back to his post at the gardens in an inebriated state. He had, some months before, seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians and play with serpents! First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not arouse it so as to bite. The assistant keeper cried out, "For God's sake put the snake back," but the foolish man replied, "I am inspired." Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, "Now for the cobra."

This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night and, therefore, the rash man placed it in his bosom till it revived and glided downward till its head appeared below the back of his waist-coat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down with his other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror!

And, as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was "in a maze." When assistance arrived, Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, "I am a dead man." They put him in a cab and took him to the hospital. First his speech went—he could only point to his poor throat and moan. Then his vision failed him and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck, he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over his body and he was a dead man.

I tell you that story that you may use it as a parable and learn never to play with sin and also, in order to bring vividly before you what it is to be bitten by a serpent. Suppose that Gurling could have been cured by looking at a piece of brass—would it not have been good news for him? There was no remedy for that poor infatuated creature, but there is a remedy for you! For men who have been bitten by the fiery serpents of sin, Jesus Christ is lifted up—not only for you who are, as yet, playing with the serpent; not only for you who have warmed it in your bosom and felt it creeping over your flesh—but for you who are actually bitten and are mortally wounded! If any man were bitten so that he has become diseased with sin and feels the deadly venom in his blood, it is for *him* that Jesus is set forth today. Though he may think himself to be an extreme case, it is for such that Sovereign Grace provides a remedy!

The bite of the serpent was painful. We are told in the text that these serpents were "fiery," a word which may, perhaps, refer to their color, but more probably has reference to the burning effects of their venom. It heated and inflamed the blood so that every vein became a boiling river, swollen with anguish. In some men that poison of asps which we call sin has inflamed their minds. They are restless, discontented and full of fear and anguish. They write their own damnation—they are sure that they are lost—they refuse all tidings of hope. You cannot get them to give a cool and sober hearing to the message of Grace. Sin works in them such terror that they give themselves over as dead men. They are in their own apprehension, as David says, "free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom God remembers no more."

It was for men bitten by the fiery serpents that the bronze serpent was lifted up and it is for men actually envenomed by sin that Jesus is preached. Jesus died for such as are at their wits' end—for such as cannot think straight, for those who are tumbled up and down in their minds, for those who are condemned already—for such was the Son of Man lifted up upon the Cross! What a joyful thing that we are able to tell you this.

The bite of these serpents was, as I have told you, mortal. The Israelites could have no question about that, because in their own presence, “much people of Israel died.” They saw their own friends die of the snakebite and they helped to bury them. They knew why they died and were sure that it was because the venom of the fiery serpents was in their veins. They were left without an excuse for imagining that they could be bitten and yet live.

Now, we know that many have perished as the result of sin. We are not in doubt as to what sin will do, for we are told by the Infallible Word that, “the wages of sin is death,” and, yet again, “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” We know, also, that this death is endless misery, for the Scripture describes the lost as being cast into outer darkness, “where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched.” Our Lord Jesus speaks of the condemned going away into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. We ought to have no doubt about this! But most of those who profess to doubt it are those who fear that it will be their own portion—they know that they are going down to eternal woe themselves and, therefore, they try to shut their eyes to their inevitable doom.

Alas, that they should find flatterers in the pulpit who pander to their love of sin by piping to the same tune. We are not of their order! We believe in what the Lord has said in all its solemnity of dread and, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to escape from them. But it was for men who had endured the mortal bite, for men upon whose pallid faces death began to set his seal, for men whose veins were burning with the awful poison of the serpent within them—for *them* it was that God said to Moses, “Make you a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it shall live.”

There is no limit set to the stage of poisoning. However far gone, the remedy still had power! If a person had been bitten a moment before, though he only saw a few drops of blood oozing forth and only felt a little smart, he might look and live! And if he had waited, unhappily waited, even for half an hour and speech failed him and the pulse grew feeble, yet if he could but look he would live at once! No boundary was set to the virtue of this Divinely ordained remedy, or to the freedom of its application to those who needed it. The promise had no qualifying clause, “It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live.”

And our text tells us that God’s promise came to pass in every case, without exception, for we read—“It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.” Thus I have described the person who was in mortal peril.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE REMEDY PROVIDED FOR HIM. This was as singular as it was effectual. *It was purely of Divine origin* and it is clear that the invention of it and the putting of power into it was entirely of God. Men have prescribed several medicines, decoctions and operations for serpent bites—I do not know how far any of them may be depended upon, but this I know—I would rather not be bitten in order to try any of them, even those that are most in vogue! For the bites of the fiery serpents in the wilderness there was no remedy whatever, except this which God

had provided and, at first sight, that remedy must have seemed to be a very unlikely one.

A simple look to the figure of a serpent on a pole? How unlikely to be a cure! How and by what means could a cure be worked through merely *looking* at twisted brass? It seemed, indeed, to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent? Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of Divine origin—for when God ordains a cure He is, by that very fact, bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure, nor prescribe a mockery! It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if He ordains, it must accomplish the promised result.

We need not know how it will work, it is quite sufficient for us that God's mighty Grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls. This particular remedy of a serpent lifted on a pole was exceedingly instructive, though I do not suppose that Israel understood it. We have been taught by our Lord and know the meaning. It was a serpent impaled upon a pole. As you would take a sharp pole and drive it through a serpent's head to kill it, so this bronze serpent was exhibited as killed and hung up as dead before all eyes. It was the image of a dead snake. Wonder of wonders that our Lord Jesus should condescend to be symbolized by a dead serpent!

The instruction to us, after reading John's Gospel, is this—our Lord Jesus Christ, in infinite humiliation, deigned to come into the world and to be made a curse for us. The bronze serpent had no venom of itself, but it took the form of a fiery serpent. Christ is no sinner and in Him is no sin. But the bronze serpent was in the form of a serpent and so was Jesus sent forth by God, "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He came under the Law and sin was imputed to Him and, therefore, He came under the wrath and curse of God for our sakes. In Christ Jesus, if you will look at Him upon the Cross, you will see that sin is slain and hung up as a dead serpent—there, too, is *death* put to death, for, "He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light"—and there is also the curse forever ended because He has endured it, being "made a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Thus are these serpents hung up upon the cross as a spectacle to all beholders, all slain by our dying Lord. Sin, death, and the curse are as dead serpents now. Oh, what a sight! If you can see it, what joy it will give you! Had the Hebrews understood it, that dead serpent dangling from a pole would have prophesied to them the glorious sight which this day our faith gazes upon Jesus slain and sin, death and Hell slain in Him! The remedy, then, to be looked to, was exceedingly instructive and we know the instruction it was intended to convey to us.

Please remember that in all the camp of Israel there was but one *remedy* for a serpent bite and that was the bronze serpent—and there was but *one* bronze serpent, not two. Israel might not make another. If they had made a second, it would have had no effect. There was one and only one—and that was lifted high in the center of the camp, that if any man was

bitten by a serpent he might look to it and live. There is one Savior and only one! There is no other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved. All Grace is concentrated in Jesus, of whom we read, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

Christ's bearing the curse and ending the curse; Christ's being slain by sin and destroying sin; Christ bruised as to His heel by the old serpent, but breaking the serpent's head—it is Christ alone that we must look to if we would live. O Sinner, look to Jesus on the Cross, for He is the one remedy for all forms of sin's poisoned wounds! There was but one healing serpent and that one was *bright and lustrous*. It was a serpent of brass and brass is a shining metal. This was newly-made brass and, therefore, not dull, and whenever the sun shone on it, there flashed forth a brightness from this bronze serpent. It might have been a serpent of wood or of any other metal if God had so ordained, but He commanded that it must be of brass, that it might have brightness about it.

What brightness there is about our Lord Jesus Christ! If we do but exhibit Him in His own true metal He is lustrous in the eyes of men. If we will but preach the Gospel simply and never think to adorn it with our philosophical thoughts, there is enough brightness in Christ to catch a sinner's eye—yes, and it does catch the eyes of thousands! From afar the everlasting Gospel gleams in the Person of Christ. As the bronze standard reflected the beams of the sun, so Jesus reflects the love of God to sinners and, seeing it, they look by faith and live!

Once more, this remedy was *an enduring one*. It was a serpent of brass and I suppose it remained in the midst of the camp from that day forward. There was no use for it after Israel entered Canaan, but, as long as they were in the wilderness, it was probably exhibited in the center of the camp, hard by the tabernacle door, upon a lofty standard. Aloft and open to the gaze of all hung this image of a dead snake—the perpetual cure for serpent venom! Had it been made of other materials it might have been broken, or have decayed—but a serpent of brass would last as long as fiery serpents pestered the desert camp. As long as there was a man bitten, there was the serpent of brass to heal him.

What a comfort is this, that Jesus is still able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them. The dying thief beheld the brightness of that serpent of brass as he saw Jesus hanging at his side and it saved him! And so may you and I look and live, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."—

***"Faint my head, and sick my heart,
Wounded, bruised, in every part.
Satan's fiery sting I feel
Poisoned with the pride of Hell.
But if at the point to die,
Upward I direct my eye,
Jesus lifted up I see,
I live by Him who died for me."***

I hope I do not overlay my subject by these figures. I wish not to do so, but to make it very plain to you. All you that are *really* guilty, all you who are bitten by the serpent, the sure remedy for you is to look to Jesus Christ who took our sin upon Himself and died in the sinner's stead, "be-

ing made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Your only remedy lies in Christ and nowhere else. Look unto Him and be you saved!

III. This brings us, in the third place, to consider THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY, or the link between the serpent-bitten man and the brass serpent which was to heal him. What was the link? It was of the most simple kind imaginable. The bronze serpent might have been, if God had so ordered it, carried into the house where the sick man was, but it was not so. It might have been applied to him by rubbing—he might have been expected to repeat a certain form of prayer, or to have a priest present to perform a ceremony. But there was nothing of the kind. He had only to *look!*

It was well that the cure was so simple for the danger was so frequent. Bites of the serpent came in many ways. A man might be gathering sticks, or merely walking along and be bitten. Even now in the desert serpents are a danger. Mr. Sibree says that on one occasion he saw what he thought to be a round stone, beautifully marked. He put forth his hand to take it up, when, to his horror, he discovered that it was a coiled living serpent! All day long, when fiery serpents were sent among them, the Israelites must have been in danger. In their beds and at their meals; in their houses and when they went abroad they were in danger.

These serpents are called by Isaiah, “flying serpents,” not because they fly, but because they contract themselves and then suddenly spring up so as to reach to a considerable height. A man might be well off his tent floor and yet not be beyond the reach of one of these malignant reptiles. What was a man to do? He had nothing to do but to stand outside his tent door and look to the place where gleamed afar the brightness of the serpent of brass! And the moment he looked, he was healed! He had nothing to do but to look! No priest was needed, no holy water, no hocus-pocus, no mass-book—nothing but a look!

A Romish bishop said to one of the early Reformers, when he preached salvation by simple faith, “O Mr. Doctor, open that gap to the people and we are undone!” And so, indeed, they are, for the business and trade of priestcraft are ended forever if men may simply trust Jesus and live. Yet it is even so! *Believe* in Him, you sinners—for this is the spiritual meaning of looking—and at once your sin is forgiven! And what, perhaps, is more, its deadly power ceases to operate within your spirit. There is life in a look at Jesus! Is not this simple enough?

But please notice how *very personal* it was. A man could not be cured by anything anybody else could do for him. If he had been bitten by the serpent and had refused to look to the serpent of brass and had gone to his bed, no physician could help him. A pious mother might kneel down and pray for him, but it would be of no use. Sisters might come in and plead; ministers might be called in to pray that the man might live; but he must die in spite of their prayers if he did not look. There was only one hope for his life—he must look to that serpent of brass!

It is just so with you. Some of you have written to me begging me to pray for you. And so I have, but it means nothing unless you, yourselves, believe in Jesus Christ. There is not beneath Heaven, nor in Heaven, any

hope for any one of you unless you will believe in Jesus Christ! Whoever you may be, however much bitten of the serpent and however near to die, if you will look to the Savior you shall live! But if you will not do this, you must be damned, as surely as you live. At the Last Great Day I must bear witness against you that I have told you this straight out and plainly—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned."

There is no help for it. You may do what you will, join what Church you please, take the Lord's Supper, be baptized, go through severe penance, or give all your goods to feed the poor—but you are a lost man unless you look to Jesus, for this is the only remedy! And even Jesus Christ Himself cannot, will not, save you unless you look to Him. There is nothing in His death to save you. There is nothing in His life to save you unless you will trust Him. It has come to this—you must look—and look for *yourself*.

And then, again, it is *very instructive*. This looking, what did it mean? It meant this—self-help must be abandoned and God must be trusted. The wounded man would say, "I must not sit here and look at my wound, for that will not save me. See there where the serpent struck me? The blood is oozing forth, black with the venom! How it burns and swells! My very heart is failing. But all these reflections will not ease me. I must look away from this to the lifted up serpent of brass." It is idle to look anywhere except to God's one ordained remedy. The Israelites must have understood as much as this, that God required us to trust Him and to use His means of salvation. We must do as He bids us and trust in Him to work our cure—if we will not do this, we shall die eternally.

This way of curing was intended that they might magnify the love of God and attribute their healing entirely to Divine Grace. The bronze serpent was not merely a picture, as I have shown you, of God's putting away sin by spending His wrath upon His Son, but it was a display of Divine Love. And this I know because Jesus Himself said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." He was plainly saying that the death of Christ upon the Cross was an exhibition of God's *love* to men and whoever looks to that grand display of God's love to man, namely, His giving His only-begotten Son to become a curse for us, shall surely live.

Now, when a man was healed by looking at the serpent, he could not say that he healed himself, for he only looked and there is no virtue in a look. A Believer never claims merit or honor on account of his faith. Faith is a self-denying Grace and never dares to boast. Where is the great credit of simply believing the Truth of God and humbly trusting Christ to save you? Faith glorifies God and so our Lord has chosen it as the means of our salvation. If a priest had come and touched the bitten man, he might have ascribed some honor to the priest. But when there was no priest in the case; when there was nothing except looking to that bronze serpent, the man was driven to the conclusion that God's love and power had healed him.

I am not saved by anything that I have done, but by what the Lord has done. To that conclusion God will have us all come—we must all confess

that if saved, it is by His free, rich, sovereign, undeserved Grace displayed in the Person of His dear Son.

IV. Allow me one moment upon the fourth head, which is THE CURE EFFECTED. We are told in the text that, "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." That is to say, he was healed at once. He had not to wait five minutes, or five seconds. Dear Hearer, did you ever hear this before? If you have not, it may startle you, but it is true. If you have lived in the blackest sin that is possible up to this very moment, yet if you will now believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved before the clock ticks another time! It is done like a flash of lightning! Pardon is not a work of time.

Sanctification needs a lifetime, but justification needs no more than a moment. You believe, you live! You trust Christ, your sins are gone! You are a saved man the instant you believe! "Oh," says one, "that is a wonder." It is a wonder and will remain a wonder to all eternity. Our Lord's miracles, when He was on earth, were mostly instantaneous. He touched them and the fevered ones were able to sit up and minister to Him. No doctor can cure a fever in that fashion, for there is a resultant weakness left after the heat of the fever is abated. Jesus works perfect cures and whoever believes in Him, though he has only believed one minute, is justified from all his sins. Oh the matchless Grace of God!

This remedy healed again and again. Very possibly, after a man had been healed, he might go back to his work and be attacked by a second serpent, for there were broods of them about. What had he to do? Why, to look again! And if he was wounded a thousand times, he must look a thousand times! You, dear child of God, if you have sin on your conscience, look to Jesus! The healthiest way of living where serpents swarm is never to take your eyes off the bronze serpent at all. Ah, you vipers, you may bite if you will, but as long as my eyes are upon the bronze serpent, I defy your fangs and poison, for I have a continual remedy at work within me! Temptation is overcome by the blood of Jesus! "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith."

This cure was of universal efficacy to all who used it. There was not one case, in all the camp, of a man that looked to the serpent of brass and yet died. And there never will be a case of a man that looks to Jesus who remains under condemnation! The Believer must be saved. Some of the people had to look from a long distance. The pole could not be equally near to everybody, but so long as they could see the serpent it healed those that were afar off as well as those who were near. Nor did it matter if their eyes were feeble. All eyes were not alike keen. Some may have had to squint, or had dimness of vision, or only one eye—but if they did but look, they lived!

Perhaps the man could hardly make out the shape of the serpent as he looked. "Ah," he said to himself, "I cannot discern the coils of the bronze snake, but I can see the shining of the brass." And he lived! Oh, poor Soul, if you cannot see the whole of Christ nor all His beauties, nor all the riches of His Grace, yet if you can but see Him who was made sin for us, you shall live! If you say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief," your faith

will save you! A little faith will give you a great Christ and you shall find eternal life in Him.

Thus I have tried to describe the cure. Oh that the Lord would work that cure in every sinner here at this moment. I do pray He may! It is a pleasant thought that if they looked to that bronze serpent by any kind of light they lived. Many beheld it in the glare of noon and saw its shining coils and lived. But I should not wonder that some were bitten at night and by the moonlight they drew near and looked up and lived. Perhaps it was a dark and stormy night and not a star was visible. The tempest crashed overhead and from the murky cloud out flashed the lightning, cleaving the rocks asunder. By the glare of that sudden flame the dying man made out the bronze serpent and though he saw but for a moment yet he lived.

So, Sinner, if your soul is wrapped in tempest and if from out the clouds there comes but one single flash of light, look to Jesus Christ by it and you shall live!

V. I close with this last matter of consideration—here is A LESSON FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEIR LORD. What ought we to do? We should imitate Moses, whose business it was to set the bronze serpent upon a pole. It is your business and mine to lift up the Gospel of Christ Jesus so that all may see it! All Moses had to do was to hang up the bronze serpent in the sight of all. He did not say, “Aaron, bring your censer and bring with you a score of priests and make a perfumed cloud.” Nor did he say, “I myself will go forth in my robes as Law-Giver and stand there.”

No, he had nothing to do that was pompous or ceremonial! He had but to exhibit the brass serpent and leave it naked and open to the gaze of all. He did not say, “Aaron, bring here a cloth of gold, wrap up the serpent in blue and scarlet and fine linen.” Such an act would have been clean contrary to his orders. He was to keep the serpent unveiled. Its power lay in itself—not in its surroundings. The Lord did not tell him to paint the pole, or to deck it with the colors of the rainbow. Oh, no! Any pole would do!

The dying ones did not need to see the *pole*—they only needed to behold the serpent. I dare say he would make a neat pole, for God’s work should be done decently, but still the serpent was the only thing to look at. This is what we have to do with our Lord. We must preach Him, teach Him and make Him visible to all! We must not conceal Him by our attempts at eloquence and learning. We must have done with the polished lancewood pole of fine speech and those bits of scarlet and blue in the form of grand sentences and poetic periods. Everything must be done that Christ may be seen and nothing must be allowed which hides Him. Moses may go home and go to bed when the serpent is once lifted up. All that is needed is that the bronze serpent should be within view both day and night. The preacher may hide himself so that nobody may know who he is, for if he has set forth Christ, he is best out of the way.

Now, you teachers, teach your children Jesus. Show them Christ Crucified! Keep Christ before them. You young men that try to preach, do not attempt to do it grandly. The true grandeur of preaching is for Christ to be grandly displayed in it. No other grandeur is needed! Keep self in the background and set forth Jesus Christ among the people, evidently cruci-

fied among them. None but Jesus, none but Jesus! Let Him be the sum and substance of all your teaching. Some of you have looked to the bronze serpent, I know, and you have been healed. But what have you done with the bronze serpent since? You have not come forward to confess your faith and join the Church. You have not spoken to any one about his soul. You put the bronze serpent into a chest and hide it away. Is this right?

Bring it out and set it on a pole! Publish Christ and His salvation! He was never meant to be treated as a curiosity in a museum. He is intended to be exhibited in the highways that those who are sin-bitten may look at Him. "But I have no proper pole," says one. The best sort of pole to exhibit Christ upon is a high one so that He may be seen the further. Exalt Jesus! Speak well of His name. I do not know any other virtue that there can be in the pole but its height. The more you can speak in your Lord's praise, the higher you can lift Him up, the better! But for all other styles of speech there is nothing to be said. Lift Christ UP!

"Oh," says one, "but I have not a long standard." Then lift Him up on such as you have, for there are short people about who will be able to see by your means. I think I told you once of a picture which I saw of the bronze serpent. I want the Sunday school teachers to listen to this. The artist represented all sorts of people clustering round the pole and as they looked, the horrible snakes dropped off their arms and they lived! There was such a crowd around the pole that a mother could not get near it. She carried a little babe, which a serpent had bitten. You could see the blue marks of the venom. As she could get no nearer, the mother held her child aloft and turned its little head that it might gaze with its infant eyes upon the bronze serpent and live.

Do this with your little children, you Sunday school teachers! Even while they are yet little, pray that they may look to Jesus Christ and live, for there is no boundary set to their age. Old men, snake-bitten, came hobbling on their crutches. "Eighty years old am I," says one, "but I have looked to the bronze serpent and I am healed." Little boys were brought out by their mothers, though as yet they could hardly speak plainly, and they cried in child language, "I look at the great snake and it blesses me." All ranks, sexes, characters and dispositions looked and lived! Who will look to Jesus at this good hour? O dear Souls, will you have life or not? Will you despise Christ and perish? If so, your blood be on your own head! I have told you God's way of salvation! Lay hold on it. Look to Jesus at once! May His Spirit gently lead you to do so. Amen.

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THE END OF THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRED NO. 746

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 21, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON.

***“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”
Numbers 23:10.***

CARLYLE, in his “History of the French Revolution,” tells us of a Duke of Orleans who did not believe in death. And when his secretary stumbled on the words, “The *late* King of Spain,” he angrily demanded what he meant by it. The flattering attendant replied, “My Lord, it is a title which some of the kings of Spain have taken.”

In all this assembly I have not such a lunatic! For you unanimously believe that the entire race of men await alike the inevitable hour. We know that all our paths, wind as they may, will lead to the grave. A certain king of France believed in death, but forbade that it should ever be mentioned in his presence. “And if,” said he, “I at any time look pale, no courtier must dare, on pain of my displeasure, to mention it in my presence.” Thus imitating the foolish ostrich, which, when pursued by the hunter, and utterly unable to escape, is said to hide its head in the sand fancying that it is secure from the enemy which it cannot see.

I trust I do not address today any men so idiotic as to desire to forget the certainty of death, or to thrust the fact from their remembrance. I trust that, being sane men, you desire to look in the face the whole of your future history, both in the present world and in worlds beyond the region of sight. And, foreseeing that soul and body must part in the article of death, you are desirous to consider that event that you may be prepared for it. You desire to take death into your reckoning that it may not surprise you. He who should go upon a long journey and provide for every difficulty on the road but one, would probably find the journey a failure. If, with a rolling chariot for the solid ways, he had forgotten to find the means of crossing the last *river* which would divide him from the country which he sought, he would be disappointed after all his pains.

If you have provided for *life*, but have not also prepared for *death*, what better will you be, my Hearer, than such a foolish traveler? We have heard of one, who, going into a tavern, ordered according to his wildest wishes and feasted sumptuously on the best the house afforded, hour after hour. But when the host came with the bill, he told him that he had no money, and had quite forgotten the reckoning, thinking it quite enough to attend to the eating and drinking while these were the order of the day, without

perplexing himself about the unknown future. Alas, my Hearer, are you living in this inn of life, forgetting the reckoning? Do you go from cup to cup, from merriment to merriment, feasting as though there were no day of account appointed for you?

If so, are you fool or knave, or both? For a man who would enjoy life, and yet shirk the account of his responsibilities with which the scene must close, is either foolish, or knavish, or both. Surely, since we must die. Since “there is no discharge in this war.” Since every man must be a conscript to the army of Death. Since whether it is tomorrow or the next day, or in a few years time, every one of us must pass through the iron gate—it behooves us, knowing the fact, to take it into our account—to be diligent in forestalling its demands and providing for its emergencies.

And yet I should not wonder if many here almost shudder at the subject which I am now introducing, so unaccustomed are they to it! Or, if they listen to it, they consider it to be especially applicable to those by whom they are surrounded, but they fail to see its application to themselves. Young’s verse is true—“All men think all men mortal but themselves.” They regard others as having death written upon their brow, but they imagine that they, at least, shall last for years to come! They will not dare admit that they are immortal, yet alas, they act as if they thought they were so. And trifling away year after year, suffer life itself to disappear without improvement.

I beseech all honest and wise hearts at this hour to reflect upon their latter end. Prepare *now* that you may be ready when the final summons shall be sounded, and may God grant you Divine Grace that the words of this morning may be made helpful to your preparations. Balaam, though a base man, was no fool. *He* had thoughts of death. He did not shut his eyes to what he did not like. He believed that he should die, and he had desires about it—and though those desires were never realized, but the reverse—yet he had wit enough to gaze upon the tents of God’s chosen Israel and to say from his heart, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

I shall regard this exclamation as having in it a double wish. First, a wish concerning death, and secondly, a wish concerning the after death. When these have been spoken upon as the Holy Spirit may help me, I shall try to make some practical use of the whole.

I. First, dear Friends, Balaam’s WISH CONCERNING DEATH. He anxiously desired that he might die such a death as the righteous die. Truly we commend his choice, for, in the first place, it must, at the least, be as well with the righteous man when he comes to die, as with any other man. By the righteous man we mean the man who has believed in Jesus Christ and so has been covered with Christ’s righteousness, and washed in His most precious blood, and moreover, has by the power of the Holy Spirit received a new heart, a *righteous* heart, so that his actions are righteous both towards God and man.

Such a man, being righteous by faith in Jesus Christ unto perfect justification, and righteous also in act and spirit through sanctification of the Holy Spirit, is alone the truly righteous man! Such a man must be right at last, and this you will see clearly by the following story. A certain carping infidel, after having argued with a poor countryman who knew the faith, but who knew little else, said to him, "Well, Hodge, you really are so stupid that there is no use arguing with you, I cannot get you out of this absurd religion of yours." "Ah, well," said Hodge, "I dare say I am stupid, Master, but do you know we poor people like to have two strings to our bow?"

"Well," said the critic, "what do you mean by that?" "Master, I'll show you. Suppose it should all turn out as *you* say. Suppose there is no God, and there is no hereafter, don't you see I am as well off as you are? Certainly, it will not be any worse for me than it will be for you if we, both of us, get annihilated. But don't you see if it should happen to be true as *I* believe, what will become of you?"

Clearly in either case it must be right with the righteous, for if he should have ignorantly received a cunningly devised fable, yet, seeing according to his own experience it makes him a better and a happier man. So far so good—he is no loser here—and he will be certainly at the last in no worse a position than the man who rejected the holy and comfortable influences of what he styled a deception.

While, if the religion of Jesus should be true—ah, ghastly, if for you who doubt it!—if it should all be true, ah, then your weeping and your wailing at the discovery will be a terrible contrast to the joy and the glory which God has reserved for them that love Him! Upon the very lowest possible ground it will be well with the righteous, as well at any rate as with the best of other men. There is this to be said for the righteous man—he goes to the death chamber with a quiet conscience. It has been clearly ascertained that in the event of death the mind is frequently quickened to a high degree of activity, so that it thinks more, perhaps, in the course of five minutes than it could have done in the course of years at ~~other times~~ ^{other times} who have been rescued from drowning have said that they imagined themselves to have been weeks in the water, for the thoughts, the many views and visions, the long and detailed retrospect seemed to them to have required weeks—and yet the whole transpired in a few seconds! Frequently towards the last, the soul travels at express speed, traversing its past life as though it rode upon lightning. Ah, then how blessed is that man who, looking back upon the past, can see many things of which conscience can approve! And how accursed must that man's deathbed be who has to look back upon a youth spent in folly, a middle life of sin, and an old age of iniquity!

What will it be, my Hearer, if, when you lie dying there should rise up before your memory those whom you led into sin, seduced to vice, or taught in profligacy! A grim assemblage must gather around some men's

beds when guilt, like a grim chamberlain, shall usher them in, one by one, and call out their names with horrible distinctness, and tell out their doings and dealings with the wretch who shivers on the brink of death accused by so many, and unable to answer one of a thousand. I picture such a man traveling over the wastes of remorse, hounded by the wolves of his past sins—rushing with desperation into a destruction still worse than his present woe—all unable to endure the horrible baying of his old sins, much less to endure their sharper fangs when they shall tear him in pieces and there shall be none to deliver!

But the righteous man knows that though his sins were as scarlet, they have been made white as wool through the precious blood of Christ! And moreover, by the power of the Holy Spirit, his life has been kept from the vices of the world and he has been enabled to serve his Lord. This surely must help to make soft his dying pillow. He remembers those holy days of sacred worship, those gatherings around the family altar, that child taught to pray, that young man won from folly and led in the paths of righteousness. Above all he remembers the love visits which the Lord Jesus has paid to his favored soul! And so, perfectly at peace, forgiving all men their offenses as he desires to be forgiven, and conscious that his Father has forgiven him, he can sleep upon his dying bed as softly as on the stillest night of his life. “Let me,” in this sense, “die the death of the righteous.”

Again, the righteous man, when he dies, does not lose his all. With every other man the sound of “earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,” is the end of present seeming wealth and the beginning of eternal and real need. But the Christian is not made a bankrupt by the grave—death to him is *gain*. “Go,” said the dying Saracen hero, Saladin, “take this winding sheet and as soon as I expire, bear it on a lance through all the streets, and let the herald cry as he holds aloft the ensign of death, ‘This is all that is left of Saladin, the conqueror of the East.’” He need not have so said if he had been a Christian, for the Believer’s heritage is not torn from him, but *opened up* to him by the rough hand of Death! The world to come and all its infinite riches and blessedness are ours in the moment of departure.

It is written upon the tomb of Cyrus, “Stranger, here lies Cyrus, who gave the empire to the Persians. Grudge him not the little earth that covers him.” But the Christian lies not there under the tombstone—he is not here, for he is risen! He has left his poor worn garments here to be washed, and cleansed, and purified—and by-and-by, when they are whiter than any fuller can make them—he will come to take his garments again. But meanwhile the Christian is not buried here, nor is the tomb his sole possession—his treasure is in Heaven, and he is gone where his wealth is stored. Who would not wish to die a death which would be a gain to him? Are you not conscious, some of you, that death would be a horrible loss to you? It would shut up forever all the outlets of your present mirth and all

the sources of your present joy. Alas for you! For the day of the Lord to you will be darkness and not light!

“Let me die the death of the righteous” may well be our wish because he dies with a good hope. Peering into eternity, with eyes marvelously strengthened, the Believer frequently beholds even while he is yet below, something of the glory which is to be revealed in him. Have you ever heard the songs of dying women, and seen their glowing countenances as they thought they could hear the angels and all but see the invisible glory? Have you ever seen their beaming eyes and heard their memorable words, so rich, so original, so quaint, so wet with the dew of Heaven that they could not have borrowed them? Ignorant, unlettered persons have I heard say in their dying moments words which were worthy of the most refined poetry.

Have you ever seen the gray-headed man who, in his weakness, had come to talk as a child, suddenly clothed with patriarchal dignity, as, stretching out his bony hand he has exclaimed, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff they comfort me”? It is sweet to die with Canaan’s happy land in view—to melt into eternal bliss as the twilight of the morning melts into opening day! It must be a dreary thing to die believing in annihilation, or expecting a doom still worse! My Hearer, will this be your death? Will you hear the warning cry of the angel: “One woe is past, and, behold, there come two woes more”?

Death is past, but the Judgment and the pit are yet to come. God forbid that such horrors should freeze the genial current of my soul, but may bliss eternal be my prospect from the top of my expiring Pisgah. Let me die as the Christian whose eye is resplendent with visions of light, and whose heart is fired with the confidence of seeing his Redeemer and being made like He is, to dwell with Him world without end!

Moreover, Beloved, the Believer dies in the arms of a Friend. I do not say in the arms of a *mortal* friend, for it has fallen to the lot of some Christians to be burnt at the stake. And some of them have rotted to death in dungeons. But yet I will repeat it, every Believer dies in the arms of a Friend—the best of friends, the Friend that sticks closer than a brother. Precious is communion with the Son of God, and never more so than when it is enjoyed upon the verge of Heaven—

**“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”**

Jesus is a Friend who is most practically friendly, for the righteous man, in the most calm and business-like manner, leaves his wife and his children in the hands of God and quotes the promise, “Leave your fatherless children, and let your widows trust in Me.”

He would gladly live, perhaps, to comfort the partner of his bosom a little longer, and to see the children of their mutual love brought up to riper

manhood. But since he must go, how often does God enable him to forget all care, to cast it so completely into the hands of Christ, that he sings, "All is well!" I have sometimes heard from dying saints sentences like these, "My business is all settled, I never want to hear again of the stock, of the farm, or of the shop, or of the family, I have put it all away. God will provide for those I have left behind and I have nothing now to do but just to hear the summons, 'Come up higher,' and then to enter into my Father's house."

My Hearers, I am not giving you an exaggerated picture! I am not telling you some wondrous stories of remarkable departures! I am telling you what is the *common* way of the dying of the righteous, which I trust commends itself to your conscience as being naturally that which righteous men might expect to feel when returning to their God. The Christian dies in peace, and often in triumph. According to the state of his body, or the disease by which he may be taken off, his feelings will vary between peace and triumph. Sometimes the death scene is still as a summer's evening, and the Christian crosses the Jordan almost dry shod. Or if there is a storm, and Jordan overflows its banks, the Believer, resting upon the everlasting arms, feels the bottom of the river and finds it good.

At times, however, God has been pleased to give to His people Divine Grace to mount to Heaven in a chariot of fiery joy, so that their dying bed has been a throne, and their chamber a palace of glory. These instances are not uncommon, they are probably the rule—but in all cases there is a strong, deep current of pure and precious peace which glides along the valley of death and makes glad the follower of the Lamb—"Let me die the death of the righteous," for such dying is the dawn of bliss, the beginning of immortal glory!

Lastly, when the good man dies, he dies with honor. Who cares for the death of the wicked? A few mourning friends lament for a little time, but they almost feel it a relief within a day or two that such a one is gone. As for the righteous, when he dies there is weeping and mourning for him! Like Stephen, devout men carry him to the sepulcher and make great lamentation over him. See the funeral of the tares? They are hurried up in heaps, they are thrown over the garden wall, they are burned, and no one regrets them. They were no blessing in living—they are no lamentation in dying.

Did you ever see the funeral of the wheat, if such I may call it? Here come the golden sheaves! The wagon is heavy with the precious freight: on the top stands one who gives a cheery note, and all around the harvest men and village maidens dance or shout for joy as they bring home the shocks of golden corn to the garner! Let me be gathered home with the triumphant funeral of the wheat which man values—garnered by angels, housed with songs of saintly spirits—and not cast away as a reprobate and worthless thing, like the weeds of which men are thankful to be rid.

May it be yours and mine, when we depart, to be remembered by those whom we have succored in their need, whom we instructed in their ignorance, whom we comforted in their distress! May we not depart from this world shaken off from it, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, but may our ashes be gathered up as sacred dust, precious in the sight of the Lord! Let me, in that sense and every other, “die the death of the righteous.” I need not tarry long on this point. Any one of these suggestions might suffice to incite, even in such a man as Balaam, a desire to “die the death of the righteous.” Surely it will kindle in you the same longings.

II. Balaam spoke concerning the godly man, of HIS LAST END. I do not know that this wicked prophet, whose eyes were once opened, knew anything about this latter end as I shall interpret it, but you and I know, and so let us use his words, if not his thoughts. We do *not* believe that death is the last end of men. Those who *do* believe it are welcome to their belief. We certainly shall not wish to deprive them of it. When a dog has his bone, let him keep it—we envy not his enjoyment. If ungodly men delight in the thought of dying like brutes, perhaps they know their own value best and know what would be best for society if it should happen to them. So they, having made their choice, shall keep it if they will.

As for us, we believe ourselves to be immortal—that God has endowed us with a *spiritual* nature which shall outlive the sun, outlast the stars, and run on existing with eternity. Like the years of God’s right hand, like the days of the Most High, God has ordained the life of souls to be. Now, I can well believe that the most of us wish that our position after death may be like that of the righteous. The first consideration in death is that the spirit is disembodied. What a spirit is like without a body you and I cannot guess. It is, of course, not a thing to be seen, or heard, or touched, or handled. It is quite out of the realm of materialism and quite beyond the reach of the senses.

Yet you and I are conscious that there is an immaterial something within us infinitely more precious than these poor clay hands, and feet, and eyes of ours. This immaterial something will leave the body, and it will be naked—not a thing to be desired, for even Paul says, “Not that we would be unclothed.” He did not desire the disembodied state for its own sake, nor should we. Those disembodied saints who are now in Heaven are happy, perfectly happy as to their *souls*, but they, as to their manhood, are not yet made perfect. They, without us, the Apostle says, cannot be made perfect. Until we all are gathered in and the Resurrection Day comes, they are without bodies, and are, as it were, but half men.

All the powers they have are full of happiness, but they are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the *redemption* of the body which will be at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what is there desirable in the state of the Christian when his spirit is disembodied? I should desire to be like a Christian in the disembodied state, because he will not be altogether in a new and strange world. Some of you have never exercised your

spirits at all about the spirit-world. You have talked with thousands of people in bodies, but you have never spoken with spiritual beings. To you the realm of spirit is all unknown, but let me tell you, Christians are in the daily habit of communing with the spirit-world, by which I mean that their souls converse with God! Their spirits are affected by the Holy Spirit. They have fellowship with angels who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation.

Now, when some of you enter into the spirit-world, you will say, "I never was here before. This is a foreign land to me." I can conceive that you will call for some companion. "Is there anyone here with whom I have had dealings?" And there will be a voice heard, "Yes, I have often spoken to you, and you to me." "Who is that?" It is Satan or some evil spirit with whom, alone out of all spirits you have ever had communion. He will be the only friend to meet you—and what a friend! Your grim companion, your fellow sinner, and your fellow prisoner forever!

But a Christian in the disembodied state, if I may so imagine it, might cry, "Where are my friends? I have been here before! Where are those with whom aforesaid I had fellowship?" And a response will come from the ministering angels, and there, above all, will be the blessed Spirit of God! There will be God Himself, and the Spirit of the ever-living Christ. All these will make up sweet company for the Believer. After the soul has left the body, we believe that it at once appears before God, and receives by anticipation what will be its final sentence. To the righteous soul there is no sleeping in the grave, no delay in "purgatory" before he enters into Heaven. "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise," is the portion of all who trust in Jesus.

Now, think, dear Hearer, your disembodied spirit will have to appear before the fiery eyes of God! What, then, is your relation to God this morning? Why, some of you never think of Him! Some of you, I almost blush to say it, have cursed Him to His face, and have even asked Him to damn you! Ah, He will do it, except you *repent!* But how delightful must it be for a man to say, "I am going up to God. He is my Father. It is no more terror to me than for a child to go home from school. I am going to my God with whom I am reconciled by the precious blood of Jesus. I have known my God, He is no stranger to me. I saw Him in Christ, and I trusted Him. And all my life long I learned to see Him in the works of nature. I could say of the mountains and the valleys, 'My Father made them all.' I was never so happy as when thoughts of God came flowing into my spirit. My spirit has dwelt with God when in the body. It is not afraid to fly up to God now that it has left the body behind it."

Surely, in the prospect of such a judgment, each man may say, "Let my last end be like his!" After the judgment is pronounced, the disembodied spirit dwells in Heaven. Some of you could not be happy if you were allowed to enter that Heaven. If you could be admitted between those pearly gates which forever exclude pollution, sin, and shame, you could not be

happy there. Shall I tell you why? It is a land of *spirit*, and you have neglected your spirit! Some of you even deny that you *have* a spirit, and I do not wonder that you say so because I do not suppose that you have ever exercised it. But let a man who has delighted to commune with the Holy Spirit enter into the spirit-world, and he will be in his element!

Besides, the world to come is a holy world. The engagements of disembodied spirits are all pure and lovely. What will that man do who loved drunkenness, who indulged in unclean habits? He will be out of his element. If he could be in Heaven, as Whitfield used to say, he would ask God to let him out, and would run into Hell for shelter, for Heaven would be a dreadful place to an ungodly man! There is a dream which is told (I tell it not for the dream, but for the moral of it) of a young woman who imagined that she was in Heaven unconverted and thought she saw upon the pavement of transparent gold, multitudes of spirits dancing to the sweetest music.

She stood still, unhappy, motionless, silent, and when the King said to her, "Why do you not partake in the joy?" she answered, "I cannot join in the dance, for I do not know the measure. I cannot join in the song, for I do not know the tune." Then said He in a voice of thunder, "What are you doing here?" And she thought herself cast out forever. Ah, dear Hearer! Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. If you do not learn Heaven's language on earth you cannot learn it in the world to come! If you are not holy you cannot be with holy saints. What a misery would it be for you to be always with those who are praising and serving God if you know nothing of His love. If you have never praised Him on earth, you will not readily take to it there. You would be strangers in a strange land!

Ah, trouble not yourselves, that shall never be your portion. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," much less can he ever *enter* there. After awhile our bodies will be raised again. The soul will re-enter the body, for Christ has not only bought the souls of His people, but their bodies, too. Think of that tremendous day, when the trump shall be heard, shrill as a clarion, ringing through earth and Heaven, and Hell, "Awake, you dead! Awake, you dead! And come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!" Then up will start the bodies of the wicked. I know not in what shapes of dread they will arise, nor how they will appear.

What forms of ghastliness they will put on or what horrors will wreath their brows, I cannot tell. But this I know, that when the *righteous* shall rise they will be glorious like the Lord Jesus! They shall have all the loveliness which Heaven itself can give them. Their body here is but a shriveled grain sown in the earth. Their next body will be as much more glorious than that as the sweetest flower of spring is fairer than the shriveled seed that was cast into the mold. It will be a glorious body, raised in honor, raised in power, raised no more to die! Oh, glorious hour! "I know that my Redeemer lives, 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 my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

Would you not wish to rise in the image of Christ as the righteous will? Remember you *must* rise from the grave very much what you are when put into it. I think I see a perfect model of a city before me, containing all that is to be built. Here I see a temple of alabaster, and there a dunghill. The architect is bid to produce on the largest scale, in the purest marble, that city as modeled before him. Rest assured that he will produce the temple as a temple, only far more splendid, and the dunghill as a dunghill, only 10,000 times more loathsome! Now, which are *you* in that model? For this life is a model of the life to come, and it is written, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

Ah, my Hearer, you may well wish to be holy here that you may be holy there! To be pure here, that you may be pure there! To be godlike on earth, that you may be godlike in Heaven. “Let my last end be like that of the righteous.” Let me wave the palm of victory! Let me wear the crown of triumph! Let me be girt about with the fair white linen of immaculate perfection! Let me cast my crown before Jehovah’s feet! Let me swell the everlasting song! Let my voice make one in that eternal chorus, “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Oh, how will I sing! How sweetly shall my voice be attuned to notes of gratitude! How will my heart dance with ecstasy before that throne! “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!”

III. As this is the last occasion of my preaching in this great hall I shall venture to trespass a little longer, and on the third head I shall most earnestly ask your solemn attention for a few minutes longer. We have to make A PRACTICAL USE OF THE WHOLE.

Behold the vanity of mere desires. Balaam *desired* to die the death of the righteous, and yet was slain in battle fighting *against* those righteous men whom he envied. There is an old proverb which says, “Wishers and woulders make bad housekeepers.” And another which declares, “Wishing never filled a sack.” I commend the truth of those proverbs to you now. Mere *desiring* to die the death of the righteous, though it may be natural, will be exceedingly unprofitable. I beseech you stop not there! Have you ever heard the old classic story of those ancient Gauls who, having once drunk the sweet wines of Italy, constantly, as they smacked their lips, said one to another, “Where is Italy?” And when their leaders pointed to the gigantic Alps crowned with snow, they said, “Cannot we cross them?” Every time they tasted the wine the questions were put, “Where is Italy? And cannot we reach it?” This was good plain sense. So they put on their war harness and marched to old Rome to fight for the wines of Italy.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, every time you hear of Heaven, I should like you, with Gothic ardor, to say, “Where is it? I gladly would go.” And happy should I be if men here would put on the harness of the Christian,

and say, "Through floods and flames for such a conquest, to drink of such wines well refined, we would gladly go to the battle that we may win the victory." Oh, the folly of those who, knowing and desiring this, yet spend their strength for nothing! The Roman Emperor fitted out a great expedition and sent it to conquer Britain. The valiant legionaries leaped ashore, and each man gathered a handful of shells, and went back to his ship again—that was all.

Some of you are equally foolish. You are fitted by God for great endeavors and lofty enterprises, and you are gathering shells! Your gold and your silver, your houses and your lands—they are mere empty shells—and Heaven and everlasting life you let go. Like Nero, you send to Alexandria for sand for your amusements and send not for wheat for your starving souls! O fools and slow of heart! When shall God, who gave you souls, give those souls wisdom that you may seek after the true treasure, the real pearl, the heavenly riches?

"Well," cries one, "how is Heaven to be had?" It is to had only by a personal seeking after it. I have read of one who, when drowning, saw the rainbow in the heavens. Picture him as he sinks! He looks up, and there if he sees the many-colored bow, he may think to himself, "There is God's covenant sign that the world shall never be drowned, and yet here I am drowning in this river." So it is with you! There is the arch of God's promise over you, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And yet, because you believe not in Him, you will be drowned in your sins.

"I would gladly enlist, then," says one, "in the army of Christ, and fight for Heaven." Come on, then, I am Christ's enlisting officer today. "What am I to give?" says one. Give? Give nothing. "But I have many good works." These are not to be brought as a price for Heaven. "I have my prayers and my tears of repentance." These cannot avail meritoriously—if you want to be a Christian, you must come to Christ with empty hands! You know how the recruiting sergeant makes a soldier—not by asking the man to give him something, but by getting him to take the Queen's shilling. Take Christ—that is God's enlisting money—and you are enlisted! Do not bring anything, but take the water of life freely. If you will trust the Lord Jesus, and take Him to be your salvation, you are then enlisted as a soldier of Jesus. Oh, may you have Grace to do that!

But remember, all soldiers have to fight! One of the first things you will have to do, if you become a Christian, is to carry a Cross. Ah, you do not like it. "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light." Take it upon you—and yet to carnal shoulders the Cross is very galling—and nothing but Divine Grace can make it light. You will have to give up your sins! You will have to give up your empty pleasures. You will have to, from now on, bear witness for Christ before a crooked and perverse generation. Do not expect to be Christ's soldier and yet not wear His uniform. No, you must put on his regimentals. You must wear His crest—His crest is the Cross. You must

take His shield, the shield of *faith*, and His sword, which is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. And resting alone on Him, depending alone upon His merit, you shall certainly win the victory!

My Brethren, what a blessing it will be if you and I shall ever reach the land of triumph. You remember Bunyan's picture. He says he saw a brave palace and as he looked up he could hear happy spirits singing on the top. They walked in white, clad in royal robes. And as he heard them singing, he longed to be with them. Going up to the door, he noticed that it was beset with armed men—a great host with pikes, and halberds, and swords—pushing back all who desired to come. Presently he saw a man of bold countenance, covered with armor, go up to a man who sat at a table with a writer's ink-horn, and he heard him say, "Set down my name, Sir." And as soon as the name was set down, the man drew his sword and began to hack and hew right and left, cutting himself a way right through the midst of his enemies.

After being covered with sweat and blood, and many wounds, he at length forced an entrance. And Bunyan says, "I did hear them sweetly sing at the top, 'Come in! Come in! Eternal glory you shall win.'" I am this morning the man with the writer's ink-horn. Is there anyone here who will say, "Set my name down, Sir"? I trust it will be so. I trust the Holy Spirit will win your hearts for Jesus! That you will rest in Him alone! But the moment your name is down, remember then the battle begins—then, with your sword drawn, you must begin to contend with your besetting sins! You must have done with your old ways, and must fight against them. You will have to cut as never soldier did, for you will have to wound yourself! It will be your own arms and eyes that will have to be given up! Your own sins that will have to be slain! But, oh, the victory will make amends for it all!

It was but the other day that on this floor men wrestled for the mastery—a dangerous sport in which few of us would like to take a share—but I do not doubt that to those who gained the victory, the victory seemed an ample compensation. Certainly to Rome's old legionaries, when they rode through the streets, and all the people climbed to the very chimney tops to see them ride the streets of Rome, it was enough reward for all their hardships. But the triumphs of Heaven, the shouts of angels, the songs of the redeemed, the hallelujahs, the bliss forever, the glory without end! Oh, those will be an abundant recompense to the humble followers of the Lamb!

Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters! Follow the Captain of your salvation! Forward to the fight, to the victory, and to the crown! And may the Lord so bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE BEST WAR CRY

NO. 1709

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 4, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.”
Numbers 23:21.***

IT was a singular spectacle to see the king of Moab and his lords climbing to the tops of the craggy rocks, accompanied by that strange being, the Eastern prophet Balaam. They are seeking to look upon Israel with the evil eye and flash down curses upon her tents in the plain beneath. You see them gazing down from the mountains upon the encampment in the wilderness below, even as vultures from aloft spy out their prey. They watch with keen and cruel eyes. Cunning and malice are in their countenances. How Balak longs to crush the nation which he fears! They are secretly endeavoring, by spell and enchantment, to bring evil upon the people whom Jehovah has chosen and led into the wilderness. You see them offering their seven bullocks and their seven rams upon the seven altars which they have set up upon Pisgah's rocks.

Balaam retires to wait until the impulse shall come upon him and he shall be able to prophesy. In all probability Moses knew nothing about this at the time and certainly the people below knew nothing of the foul conspiracy. There lay the tribes in the valley, unaware that mischief was brewing, and quite unable to meet the dark design even if they had been aware of it. What a mercy it was for them that they were guarded by a Watcher—a Holy One whose eyes can never slumber. How true it is—“I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” The Lord's eyes are fixed upon Balaam the hireling, and Balak the son of Zippor—in vain do they weave the enchantment and work the divination—they shall be utterly ashamed and confounded.

They were baffled in their machinations and utterly defeated in their schemes, and that for one single reason—it is written, “JEHOVAH SHAMMAH—the Lord Is There. God's Presence in the midst of His people is as a wall of fire round about them and a Glory in their midst. The Lord is their light and their salvation, whom shall they fear? At this present time God has a people, a remnant according to the election of Grace, who still dwell like sheep in the midst of wolves. When, as a part of the Lord's Church, we look at our surroundings, we see much that might cause us alarm, for never, either day or night, is Satan quiet. Like a roaring lion, he goes about, seeking whom he may devour! He plots in secret his crafty devices—if it were possible he would deceive the very elect!

This Prince of Darkness has on earth many most diligent servants, compassing sea and land to make proselytes, laying out all their strength and using all their craft and cunning if, by any means, they may destroy the Kingdom of God and blot out the Truth of God from under Heaven. It is saddest of all to see certain men who know the Truth in some degree, as

Balaam did, entering into league with the adversary against the true Israel. These combine their arts and use all possible means that the Gospel of the Grace of God, and the Church that holds it, may utterly be destroyed. If the Church is not destroyed, it will be no thanks to her enemies, for they would swallow her up quickly!

When we look upon the signs of the times, our heart grows heavy, for iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold, many false spirits have gone abroad in the earth and some whom we looked upon as helpers are proving themselves to be of another order. What then? Are we dismayed? By no means, for that same God who was in the midst of the Church in the wilderness is in the Church of these last days! Again shall her adversaries be defeated. Still will He defend her, for the Lord has built His Church upon a rock and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. The reason of her safety is this—

***“God in the midst of her does dwell;
Nothing shall her remove;
The Lord to her a Helper shall,
And that right early, prove.”***

Our text declares the grand safeguard of the Church of God, ensuring her against every peril known and unknown, earthly or Satanic—“Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them.” May the Holy Spirit help me while I try to speak, first, upon God’s Presence with His people. Secondly, upon the results of that Presence. And thirdly, upon how, by the Grace of God, that Presence may be preserved continually among us.

I. First, let me speak a little upon GOD’S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE. It is an extraordinary Presence, for God’s ordinary and usual Presence is everywhere. Where shall we flee from His Presence? He is in the highest Heaven and in the lowest Hell! The hand of the Lord is upon the high hills and His power is in all deep places. This knowledge is too high and wonderful for us! God is everywhere, for in Him we live and move and have our being. Still there is a *peculiar* Presence, for God was among His people in the wilderness as He was *not* among the Moabites and the Edomites, their foes. And God is in His Church as He is not in the world. It is a peculiar promise of the Covenant that God will dwell with His people and walk among them.

By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord is with us and in us at this hour. He says of His Church, “Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.” This is much more than God’s being about us—it includes the favor of God towards us, His consideration of us, His working with us. An active nearness to bless is the Presence of which we speak. Here we may say with great reverence that God is with His people in the entirety of His Nature. The Father is with us, for the Father, Himself, loves us. Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. He is near to us, supplying our needs, guiding our steps, helping us in time and tutoring us for eternity. God is where His children are, hearing every groan of their sorrow, marking every tear of their distress. The Father is in the midst of His family, acting a father’s part towards them. “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.” He is never far from any into whose breasts He has put the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba,

Father!" Come, you children of God, rejoice in this—your heavenly Father has come unto you and abides with you!

We also have the Presence of the Divine Son of God. Said He not to His Apostles, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? Have we not this for our joy whenever we come together, that we meet in His name, and that He still says, "Peace be unto you," and manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world? Many of you know most delightfully what it is to have fellowship with God, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"—and this fellowship were not ours if we were not made near by His precious blood. Very near are we to the heart of Christ—He dwells with us—yes, He is one with us!

Peculiarly this presence relates to the Holy Spirit. It is He who represents the Lord Jesus who has gone from us. We have a double portion of Christ's Spirit because we see Him, now that He is taken up, even as Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit, according to the Prophet's saying, "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so unto you." That is, a double portion of my spirit shall rest upon you. It was expedient that our Lord and Master should go, that the Spirit might be given! That Spirit, once poured out at Pentecost, has never been withdrawn! He is still in the midst of this dispensation, working, guiding, quickening, comforting, exercising all the blessed office of the Paraclete and, being for us and in us, God's Advocate, pleading for the Truth of God and for us.

Yes, dear Friends, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in the midst of the true Church of God when that Church is in a right and healthy state. And if the Triune God is gone away from the Church, then her banners must trail in the dust, for her warriors have lost their strength. This is the Glory of the Church of God—to have the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be her never-failing benediction! What a glory to have Father, Son and Holy Spirit manifesting the Godhead in the midst of our assemblies and blessing each one of us! For God to dwell with us—what a condescending Presence this is! And will God, in very truth, dwell among men? If the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, will He abide among His people? He will! He will! Glory be to His name! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" God dwells in us! Wonderful word!

Who can fathom the depth of this Grace? The mystery of the Incarnation is equaled by the mystery of the indwelling! That God, the Holy Spirit, should dwell in *our* bodies is as extraordinary as that God, the Son, should inhabit that body which was born of the blessed virgin! Strange, strange is this, that the Creator should dwell in His creatures, that the Infinite should tabernacle in finite beings! Yet so it is, for He has said, "Certainly I will be with you." What an awe this imparts to every true Church of God! You may go in and out of certain assemblies and you may say, "Here we have beauty! Here we have adornment, musical, ecclesiastical, architectural, oratorical and the like!"

But to my mind there is no worship like that which proceeds from a man when he feels the Lord is present! What a hush comes over the soul! Here is the place for the bated breath, the unsandalled foot and the pros-

trate spirit! Now are we on holy ground. When the Lord descends in the majesty of His infinite love to deal with the hearts of men, then it is with us as it was in Solomon's temple when the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the Glory that filled the place. Man is set aside, for God is there! In such a case the most fluent think it better to be silent, for there is, at times, more expressiveness in absolute silence than in the fittest words. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Why? Because Jacob had said, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

We regard the lowliest assemblies of the most illiterate people with solemn reverence if God is there—we regard the largest assemblies of the wealthiest and most renowned with utter indifference if God is *not* there. This is the one necessity of the Church—the Lord God must be in the midst of her or she is nothing! If God is there, peace will be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces—but if the Lord is not there, woe unto the men that speak in His name, for they shall cry in bitterness, "Who has believed our report?" Woe unto the waiting people, for they shall go away empty! Woe unto the sinners in a forsaken Zion, for no salvation comes to them! The Presence of God makes the Church to be a joyful, happy, solemn place! This brings glory to His name and peace to His people. But without it, all faces are pale, all hearts are heavy.

Brothers and Sisters, this Presence of God is clearly discerned by the gracious, though others may not know it. Yet I think even the ungracious, in a measure, perceive it—coming into the assembly they are struck with a secret something—they know not what. And if they do not immediately join in the worship of the present God, yet a deep impression is made upon them beyond any that could be caused by the sound of human speech, or by the grandeur of outward show. They feel awed and retire abashed. Certainly the *devil* knows where God is—none better than he. He hates the camp of which Jehovah is the leader against it. He doubles his enmity, multiplies his plots and exercises all his power. He knows where his kingdom finds its bravest assailants and he, therefore, attacks their headquarters, even as Balaam and Balak did of old.

Let us look at Balaam for a moment. May we never run in the way of Balaam for a reward, but let us stand in his way for a moment that he may be our beacon. This man had sold himself for gold and, though he knew God and spoke under Inspiration, yet he knew Him not in his heart, but was willing to curse God's people for money. He was thwarted in his design because God was there. It is worth our while to see what kind of a God Jehovah is in Balaam's estimation. He describes our God in verse 19—"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?" Balaam perceived that the God who was in the midst of His people is not a changeable god, not a false god, not one who promises and forgets, or promises and eats his words, or promises what he cannot and will not perform.

The God of Israel is faithful and true, immutable, unchanging! Every one of His promises shall be fulfilled! None of His Words shall fall to the ground. "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He spoken and shall it

not come to pass?” What a joy it is to have such a God as this among us—a promise-making and a promise-keeping God—a God at work for His people as He has declared He would be! We have a God comforting and cheering His people—and fulfilling in their experience that which His Word has led them to expect. This God is our God forever and ever! He shall be our Guide even unto death! My dear Friends, we sometimes hear men talk of the failure of the Church. We are afraid that some churches do fail. Wherever failure occurs, the bottom of it is the absence of the Lord of Hosts, for *He* cannot fail.

I heard one, speaking of the district in which he lives, say, “We are a religious people. Almost all the people attend a place of worship, but,” he added, “I am bound to add that of *spiritual life* we have few traces. One Church has given up its Prayer Meetings; another feels that its entertainments are more important than its worship and another is notorious for worldliness.” This is a testimony as terrible as it is common! The worst thing that can be said of any Christian community is this—“You have a name to live and are dead.” “You are neither cold nor hot.” Our Lord Jesus says, “I would you were cold or hot. So, then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of My mouth.”

A Church without life and zeal makes Christ sick! He cannot bear it. He can put up with downright godlessness sooner than with a profession of religion out of which the life and the power are gone, since it has cooled down into lukewarmness. This, then, we should pray for continually—the Presence of God in the midst of His people—

**“Great Shepherd of Your Israel
Who did, between the cherubs dwell,
And led the tribes, Your chosen sheep,
Safe through the desert and the deep,
Your Church is in the desert now!
Shine from on high, and guide us through.
Turn us to You, Your love restore
We shall be saved, and sigh no more.”**

II. To whet your desire for this, let me pass on to the second head of my subject, which is briefly to describe THE RESULTS OF THIS DIVINE PRESENCE. Some of these results are mentioned in the context. One of the first is *leading*—“God brought them out of Egypt” (v. 22). The best critics give us another rendering—“God is *bringing* them out of Egypt.” When God is in the midst of His people, He is leading them, so that we may cheerfully sing that song, “He leads me, He leads me,” and go on with David to say, “He leads me beside the still waters.” We need no other Leader in the Church when we have God, for His eyes and arms will guide His people.

I am always afraid of having human rules in a Church and equally fearful of being governed by human precedents. I am afraid of power being vested in one, or two, or 20 men—the power must be in the Lord, Himself. That Church which has God in the midst of it, rules itself, and goes right without any other guidance but that which comes of the Holy Spirit’s working. Such a Church keeps together without aiming at uniformity and goes on to victory even though it makes no noise. That movement is right which is led by God—and that is sure to be all wrong which is led in the best possible way if God is absent. Organization is all very well, but I

sometimes feel inclined to join with Zwingli in the battle when he said, "In the name of the Holy Trinity let all loose," for when everybody is free, if God is present, everybody is bound to do the right thing. When each man moves according to the Divine instinct in him, there will be little need of regulations—all is order where God rules! Just as the atoms of matter obey the present power of God, so do separate Believers obey the one great impelling influence.

Oh, if God is in the Church to lead it, it shall be rightly guided! Do not fall in love with this particular system, or that, my Brothers and Sisters—do not cry up this scheme of working or that! Get the Spirit of God and almost any shape that spiritual life takes will be a form of energy suitable for the particular emergency! God never leads His people wrongly! It is for them to follow the fiery, cloudy pillar. Though it leads them through the sea, they shall traverse it dry-shod! Though it leads them through a desert, they shall be fed! Though it brings them into a thirsty land, they shall drink to the full of water from the Rock! We must have the Lord with us to guide us into our promised rest.

The next blessing is strength. "He has, as it were, the strength of an unicorn" (v. 22). It is generally agreed that the creature here meant is an extinct species of urns or ox, most nearly represented by the buffalo of the present period. This gives us the sentence—"He has, as it were, the strength of a buffalo." When God is in a Church, what rugged strength, what massive force, what irresistible energy is sure to be there! And how untamable is the living force! You cannot yoke this buffalo to everybody's plow—it has its own free way of living and it acts after its own style. When the Lord is with a Church, her power is not in numbers, though very speedily she will increase. Her power is not wealth, though God will take care that the money comes when it is needed. Her power lies in God—and that power becomes irresistible, untamable, unconquerable! Force and energy are with the Lord.

I fear that what many bodies of Christian people need is this force. Examine yonder religious body—it is huge, but it lacks muscle—it is a fine-looking organization, but soul, sinew, backbone are lacking. Where God is, there is sure to be life-force. When the Spirit of God descended upon the first saints, they began to speak with wondrous power! And though they were persecuted, they were not subdued. No bit could be put into their mouths to hold them in, for they went everywhere preaching the Word of God! Of the true Israel it shall be said—"His strength is as the strength of the buffalo: it cannot be controlled or conquered."

The next result is safety. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." The Presence of God quietly baffles all the attempts of the Evil One. I have noticed, dear Brothers and Sisters, in this Church where we have had God's Presence in a great measure, that all around us people have gone off to this opinion and to the other fancy, yet, our members, as a rule, have stood firm. Persons say to me, "Do you not sometimes answer the skepticisms of the day?" I answer, No. They do not come in my way. "Do not modern opinions trouble your Church?" They have not done so. Why? Because God is there and

spiritual life, in vigorous exercise, does not fall a victim to disease! A gracious atmosphere does not agree with modern doubt.

When people fall into that evil, they go where the thing is indulged, or at least where it is combated—where in some way or other they can develop their love of novelty and foster the notion of their own wisdom. Infidelity, Socinianism, and modern thought can make no headway where the Spirit is at work! Enchantment does not lie against Israel and divination does not touch Jacob. If a Church will keep to the Truth of God, keep to God, and do its own work, it can live like a lamb in the midst of wolves without being torn in pieces. Have God with you and not only the evil of doctrinal error but every other error shall be kept far from you. But still, there was, when Christ was in the Church, a Judas in the midst of it—and even in the Apostles' days there were some that went out from them because they were not of them, for if they had been of them, doubtless they would have continued with them—therefore we may not expect to be without false brethren.

But the true safety of the Church is not a creed, not an enactment for expelling those who violate the creed—only the Presence of God can protect His people against the cunning assaults of their foes. Upon these words, “there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel,” suffer a few sentences. There are still a few foolish people in the world who believe in witchcraft and spells, but you, Beloved, if you love the Lord, throw such nonsense to the winds! Do you not hear people talk about this being *lucky* and that *unlucky*? This notion is heathenish and unchristian! Never utter such nonsense! But even if there were such things as witchcraft and divination, if this house were full of devils and the air swarmed with invisible spirits of an evil sort, yet if we are the people of God, surely there is no enchantment against us. Divination cannot touch a child of God—the Evil One is chained!

Therefore be of good courage—if God is for us, who can be against us? Further than that, God gives to His people the next blessing, that is, of His so working among them as to make them a wonder and cause outsiders to raise enquiries about them. “According to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What has God worked?” Is not that a singular thing? Here is Balaam with his seven altars, seven bullocks and seven rams. And here is Balak. And they are all going to compass some dreadful evil against Israel! The prophet is a man of great skill in the occult arts—but what does God say? In effect, He says—“From this hour in which you try to curse them, I will bless them more than ever until I will make them say, and their enemies say, “What has God worked?”

Brethren, there is another question, “What has *Israel* worked?” I am glad that Israel's work is not my subject just now, because I should make a very wretched sermon out of it! We have better music in the words, “What has *God* worked?” Let me tell not what I have done, but what God has done! Not what human nature is, but what God's Nature is and what the Grace of God will work in the midst of His people. If God is within us, *we* shall be signs and wonders until those around us shall say, “What is this that God is doing?” Yes, in you, poor Jacob, wrestling, halting on your thigh, men shall see marvels and cry, “What has God worked?” Much

more shall it be so with you, my brother, Israel, you who have prevailed and won the blessing—you are as a prince with God and you shall make men enquire, “What has God worked?”

When God is with His people, He will give them power of a destructive kind. Do not be frightened! Here is the text for it—“Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion”—that is, as a lion in the fullness of his vigor—“He shall not lie down until he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.” God has put into His Church, when He is in it, a most wonderful, destructive power against spiritual wickedness! A healthy Church kills error, and tears evil in pieces! Not so very long ago our nation tolerated slavery in our colonies. Philanthropists endeavored to destroy slavery, but when was it utterly abolished? It was when Wilberforce roused the Church of God, and when the Church of God addressed herself to the conflict—then she tore the evil thing to pieces!

I have been amused with what Wilberforce said the day after they passed the Act of Emancipation. He merrily said to a friend when it was all done, “Is there not something else we can abolish?” That was said playfully, but it shows the spirit of the Church of God! She lives in conflict and victory—her mission is to destroy everything that is bad in the land! See the fierce devil of intemperance, how it devours men! Earnest friends have been laboring against it and they have done something for which we are grateful. But if ever intemperance is put down, it will be when the entire Church of God shall arouse herself to protest against it! When the strong lion rises up, the giant of drunkenness shall fall before him. “He shall not lie down until he eats of the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.”

I predict for the world the best results from a fully awakened Church! If God is in her, there is no evil which she cannot overcome! This crowded London of ours sometimes appalls me—the iniquity which reigns and rages in the lower districts, the general indifference and the growing atheism of the people—these are something terrible, but let not the people of God be dismayed. If the Lord is in the midst of us, we shall do with this as our forefathers have done with other evils—we shall rise up in strength and not lie down till the evil is destroyed! For the destructions, mark you, of God’s people, are not the destructions of men and women—they consist in the overthrow of *sin*—the tearing in pieces of systems of iniquity. This it is which God shall help His Church to do, He being in the midst of her.

Once more—the results of God’s Presence are to be seen, not only in the context, but in other matters which we have personally experienced and hope to experience more fully. Note them. When God is in a Church, there is a holy awe upon the hearts of His people. There is also a childlike trustfulness, hopefulness and consequent courage and joy. When the Lord is in the midst of His people, the ordinances of His house are exceedingly sweet. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper become divinely painted pictures of our burial in Christ and of our life through Him. The preaching of the Word drops as dew and distils as the rain. The meetings for prayer are fresh and fervent—we desire to stay in them hour after hour—we feel it such a happy thing to be there! The very house in which we meet grows beautiful to us. We love the place where our Lord is accustomed to meet with us.

Then work for Christ is easy, no, delightful! God's people never need urging, they are eager for the fray when the Lord is with them. Then, too, suffering for Christ becomes pleasant, yes, any kind of suffering is easily borne—

***“I can do all things, or can bear
All sufferings, if my Lord is there!
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,
While His left hand my head sustains.”***

Then prayer grows abundant all over the Church, both in private and in public. Then life is made vigorous, the feeblest becomes as David, and David like the Angel of the Lord. Then love is fervent; unity is unbroken; the Truth of God is esteemed and the living of truth in the life is sought after by all the people of God! Then effort is successful; the Church enlarges the bounds of her tent, for she breaks forth on the right hand and on the left. Then her seed inherits the Gentiles and the desolate places are inhabited. Then God gives unto her the holy energy with which she vanquishes nations. When God is with her she becomes like a sheaf of fire in the midst of the stubble and consumes her adversaries round about. “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners,” is a Church which has God in her midst!

But now notice one thing in my text, and with that I close this description. Where God is, we are told, “The shout of a king is among them.” What is the shout of a king? When great commanders are known to have come into a camp, what a thrill of joy it causes among their trusty warriors! When the soldiers have been much dejected, it has been whispered in their tents—

***“The king has come to marshal us,
All in his armor dressed,”***

and from that moment every man is cheered up. At the sight of the king, as he comes riding into the camp, the host raises a great shout. What does it mean? It is a shout of loyal love—they are glad to welcome their leader. So is it with us when we sing—“The King Himself comes near”—we are all as glad as glad can be! Those who cannot come out to see their prince, because they are lying on their sick beds in hospitals, clap their hands, while even the little children in their mothers' arms join in the general joy. “The king is come,” they say, and his presence kindles their enthusiasm till they make the hills ring again!

You know how the stern Ironsides felt when Cromwell came along. Every man was a hero when he led the way. They were ready for any adventure, no matter how difficult, as long as their great chief was there. That enthusiasm which was inspired by Alexander, by Napoleon and by other great commanders, is the earthly image of the spiritual fervor felt by the Church when the Lord Jesus is in her midst! What next? When the king comes and they have received him with enthusiasm, he cries, “Now is the hour of battle” and at once a shout goes up from his warriors who are eager for the fight. When a clan of Highlanders was led to the battle by their chief, he had only to show them the enemy and with one tremendous shout they leaped upon them like lions!

It is so with the people of God. When God is with us, we are strong, resolute, determined. The charge of the servants of God is as the rush of a

hurricane against a bowing wall and a tottering fence. In God is our confidence of victory. With God present, no man's heart fails him; no doubt enters the host. "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men," is the word that is passed round, for our King's eyes make us brave and the Presence of His Majesty secures our triumph. My Brothers and Sisters, let us cry to God, entreating Him to be among us! This it is that you need in your Sunday schools, in your mission halls, in your street preaching, in your tract distributing—it is this that I need beyond everything when I have to speak to you in this vast house.

If I could hear the sound of my Master's feet behind me, I would speak though I were lying upon the borders of the grave! But if God is gone, I am bereft of power. What is the use of words without the Spirit? We might as well mutter to the whistling winds as preach to men without the Lord! O God, if You are with us, then the shout of a King is among us, but without You, we pine away!

III. Thirdly, let us look at a very important point and a very practical one, too—What can be done for THE SECURING AND PRESERVING OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITHIN THE CHURCH? This is a matter that would require several sermons to discuss fully, but I notice that there is something, even, in the conformation of a Church to secure this. God is very tolerant and He bears with many mistakes in His servants and yet blesses them. But depend upon it, unless a Church is formed at the very outset upon Scriptural principles and in God's own way, sooner or later all the mistakes of her constitution will turn out to be sources of weakness! Christ loves to dwell in a house which is built according to His own plans and not according to the whims and fancies of men.

The Church ought not to set up as her authority the decrees of men, either living or dead—her Ruler is Christ! Associations formed otherwise than according to Scripture must fail in the long run. I wish Christians would believe this. Chillingworth said, "The Bible and only the Bible, is the religion of Protestants." That was not true. Certain Protestants have tacked many other things to the Bible—and they are suffering as the result of their folly—for they cannot keep their Church from becoming Popish. Of course they cannot! They have admitted a little leaven of Popery and it will leaven the whole lump. The dry rot in one part of the house will spread throughout the whole fabric, sooner or later. Let us be careful to build on the foundation of Christ—and then let every man take heed how he builds thereon, for even if the foundation is good, yet if he builds with hay and stubble, the fire will cause him grievous loss.

But next, God will only dwell with a Church which is full of life. The living God will not inhabit a dead church! Hence the necessity of having really regenerated people as members of the Church. We cannot secure this in every case with all our watching—tares will grow among the wheat. But if the admission of unregenerate men is *usual* and there are no restrictions, then the Lord will be grieved and leave us. God dwells not in temples made with hands—He has nothing to do with bricks and mortar—He dwells in living *souls*! Remember that text—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," and it bears this sense among others, that He is

not the God of a church made up of unconverted people. Oh, that we may all live unto God, and may that life be past all question.

That being supposed, we next notice that to have God among us we must be full of faith. Unbelief gives forth such a noxious vapor that Jesus, Himself, could not stay where it was. His strength was paralyzed—"He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Faith creates an atmosphere in which the Spirit of God can work! Meanwhile, the Spirit of God, Himself, *creates that faith*, so that it is all of His own working from first to last! Brothers and Sisters, do you believe your God? Do you believe up to the hilt? Alas, too many only believe a little! But do you believe His *every* Word? Do you believe His grandest promises? Is He a real God to you, making His Words into facts, every day of your lives? If so, then the Lord is among us as in the Holy Place!

Faith builds a pavilion in which her King delights to sit enthroned. With that, must come prayer. Prayer is the breath of faith. I do not believe God will ever be long with a Church that does not pray—and I feel certain that when meetings for prayer, when family prayer, when private prayer, when *any* form of prayer comes to be at a discount—the Lord will leave the people to learn their weakness! Lack of prayer cuts the sinews of the Church for practical working. She is lame, feeble, impotent, if prayer is gone. If anything is the matter with the lungs, we fear consumption—Prayer Meetings are the lungs of the Church and anything the matter *there* means consumption to the Church, or at best a gradual decline, attended with general debility.

Oh, my Brothers, if we want to have God with us, pass the watchword round, "Let us pray!" Let us pray after the fashion of the widow who was importunate and would not be repulsed! Remember, it is written, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Where prayer is fervent, God is present. Supposing there is this faith and prayer, we shall also need holiness of life. You know what Balaam did when he found he could not curse the people? Satanic was his advice. He bade the king of Moab seduce the men of Israel by the women of Moab that were fair to look upon—these were to fascinate them by their beauty and then to invite them to their idolatrous rites—which rites were orgies of lust. He hoped that the lewdness of the people would grieve the Lord and cause Him to leave them and then Moab could smite them.

He sadly succeeded. If it had not been for Phinehas, who, in holy wrath, drove his javelin right through a man and woman in the very act of sin, sparing none in the vehemence of his zeal, Israel had been quite undone. So in a Church. The devil will work hard to lead one into licentiousness, another into drunkenness, a third into dishonesty and others into worldliness. If he can only get the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold buried in an Achan's tent, then Israel will be chased before her adversaries! God cannot dwell in an unclean Church!

A holy God abhors the very garments spotted by the flesh. Be you holy as Christ is holy! Do not take up with this German silver electrotype holiness, which is so much boasted of nowadays. Do not be deluded into self-righteousness, but seek after real holiness—and if you find it, you will never boast about it—your life will speak, but your lips will never dare to

say, "See how holy I am." Real holiness dwells with humility and makes men aspire after that which yet lies beyond them. Be holy, upright, just, straight, true, pure, chaste, devout. God send us this behavior and then we shall keep Him among us as long as we live!

Lastly, when we have reached that, let us have practical consecration. God will not dwell in a house which does not belong to Him. No, the first thing with any one of us is to answer this question—Do you give yourself up to Christ—body, soul and spirit—to live for Him and to die for Him? Will you give Him all that you have of talent and ability, and substance, time and life, itself? Where there is a Church made up of consecrated people, there God will remain and there He will make a Heaven below! And there the shout of a King shall be heard! And there His strength shall be revealed! And there His glory shall be seen, even as it is beheld on high! The Lord send us this, for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Numbers 23.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 114, 149.**

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“THE STAR OUT OF JACOB”

NO. 3343

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1913.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“There shall come a Star out of Jacob.”
Numbers 24:17.***

THIS prophecy may have some reference to David, but we feel persuaded that the true design of the Holy Spirit is to set forth an emblem of our Lord Jesus Christ. All Nature, above as well as around us, is laid under contribution to set forth our Lord. All the flowers of the field and many of the beasts of the plain—and now the very orbs of Heaven—are turned into metaphors and symbols by which the Glory of Jesus may be manifested to us! Where God takes such pains to teach, we ought to be at pains to learn. Where He makes Heaven and earth to be the pages of the book, we ought to be most ardent in our study. Oh, you who have neglected to learn of Christ, may that neglect come to an end and may some word be spoken which shall be as the beaming of a star unto the darkness of your soul, that henceforth you may be led to know Christ and to be found in Him!

Our Lord, then, is compared to a star, and we shall have seven reasons to assign for this. He is called a Star as—

I. THE SYMBOL OF GOVERNMENT.

You will observe how evidently it is connected with a scepter and with a conqueror. Jacob was to be blessed with a valiant leader who should become a triumphant sovereign. Very frequently in Oriental literature, their great men, and especially their great deliverers, are called stars. The star has been constantly associated with monarchy and even in our own country we still look upon the star as one of the emblems of lofty rank. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ as the Star of Jacob! He is the Captain of His people, the Leader of the Lord's hosts, the King in Jeshurun, God Over All, glorious and blessed forever!

We may say of Jesus in this respect that He has an authority which *He has inherited by right*. He made all things and by Him all things consist. It is but just that He should rule over all things. As there is not a tongue that can move in Heaven or earth except by His permission, it is right that every tongue should confess that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father! Oh, that men were just towards the Son of God! Would that their rebellious souls would give way to the force of rectitude—that they would no longer say, “Let us break His bonds asunder and cast His cords from us!” Unconverted men and women, I would that you would yield to Jesus. He has a right to you. It is through His intercession that your forfeited life is still spared! It is by His Divine goodness that you are where you are tonight. Through His mediatorial Sovereignty it is that you are

allowed to be on praying ground and pleading terms with God! Give Him His due then. Rob Him not of the allegiance which He so justly claims. Give not your spirit over to that exacting tyrant who seeks to compass your destruction! Bow the knee and kiss the Son, even now, lest He be angry and you perish from the way. Acknowledge Him to be your Lord!

Our Lord as a Star has an authority which He has valiantly won. Wherever Christ is King, He has had a great and a stern fight for it. Remember the dread conflict in Gethsemane in which He said, “I have trodden the wine press alone.” When He came red with His own gore from Calvary, He had, in fact, then and there put to flight the hosts of Bozrah and of Edom and stained His garments with the victor’s crimson! He who, then, traveled in the greatness of His strength is still mighty to save. In every human heart where Jesus reigns, He reigns through having dislodged, by the force of Divine Grace, the old tyrant who had fixed his sovereignty there. The maintenance of that Sovereignty within the heart is the result of the same powerful scepter of His love and Grace. Oh, that King Jesus would put forth His power and get a throne in more hearts! Believers, do you not long to see Him glorious? I know you do if you love Him! You would live for this, you would die for this—that Christ might have His own and drive the milk-white steeds of triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, all His people bowing before Him and strewing His pathway with their honors! O Sinners, would to God that you would yield to Him! I pray that now He may gird His sword upon His thigh and by the power of Grace constrain you to bow your willing necks to His silver scepter! Brothers and Sisters, it is a mournful fact that Christ has so small a part of the world as yet in His royal power. Look, the gods of the heathen stand fast upon their pedestals! The old harlot of Rome still flaunts in her scarlet! The crescent of Mohammed wanes, but still its baleful light is cast throughout the nations! Why does He tarry? Perhaps His finger is on the latch. It may be that He will come before long. Come quickly, Lord! Our yearning hearts beseech You to come! Meanwhile, it is for you and for me to be fighting, each soldier in his rank, each of us standing in his place, as his Master has bidden us, contending with heart and soul and strength for the right and for the true, for faith, for holiness, for the Cross and all that that Cross indicates among the sons of men! Blessed Star of Jacob! You shine with no borrowed rays! You shine with a mysterious power which none gave to You, for it is inherently Your own.

Before we leave this point, I will only say this Kingdom of Christ, *wherever it is, is most beneficent*. Wherever this Star of government shines, its rays scatter blessings! Jesus is no tyrant. He rules not by oppression. The force He uses is the force of love. There was never a subject of Christ’s Kingdom that complained of Him. Those who have served Him most, have longed to serve Him more! Why, even His poor martyrs in the catacombs of Rome, dying of starvation, or dragged up to the Coliseum to be devoured by wild beasts, never said an ill-word of Him. Certainly if it were difficult to any, it seems it would be hard to them—but the more they were troubled, the more they rejoiced—and there never were sweeter songs than those which came from dying lips when men were crackling

on the firewood, or being dragged limb from limb at the heels of wild horses, or being sawn asunder! Just in proportion as the bodily pains became acute, the spiritual joy became intense! And while the outward man decayed, the inner man leaped up into newness of life, anticipating the joys of the first-born before the Throne of God! He is a good Master. Young people, I would that you would serve Him! Oh, that you were enlisted in His service. It is now a good many years since I gave my heart to Him—it is fast coming on 20 years, but I cannot say a word against Him! No, but I wish I had always served Him! I wish I had served Him, before, and I pray that He may use me to the fullest extent. If He will make but a doormat for His temple of me, I shall be but too glad. If He will let my name be cast out as evil and give my body to the dogs, I do not care, so long as His truth does but prosper and His name becomes great! But alas, there is so much self in us, pride and I know not what besides, that we who really know the Master, have reason to ask Him to bring in His great artillery and blow down the castles of our natural corruption—conquer us yet again, and rule in us by main force of Grace, till in every part and corner of our spirits there shall be nothing but the love of Christ and the indwelling of His gracious Spirit! By the star we understand the symbol of government. In the second place, the star is—

II. THE IMAGE OF BRIGHTNESS.

When men wish to speak of brightness they talk of the stars. They who are righteous are as the stars and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever! Our Lord Jesus Christ is brightness itself! The star is but a poor setting forth of His ineffable splendor. Oh, let the thought come home to you. He is the brightness of His Father's Glory—unutterably bright as the Deity. He is brightness Himself in His Human Nature, for in Him there was neither spot nor wrinkle. As Mediator, exalted on high, enjoying the reward of His pains, He is bright indeed! Observe that our Lord as a Star is a bright particular Star in the matter of holiness. In Him was no sin. Look, and look, and look again into His star-like character. Even the lynx-eyes of infidels have not been able to discover a mistake in Him! And as for the attentive eyes of critics who have been Believers, they have been made to water again and again—and then to glisten and sparkle with delight as they have seen the mingling of all the perfections in His adorable Character to make up one perfection!

As a Star, He shines also with the light of knowledge. Moses was, as it were, but a mist, but Christ is the Prophet of Light. “The Law was given by Moses”—a thing of types and shadows—“but Grace and truth come by Jesus Christ.” If any man is taught in the things of God, he must derive his light from the Star of Bethlehem. You may go as you will to the universities, to the tomes of the learned, to the schools of the philosophers, but in spiritual things you receive no light till you look up to Jesus! And then in His light you see light, for there is transcendent brightness in Him. He is the Wisdom of God as well as the Power of God. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life! Divine Light has found its center in Him!

His Light, too, is that of comfort. Oh, how many have emerged from the darkness of their souls and found peace by looking up to this Star of Jacob, the Lord Jesus Christ! Well did our hymn put it—

***"He is my soul's bright Morning Star,
And He my Rising Sun."***

One glimpse of Christ and the midnight of your unbelief is over. But a sight of the five wounds and your sins are covered and your iniquities put away. Happy day, happy day, when first the soul beholds a crucified Redeemer and gives herself up to Him, relying upon Him for eternal salvation! Shine, sweet Star—shine into some benighted heart tonight! Give holiness, give light, give the knowledge of God, give joy and peace in believing, in believing in the precious blood!

When speaking upon Christ as a Star, "the Symbol of Government," I said, submit to Him. Now, speaking of Him as a Star, the Image of Brightness, I say, look to Him—look to Him! It is the Gospel's precept, "Look unto Me, and be you saved all you ends of the earth," and well do we sing—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!"

Poor Sinner, delay no longer! You are not asked to *do* anything, nor to *be* anything, nor to *feel* anything! You are simply bid to look away from self to what Christ has done and you shall live—

***"View Him prostrate in the Garden,
On the ground your Maker lies!
On the bloody tree behold Him,
Hear Him cry before He dies—
'It is finished!'
Sinner, will not this suffice?"***

Look to Him, then, and live! Thirdly, our Lord is compared to a star to bring out the fact that—

III. HE IS THE PATTERN OF CONSTANCY.

Ten thousand changes have been worked since the world began, but the stars have not changed. There they remain. We dreamed at one time that they moved. Untaught imagination said that all those stars revolved around this little globe of ours. But we know better now. There they are, both day and night—always the same—and we may say they have not changed since the world began, nor probably will they till, like a vesture, God shall roll up Creation because it is worn out. It is very delightful to recollect that the same star which I looked at last night was viewed by Abraham, perhaps with some of the same thoughts! And when we have gone and other generations shall have followed us, those that come after will look up to the same star! So with our Lord Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. What the Prophets and Apostles saw in Him, we can see in Him! And what He was to them, that He is to us and shall be to generations yet unborn! Hundreds of us may be looking at the same star at the same time without knowing it. There is a meeting place for many eyes. We may be drifted, some of us, to Australia, or to Canada, or to the United States. Or we may be sailing across the great deep, but we shall see the stars there. It is true that on the other side of the world we shall see another set of stars, but the stars, themselves, are always the same. As long as we who are in this hemisphere are concerned, we

shall look upon the same star. So, wherever we may be, we look to the same Christ. One Brother here has learning, but as he looks to Christ, he sees the same Christ as the poor unlettered woman in the aisles. And you, poor man, who have not, perhaps, a sixpence in the world, you have got the same Christ to trust in as the richest man in all the world! And you who think yourself so obscure that no one knows you but your God, you look to this same Star and it shines with the same beams for you, as for the Christian who leads the van in the Lord's hosts! Jesus Christ is still the same, the same to all His people, the same in all places, the same forever and ever! Well, therefore, may He be compared to those bright stars that shine now as they did of old and change not! In the fourth place, we may trace this comparison of our Lord to a star as—

IV. THE FOUNTAIN OF INFLUENCE.

The old astrologers used to believe very strongly in the influence of the stars upon men's minds. Without endorsing their exploded theories, we meet in Scripture with expressions like this—"Can you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?"—alluding, no doubt, to the fact that the Pleiades are in the ascendant in the sweet months of spring when the warm breath and gentle showers are bringing forth the green sprout and tender blade, the foliage and the flowers of May with all the loveliness of the season. While Orion is in the ascendant as a wintry sign, when the bands of frost are binding up the outburst of Nature. But, whether there is an influence in the stars or not, as touching this world, I know there is great influence in Christ Jesus! He is the Fountain of all holy influences among the sons of men. Where this Star shines upon the graves of men who are dead in sin, they begin to live! Where the beam of this Star shines upon poor imprisoned spirits, their chains drop off, the captive leaps to lose his chains! When this Star gleams upon a burdened Christian with its light, he begins to bud and blossom and precious fruits are brought forth! When this Star shines upon the backslider, he begins to mend his ways and to follow, like the eastern sages, its light till he finds his Savior once more! This Star has an influence upon our nativity. It is through its benign rays that we are born-again and in our destiny it has an influence upon our death, for it is in its light that we fall asleep, believing that we shall wake up in the image of the Lord Jesus! Oh, sweet Star, shine on me always! Never let me miss Your rays, but may I always walk in the light thereof, till I am found sitting in the full noontide heat of the Sun of Righteousness forever and ever! In the fifth place, the Lord Jesus Christ may be compared to a star—

V. AS A SOURCE OF GUIDANCE.

There are some of the stars that are extremely useful to sailors. I scarcely know how else the great wide sea would be navigated, especially if it were not for the polar star. Jesus is the Polar Star to us. How the poor Negro in the olden times, when the curse of slavery had not been taken away, must have blessed God for that polar star—so easy to find. Any child with but a moment's teaching will soon know how to discover it in the midst of its fellows at night. And when the Negro had once learned

to distinguish the star that shone over the land of freedom, how he followed it through the great dismal swamps, or along the plains which were still more dreadful! How he could ford the streams and climb the mountains, always cheered by the sight of that polar star. Such is Jesus Christ to the seeker! He leads to liberty. He conducts to peace. Oh, I wish you would follow Him, some of you who are going about a thousand ways to find peace where you will never find it! There is never a Sunday but I try to speak, sometimes in gentler tones, and at other seasons with thundering notes, the simple Truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I try to make it plain to you that it is not your prayers and tears, your doings, your willings, your ANYTHING that can save you—but that all your help is laid upon One who is Mighty and that you must look alone to Him! Yet, Sinners, you are still looking to yourselves! You rake the dunghills of your human nature to find the pearl of great price which is not there! You will look beneath the ice of your natural depravity to find the flame of comfort which is not there! You might as well seek in Hell, itself, to find Heaven as look to your own works and merits to find some ground of trust! Down with them! Down with them, every one of them! Away with all those confidences of yours, for—

***"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good!"***

Just reverse that helm and shift that sail, and tack about! Follow not the wrecker's beacon on yonder shore luring you to the rocks of self-delusion, but where that Star guides, there let your vessel sail and pray for the favoring gales of the blessed Spirit to guide you rightly to the Port of Peace. Our Lord is compared to a star, surely—

VI. AS THE OBJECT OF WONDER.

One of the first lines which full many of you ever learned to recite was—

***"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are."***

But that is precisely what Galileo might have said and exactly what the greatest astronomer that ever lived might say. You have sometimes looked through a telescope and have seen the planets, but after you have looked at them you do not know much about them—and those who are busy all day and all night long taking constant observations, I think, will tell you that the result is rather that of astonishment than of intelligence. Still, it is—

"How I wonder what you are."

So to those of us who are in Christ Jesus, He is a peerless Star! But oh, Brothers and Sisters, we may well wonder what He is! We used to think, when we were little ones, that the stars were holes pricked in the skies through which the light of Heaven shone, or that they were little pieces of gold dust that God had strewn about. We do not think so now. We understand that they are much greater than they look to be. So, when we were carnal and did not know King Jesus, we esteemed Him to be very much like anybody else—but now that we begin to know Him, we find out that He is much greater, infinitely greater than we thought He was! And as we grow in Grace, we find Him to be still more glorious! A little Star to our view at first, He has grown in our estimation into a Sun, now,

a blazing Sun by whose beams our soul is refreshed! Ah, but when we get near to Him, what will He be? Imagine yourself borne up on an angel's wing to take a journey to a star. Travelling at an inconceivable rate, you open your eyes all of a sudden and say, "How wonderful! Why, that which was a star just now has become as large to my vision as the sun at noon!" "Stop," says the angel, "you shall see greater things than these," and, as you speed on, the disc of that orb increases till it is equal to a hundred suns! And now you say, "But what? Am I not near it now?" "No," says the angel, "that enormous globe is still far, far away," and when you come to it, you would find it to be such a wondrous world that arithmetic could not compute its size! Scarcely could imagination belt it with the zone of fancy. Now, such is Jesus Christ! I said He grows upon His people here, but what must it be to see Him there where the veil is lifted and we behold Him face to face? Sometimes we long to find out what that Star is, to know Him, to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge—but, meanwhile, we are compelled to sit down and sing—

***"God only knows the love of God—
Oh that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart!"***

We have to confess that—

***"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depth to see!
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height!"***

But, to conclude, the metaphor used in the text may well bear this seventh signification. Our Lord is compared to a star as—

VII. HE IS THE HERALD OF GLORY.

The bright and morning star foretells that the sun is on its way to gladden the earth with its light. Wherever Jesus comes, He is a great Prophet of Good. Let Him come into a heart and, as soon as He appears, you may rest assured that there is a life of eternity and joy to come! Let Jesus Christ come into a family and what changes He makes there! Let Him be preached with power in any town or city and what a herald of good things He is there! To the whole world, Christ has proclaimed glad tidings. His coming has been fraught with benedictions to the sons of men. Yes, the coming of Christ in the flesh is the great prophecy of the Glory to be revealed in the latter days, when all nations shall bow before Him and the age of peace, the golden age, shall come—not because civilization has advanced, not because education has increased, or the world grown better—but because Christ has come! This is the first, the fairest of the stars, the prognostic of the dawn.

Yes, and because Christ has come, there will be a Heaven for the sons of men who believe in Him. Sons of toil, because Christ has come, there shall be rest for the weary! Daughters of sorrow, because Christ has come, there shall be healing for the weak! O you whom chill penury is bowing down, there shall be lifting up and sacred wealth for you because the Star has shone! Hope on! Hope always! Now that Jesus has come, there is no room for despair!

I commend these thoughts to you and earnestly ask you once again, if you have never looked to Christ, trust in Him now! If you have never submitted to Jesus, submit to Him now! If you have never confided in Him, confide in Him now! It is a very simple matter. May God the Holy Spirit teach and guide you to disown yourselves and to acknowledge Him. Cease from your own thoughts and trust His Word. This done by you all, there is proof positive that all is done for you by Christ. You are His and He is yours—where He is, shall your portion be—and you shall be like He, for you shall see Him as He is! It will be a day to be had in remembrance if you are now led to give yourselves to Him. I well recollect when my heart yielded to His Divine Grace—when I could no longer look anywhere else and was compelled to look to Him! Oh, come to Him! I know not what words to use, or what persuasions to employ. For your own sake, that you may be happy now! For eternity’s sake, that you may be happy hereafter! For terror’s sake, that you may escape from Hell! For mercy’s sake, that you may enter into Heaven, look to Jesus! You may never be bidden to do so again. This bidding may be the last, the concluding measure which shall fill up the heap of your guilt because you reject it. Oh, do not despise the exhortation. Let the prayer go up quietly now from your spirit, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” Let your soul wrestle vehemently. Let your tongue utter its mighty resolve—

*“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
But, if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried—
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died!”*

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 15:1-24.**

Verse 1. *Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him.* They were drawing near. It was not an unusual occurrence. It was their habit to draw near to Christ. The Pharisees and Scribes stood in the outer ring. They did not come too near. These poor outcasts and publicans and sinners drew near. They wanted to catch every word. They could not have too much of it. They took a delight in getting near to His blessed Person. They drew near to hear Him.

2. *And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This Man receives sinners, and eats with them.* The sinful, *known* to be so. This Man receives them, welcomes them, admits them to an intimacy with Him. What is worse, He eats with them! To teach them is bad enough, but to sit at the same table with them, making Himself their company and making them His company—this is worse than worse! And so they murmured. I am very glad that they did. We owe a great deal to the murmurings of the

proud Pharisee, for our Lord graciously answered those murmurings and then He gave us some of the choicest jewels of speech that are preserved in the treasury of knowledge!

3. *And He spoke this parable unto them, saying.* So it is only one parable, yet it is three. Three panels making one picture. The whole three are necessary to make up all His teaching.

4. *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it?* He is justifying His looking for the lost ones. Their accusation was that He received the sinful and false, and ate with them. “Well, well,” says Christ, “I do that, but I am a shepherd, and if I have lost one of My sheep, do you blame Me if I leave the flock to go after the lost sheep?” “And he goes after that which is lost until he finds it.”

5, 6. *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.* A true picture of Christ going after those who are willful and wayward and, therefore, have taken to wandering till they are lost—lost to God, lost to society, lost to usefulness, lost to happiness—perhaps lost to hope. He goes after them. That is, in His life. He throws them on His shoulders in His death. He will bring them home rejoicing by His Resurrection Life and then throughout eternity He will make the glorified spirits in Heaven glad by showing them the sheep that was lost, the soul that was saved!

7. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* If there is such, if there is some that have never wandered and who belong to the flock, yet the flock, itself, does not, of itself, cause any great exuberance of joy. The overflow of delight is caused by the lost sheep when it is found! A Church of godly people will give great content to Christ, but still, if there is any bell ringing, any sound of joy and gladness, it will be over the wandering one that has been restored! Here you have the Son of God, Himself, and His relation to the wandering souls of men. He is their Shepherd! He seeks them! He brings them back to the fold and He is glad! Now comes the second panel of the picture.

8-10. *Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents.* In this second picture you have the Holy Spirit working through the Church, compared to a woman. She has lost her piece of money. She gets the candle of the Gospel. She takes the broom of the Law—she sweeps and searches, she raises dust, she expends her candle till she finds her piece of money. You notice that she blames herself for its being lost, for she says, “I have found the piece which I had lost.” The shepherd did not say that of the sheep. He said,

“the sheep that was lost.” That was its own doing. The Church of God seems to blame herself that she has lost her hold upon so many who once belonged to her. The Holy Spirit, through the Church, seeks after lost souls who bear the image of the King upon them, like minted pieces of silver. It is a wonderful verse which is repeated here. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.” It does not say that the angels rejoice. It means that—but there is joy in their presence. Who is in their presence but God, Himself? The great and blessed God, whose Throne they continually surround, in whose face they see joy over saved souls! And notice the joy is about one sinner—a sinner. That is all we know about him. He may have been as poor as a church mouse and he may have made himself sick unto death by his vice. There was joy over him when he repented. It was only one! It was not a batch of twenty. It was not a large number converted—there is joy over one sinner. What had he done? Built a church? No. Preached a sermon? No. He had repented! That is all, but that is quite enough to set all the music of the angels’ harps pouring forth the praise of God! “One sinner that repents.”

11. *And He said*—And here comes the greatest of all the parables, the most instructive, perhaps, and the best loved of them all! In these parables we do not find anything about a Savior, a Mediator. Did you ever read a parable that contained all the Truth of God? If any man were to try and make a parable that contained all Truths of God at once, verily I say unto you, he would be a fool! He must fail, and fail in his object of teaching anything—

**“One thing at a time, and that done well,
Is a very good rule as many can tell.”**

And to teach one Truth at a time is quite sufficient. It is true that the parable that we are going to read says nothing about a mediator, and it does not say anything about the father seeking his lost son, not a word. No work of the Holy Spirit. It is meant to teach one thing—and it does teach it! And if it does not teach 50 things, do not imagine that the other 49 are not true!

11, 12. *A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.* He would have that when His father died. Does he *demand* to have his heritage in his father’s life-time? Yes, he does. It is an unreasonable demand. Yet—

12. *And he divided unto them his living.* He was of a gentle mold, of a kindly heart. He did not want to have a son stay with him like a slave. He must be served willingly or not at all—so he divided to them his living.

13. *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together.* He turned the sheep and the stock and everything into money.

13. *And took his journey into a far country.* We do not know where it was. It does not matter, it was a far country. He wanted to get away from his father, from his authority, from his observation. He went into a far country.

13. *And there wasted his substance with riotous living.* What he did I do not know. His elder brother had heard some very bad stories about him which we shall see at the end of the chapter. They may not, however,

have been all true, for rumor is greatly given to exaggeration. Beware of this exaggeration, especially of the follies of others!

14. *And when he had spent all.* Got to his last penny.

14. *There arose a mighty famine in that land.* Famines generally come when one's money is all gone. He might not have feared a famine if he had still been wealthy. The two things come together, the two seas meet. He had spent all and now there was a famine.

14. *And he began to be in need.* The first time in his life. He had always had everything he wanted, but now he began to be in want. It is an ugly kind of feeling when, for the first time, you cannot buy a loaf of bread. When, for the first time, you cannot get a night's lodging for love or money—and have not any money and nobody gives you any love. He began to be in need.

15. *And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country.* I dare say he was a member of the same company that he belonged to. He went to him and said, “Now help me. You have many a time enjoyed yourself at my house. You have drunk my champagne, now help me. I am in trouble.” Well, he had a berth empty and that was to keep his pigs—the very worst thing a Jew could do—and what a Jew would never do unless he was starving.

15. *And he sent him into his fields to feed swine.* “There is a job for you! You need a job? Go into my fields and feed my swine.” The son has become a swineherd. One who fared sumptuously everyday at home, has now come to serve pigs!

16. *And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.* So hungry was he, that if he could have eaten the slop which the pigs fed upon, he would have been glad to kneel at the trough and feed with them!

16. *And no man gave unto him.* No, they all alike seemed stony-hearted. When you have plenty, everybody will give you some more. When you have nothing, nobody will give you a penny. “No man gave to him.”

17. *And when he came to himself.* For he had been away from himself. He was beside himself and now he came home to himself.

17. *He said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I—*The son whom he loves. “And I.”

17-19. *Perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants.* Let me be anything, so that I may have something to do with you. Let me live at home. Let me eat the bread from your table. Put me in the lowest place. I cannot be so low as I now am. Put me anywhere. Make a hired servant of me.

20. *And he arose, and came to his father. But—*Blessed “but.”

20, 21. *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son.* He was going on with his

prayer, “Make me as one of your hired servants,” when his father kissed him right on his lips and smothered that prayer! He did not mean to let him pray that, and so the father, interrupting him, stopped that legal bit of prayer.

22. *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* Is this the justifying righteousness of Christ? I think not. No servant can put that on. God Himself, imputes the righteousness of Christ to us! It means just this—Receive this poor forgiven sinner into the Church and treat him like a gentleman. Do not look at him as one that is wearing rags any longer. Put the best robe on him, treat him well, take him into your favor, receive him into your society, put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

23, 24. *And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, and be merry: For this, my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry* A fine old Saxon word that is, “merry.” I have known some good people afraid to say, “I wish you a merry Christmas.” But I always like it, for I like these grand old Bible words. If the word “merry” means anything wrong, it is you that make it wrong! But it is right enough in the Bible. “They began to be merry.” Now, is it not a very curious thing that the father said, “Put the robe on him, put the shoes on him”—but he never said, “Now *make him eat.*” Why is that? He says, “Let us eat and be merry.” He does not say anything about the son eating. No, Brothers and Sisters, because the best way to make another man eat is to go at it yourself. It breeds an appetite in him. If he is standing there looking at what you are doing—“Let us eat and be merry”—his mouth begins to water! Why, you know how hard it is if you are called upon to stand when you are very hungry and see other people eat. How you want to eat! That is the best preaching in the world. If the end of the discourse is to make a man eat, the best preaching is to fall to, yourself! “Let us eat and be merry,” and they did that—and then this restored prodigal son found his appetite, and so feasted, too.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

THE GREAT SIN OF DOING NOTHING

NO. 1916

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord:
and be sure your sin will find you out.”*
Numbers 32:23.

THERE are many dear friends engaged in business who can only reach the Tabernacle in time for the middle of the service and, therefore, they lose the reading of the Scriptures and the exposition which make up a whole with the sermon. This is a great loss to them, but as it is not their fault, we must not let them suffer for it, so far as we can remedy the evil. With this design let me explain to them that, according to the chapter which we have read and expounded, the Israelites had conquered the country possessed by Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites. And the tribes of Reuben and Gad, having great quantities of cattle, thought that a country so rich in pasture would be eminently suitable for them and for their flocks. They were no bad judges, for the country was specially fitted for sheep farming.

They, therefore, asked Moses that they might have that country to be theirs. But Moses objected. Did they mean to sit still and enjoy that country—and then leave the rest of the tribes to cross the Jordan and to fight for their possessions? If so, he declared that it was a very evil course to take—that they were selfish in seeking their own ease and that they would be discouraging God’s people and doing all sorts of mischief. He, therefore, proposed to them that if they were to have that conquered country for their own, they should at least cross the river with their brethren and fight and continue fighting until the land on the other side of the Jordan had been cleared of its old inhabitants and the whole of Israel could take the whole of the country—and each tribe could possess its portion.

He put it to them as a matter of honor and as a matter of right, that they ought to help in conquering the rest of the land. Why should they receive their lot without fighting and leave the other tribes to bear the toil and danger of war? Had not God bid them *all* to go up and drive out the condemned Canaanites? How could they evade their duty without great sin? He would have them take their full share in the war and on that condition they might have the rich meadows of Bashan, but not otherwise. This was clearly just and equitable and commended itself to those concerned. They at once agreed to the proposal and Moses, to enforce the agreement, told them in the words of the text, that if they did not keep

their covenant and give all due aid to their brethren, then they would sin against God and they might be sure that their sin would find them out.

I remarked, in reading the chapter, that Moses spoke very wisely, very forcibly, very honestly—and the people were very pliant. They yielded to his persuasions and the difficulty which threatened to divide the nation was readily remedied. It is well to have a wise leader. It is well for him when he leads a reasonable people! Oh, that I may be able, tonight, to speak a word in season and may your ears be ready to hear it! May the Lord bring as gracious an issue out of this service as He did out of the discourse of His servant Moses! To His Holy Spirit shall be all the praise.

We shall speak at this time, first, *of what was this sin?* Secondly, *what would be the chief sin of that sin?* “If you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord.” This would be the peculiar atrocity of their sin, that it would be leveled at God, Himself. And then there is a third point—*What would the consequence of such sin be?* “Be sure your sin will find you out.” They would be guilty and would not long go unpunished.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS THIS SIN? What is this sin about which the Spirit of God says by Moses, “Be sure your sin will find you out?” A learned divine has delivered a sermon upon the sin of murder from this text; another upon theft; another upon falsehood. Now they are very good sermons, but they have nothing to do with this text if it is read as Moses uttered it. If you take the text as it stands, there is *nothing* in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men *do*, but it is about what men *do not do*. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not so often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning—“If you will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out.”

What, then, was this sin? Remember that it is the sin of God’s own people. It is not the sin of Egyptians and Philistines, but the sin of God’s chosen nation and, therefore, this text is for you that belong to any of the tribes of Israel—you to whom God has given a portion among His beloved ones. It is to you, professed Christians and Church members, that the text comes, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” And what is that sin? It is, very sadly, common among professed Christians and needs to be dealt with—it is the sin which leads anyone to forget his share in the holy war which is to be carried out for God and for His Church. A great many wrongs are tangled together in this crime and we must try to separate them and set them in order before your eyes.

First, *it was the sin of idleness and of self-indulgence.* “We have cattle: here is a land that yields much pasture: let us have this for our cattle and we will build folds for our sheep with the abundant stones that lie about, and we will repair these cities of the Amorites, and we will dwell in them. They are nearly ready for us, and there shall our little ones dwell in comfort. We do not care about fighting: we have seen enough of it already in the wars with Sihon and Og. Reuben would rather abide by the sheep-folds. Gad has more delight in the bleating of the sheep and in the folding of the lambs in his bosom than in going forth to battle.”

Alas, the tribe of Reuben is not dead and the tribe of Gad has not passed away! Many who are of the household of faith are equally indisposed to exertion, equally fond of ease. Hear them say, "Thank God we are safe! We have passed from death unto life. We have named the name of Christ. We are washed in His precious blood and, therefore, we are secure." Then, with a strange inconsistency, they permit the evil of the flesh to crave carnal ease and they cry, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years! Take your ease—eat, drink and be merry!" Spiritual self-indulgence is a monstrous evil, yet we see it all around. On Sunday these loafers must be well fed. They look out for such sermons as will feed their souls. The thought does not occur to these people that there is something else to be done besides *feeding*.

Soul-saving is pushed into the background! The crowds are perishing at their gates! The multitudes with their sins defile the air! The age is getting worse and worse—and man, by a process of evolution—is evolving a devil! And yet these people want pleasant things preached to them! They eat the fat, drink the sweet and they crowd to the feast of fat things full of marrow and of wines on the lees well refined—spiritual festivals are their delight! Sermons, conferences, Bible reading, and so forth, are sought after, but regular service in ordinary ways is neglected. Not a hand's turn will they do! They gird on no armor, they grasp no sword, they wield no sling, they throw no stone. No, they have gotten their possession, they know they have, and they sit down in carnal security, satisfied to do nothing!

They neither work for life, nor from life—they are absolute sluggards, as lazy as they are long! Nowhere are they at home except where they can enjoy themselves and take things easy. They love their beds, but the Lord's fields they will neither plow nor reap. This is the sin pointed out in the text—"If you do not go forth to the battles of the Lord, and contend for the Lord God and for His people, you do sin against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the others! The sin of sitting still while your Brethren go forth to war, breaks both tables of the Law and has in it a huge idolatry of self, which neither allows love to God or man. Horrible idleness! God save us from it!

This sin may be viewed under another aspect, as *selfishness and unbrotherly*. Gad and Reuben ask to have their inheritance at once and to make themselves comfortable in Bashan, on this side Jordan. What about Judah, Levi, Simeon, Benjamin and all the rest of the tribes? How are they to get their inheritance? They do not care, but it is evident that Bashan is suitable for them with their multitude of cattle! Some of them reply, "You see, they must look to themselves, as the proverb has it, 'Every man for himself and God for us all.'" Did I not hear someone in the company say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I know that gentleman! I heard his voice years ago. His name is Cain and I have this to say to him—it is true that he is not his brother's keeper, but he *is* his brother's *killer*. Every man is either the keeper of his brother, or the destroyer of his brother! Soul-murder can be worked without an act or even a will—it can be and is

constantly accomplished by neglect! Yonder perishing heathen—does not the Lord enquire, “Who slew all these?” The millions of this city unevangelized—who is guilty of their blood? Are not idle Christians starving the multitude by refusing to hand out the Bread of Life? Is not this a grievous sin?

“But wait,” says another, “they can conquer the land themselves. God is with them and He can do His own work and, therefore, I do not see that I need trouble myself about other people.” That is *selfishness* and selfishness is never worse than when it puts on the garb of religion! The boy at school who selfishly feeds himself upon his luxuries and gives nothing to his young companions is generally their ridicule. He is the greedy boy whom all despise. A man with large stores who, in time of famine, would feed himself but never think of the poor, is despised among men! But what shall I say of the man who, concerning the things of the *soul*—concerning Heaven, Hell, Christ and eternity—is so selfish that, being saved himself, he cares not one jot for others? He is so unbrotherly that I am half afraid he is no Brother! He is so inhuman that I can scarcely think a touch of the life of Christ can ever have quickened him! How is he a Christian who is not like Christ, but who just feels, “Well, I am all right and if I look to myself, other people must look to themselves. God will see to them all, no doubt! I have nothing to do with it”?

Now, unless we shake off that horrible selfishness and feel that the very essence of our religion lies in love and that one of the first fruits of it is to make us care about the salvation of our fellow men—unless, I say, we shake that off and go forth to fight the Lord’s battles—then this text very solemnly threatens us. “If you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.” O my Brothers and Sisters, hear this text and let it operate with salutary influence to produce in you constant effort for the salvation of those around you!

But with this there was mingled *ingratitude* of a very dark order. These children of Gad and Reuben would appropriate to themselves lands for which all the Israelites had labored. God had led them forth to battle and they had conquered Sihon and Og. And now, these men would take possession of what others have struggled for, but they are not, themselves, to fight. This is vile ingratitude and I fear it is common among us at this very day. How came we to be Christians at all? Instrumentally, it is through those holy missionaries who won our fathers from the cruel worship of the Druids and afterwards from the fierce dominion of Woden and Thor. We must also trace our Gospel light to those stakes at Smithfield, where men of God counted not their lives dear to them, but willingly gave up all they had—and their lives, also—by a painful death that they might keep the Truth of God alive in the land.

Some of you came to be Christians through the earnest labors of men who preached by the roadside, or by the loving entreaties of tender mothers who wept you to the Savior, or by the faithful ministry of some Brother from the pulpit, or the equally faithful teaching of an earnest Sunday school teacher. We owe under God much to past ages and much to present laborers! There is no man among us but stands immensely indebted

to the Church of God. Though God is our Father, yet the Church is our mother and through her various agencies we have been born to God. Do we acknowledge all this debt and are we not going to pay it? Are we to receive all and then give out nothing in return? Are we to be like candles burning under bushels? Are we to waste our life by much receiving and little distributing? This will never do! This will not be life, but death!

I do not charge this upon anybody, personally, but if this cap fits anybody, pray let him wear it! If any man must acknowledge his obligation to the Church of God and yet he is not repaying it, let him cover his face for very shame! Will you not pass on the Light you have received? Verily you deserves to perish in darkness! Are you fed and will you not break your bread to the hungry, or pass a cup of cold water to the thirsty? What are you doing, strange ingrate? Will you simply be a stagnant reservoir into which streams of mercy never fall out of you, to run again, but to stand and putrefy in selfishness? Remember the Dead Sea and tremble, lest you be like it—a pool accursed and cursing all around you! O God, have mercy upon the great mass of Your professing people to whom this must be solemnly applied—that they do receive, but give back to You and to Your cause so little either of time, substance, talent, prayer, or anything else!

The text, when *spiritually* interpreted, says concerning our personal service in the conquest of the world for Christ—“if you do not so, behold you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.”

Again, we may view this from another point of view. It is the sin of *untruthfulness*. These people pledged themselves that they would go forth with the other tribes and that they would not return to their own homes until the whole of the campaign was ended. Now, if after that they did not go to war and did not fight to the close of it, then they would be guilty of a barefaced lie! It is a wretched thing for a man to be a covenant-breaker. It is sacrilege for any man to lie, not only unto man, but unto God. I would speak very tenderly, but if any man has been converted from the error of his ways, by that very conversion he is bound to serve the Lord. If he has been baptized as a Believer, by that Baptism he declared that he was dead to the world and buried to it—that from that day on he might live in newness of life.

Now, if he lives only to make money and hoard it, and he does nothing for God's Church and for poor sinners, is not his Baptism a lie? Such a baptized person was buried, but he was never dead! Is not this to turn Baptism into a farce? He gave himself up to the Church of God—he became a member of it—and by that act and deed he pledged himself to do all he could for its growth and its prosperity. And if he does nothing, he is a deceiver. If his joining a Church meant anything, it meant that he would take part in the common service of God. A do-nothing professor is a merely nominal member and a nominal member is a real hindrance! He neither contributes, nor prays, nor works, nor agonizes for souls, nor takes any part in Christian service—and yet he partakes in all the privileges of the Church! Is this fair? What is the use of him? He sits and hears and sometimes sleeps under the sermon. That is all. Is not his union with the Church a practical lie? I will not say so, but I will ask the question. It

seems to me that if I belong to the Israelites and they are sent by God to conquer a country—and I do not go forth to the war with them and take my part in the conflict—I am not a true Israelite. I am unworthy of my nation! I am disloyal to the standard! I am false to my fellow soldiers. I think it is so—don't you?

Having entered the Christian ministry, if I did nothing in it, I should feel that I disgraced it. If I simply tried to enjoy religion without an effort to *spread* it, I ought to be drummed out of the army of preachers. If there are any in the Church who have talent that they do not use for God, or money which they do not lay out for Christ, or time which they do not use for holy purposes, they are sinning and their sin will find them out. Your buried talent, will it not rust? And rusting, will it not create within your spirits a most horrible disease and be a peril to you? Must it not be so? Are they not guilty of an acted lie before high Heaven who call themselves servants of God and yet do not serve Him? You often sing—

***“Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
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.”***

Is that hymn true? Do you mean those verses, or do you mock God? You have all sung the hymn many times and mark, “Happy day! Happy day!” the chorus. But is your singing true or false? If any man or woman among you shall, after such a song sink back into himself and do nothing for his Lord, what truth is there in him? God save us from using our lips to mock His holy name! It can be little short of blasphemy to sing such words and yet live a selfish, indolent life. Will a man thus insult his God? O Sirs, I beseech you make such language true, or else have done with it—lest the record of it destroy your souls!

Once more and I will have done with this painful subject. What would their sin be? According to Moses it would be a grave injury to others. Do you not notice how he put it to them? “Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?” What an example to set! If one Christian man is right in never joining a Christian Church, then all other Christian men would be right in not doing so—and there would be no visible Christian Church! Do you not see, you non-professing Believers, that your example is destructive of all Church life? What are you doing? If one Christian man, with the talent to preach, is right in not preaching, then other Christian men have a right to trifle in the same way—and then there would be no ministry left!

An idler is a great waster and makes others, wasters, too—his example is likely to make all around him as indolent as himself. I notice in our Churches that a few earnest men and women lead the way and others are sweetly drawn to follow them. How precious are the earnest few in a Christian community! David knew the value of the first three in his band.

But if the leading spirits are dead, cold, indifferent—what happens? Why, lethargy spreads over the whole! I am sorry to say that I hear of instances in which a minister laments, “I labor with all my might, but I am persuaded that nothing will ever be done while Mr. So-and-So is here.” He is often a cold-blooded deacon, or a purse-proud member. When you come to know him, you feel, “While there is such a great big iceberg floating close to the shore, the garden by the sea must be frostbitten—nothing can grow.”

It were a pity that any of us should freeze others. God save us from it! “Oh,” says one, “nobody knows me and, therefore, I cannot have much influence either for good or for evil.” Not over your own child—your daughter, your son? That influence which you have over even one or two little ones may spread far further than you imagine. We cannot calculate the range of moral influence—it is immeasurable! I suppose that there is not a single moving atom of matter which does not influence, in some measure, the entire universe. One atom collides with another and that with another—and so it reaches the remotest star. Whether we do or do not do, *what* we do or do not do, will have an influence upon all that are round us—perhaps to all eternity.

Perhaps the word I speak tonight shall thrill when yonder sun has burned out like a coal and the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair. I am not sure but that our thoughts upon our bed may throb throughout the ages in their incessant results. “None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself”—for good or for evil we are yoked with the universe and there is no possibility of severance. There is much influence for evil in an idle example—possibly such an example would not be set by certain persons if they would but think of the consequences. To such consideration of consequences I invite all whose gravest fault is forbearing to do good. O barren tree, do not excuse yourself because you do not drip with poison like the upas! It is crime enough that you cumber the ground!

Moses goes on to remark that if these people did not go forth to war they would *discourage all the rest*. “Therefore discourage you the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them?” It is no slight sin to discourage holy zeal and perseverance in others. May we never be guilty of killing holy desires even in children! How often has a burning desire in a boy’s heart been quenched by his own father who has thought him too impulsive or too ardent! How frequently the conversation of a friend, so called, has dried up the springs of holy desire in the person with whom he has conversed! Let it not be so. Yet without cold words, our chill neglects may freeze. I know a terrace where the shutting up of one or two shops has a deadening effect upon the trade of the other shops. Somehow, the closed shutters give a gloomy look to the place and customers are repelled. Does not the same thing happen to groups of workers when one grows idle? Does not the one dull brother deaden the rest?

We cannot neglect our own gardens without injuring our neighbors. Do you live anywhere near a house that is not let, which has a back garden

left to run to waste? All manner of seeds are blown over upon your ground and, though you keep the hoe going, the weeds baffle you, for there is such a nursery for them just over the wall! One mechanic coming late among a set of workmen may throw the whole company out of order for the day. One railway truck off the rails may block the entire system. Depend upon it, if we are not serving the Lord our God, we are committing the sin of discouraging our fellow men. They are more likely to imitate our lethargy than our energy! Why should we wish to hinder others from being earnest? How dare we rob God of the services of others by our own neglect? O God, deliver us from this sin!

If I had preached a sermon about murder or theft, you would all have escaped the lash, but few of us will be without rebuke, now that I have kept the text in the setting in which God originally put it—and in which He meant it to be presented for our rebuke and exhortation!

II. Secondly, let us carefully notice WHAT WAS THE CHIEF SIN IN THIS SIN? Of course, if the Reubenites did not keep their solemn agreement to go over the Jordan and help their Brethren, they would sin against their Brethren, but this is not the offense which rises first to the mind of Moses. Moses overlooks the lesser, because he knows it to be comprehended in the greater—and he says, “Behold, you have sinned against the Lord.” In this, he anticipated the confession of David, “against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” To refuse to help their *Brethren* would be disobedience to the Lord! Did He not command all Israel to drive out the Canaanites? In like manner, neglect of holy work is positive sin against the Lord. It is *disobedience* against the Lord not to be preaching His Truth if we are able to do so. Did not our Lord say, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature?” This command was not confined to a dozen or so, but was meant for all His people, as they have opportunity and ability. We who hear the Gospel are bid to proclaim it, for it is written, “Let him that hears say, Come.” The hearer of the Gospel is bound to be a repeater of the Gospel! We are all called upon, as we know the Lord, to tell others what the Lord has told us—and if we do not—we are guilty of disobedience to a great Gospel precept.

We are certainly guilty, dear Friends, of *ingratitude*, if, as I have already said, we owe so much to other men and yet do not seek to bless mankind. But chiefly we owe everything to the Grace of God and, if God has given us Grace in our own hearts and saved us with the precious blood of the Only-Begotten, how can we sit still and allow others to perish? As we value salvation, we are under bonds to make it known. We rejoice to be in the Kingdom of God—should we not spend and be spent for the growth of that Kingdom? He that does not bear arms in this war is a traitor to his Sovereign Lord.

There would be sin against God in the conduct of these people if they did not aid in the conquest of Canaan, for they would be *dividing God’s Israel*. Shall the Lord’s heritage be torn in two? God meant them all to stay together. They all came out of Egypt together; they all marched through the wilderness together and now He meant them to fight His battles together. Were these to take their inheritance and live among the sheepcotes

and leave the other ten and a half tribes to go over Jordan and wage the war alone? This would be scattering the family of God! Can it be that any of us are dividing the Church of God, that is, dividing it into drones and workers? This would be a terrible division, but I fear that it already exists. It is apparent to those who are able to observe and it is mourned over by those who are jealous for the God of Israel. Half the schisms in churches arise out of the real division which exists between idlers and workers. Mind this. Be not sowers of division by being busybodies working not at all!

If you are not serving the Lord, you are sinning against the sacred Trinity. You sin against our Father who would have you do good and be imitators of Him as dear children. You sin against the Son of God who has bought you with a price that you might be zealous for His Glory. You sin against the Holy Spirit whose impulses are not to sleep and idleness, but to quickening and to holiness. May we no longer sin against the Lord by refusing to perform His will!

III. We have now reached the last point and the point that is most serious—WHAT WILL COME OF THIS SIN OF DOING NOTHING? What will come of it? “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Now, as the time is nearly gone, I will not do more than show that these Gadites and Reubenites would be sure to be found out by their own neglect. Their sin would find them out to their shame and sorrow if they did not lend all their strength to their Brethren according to their promise.

It would find them out thusly—they would be *ill at ease*. One of these days their sin would leap upon their consciences as a lion on its prey. They would wake up and say, “We were wrong. We were bound to have taken our share in that war”—and every man among them that was good for anything would be troubled in heart because he had failed to do his duty in the hour of need. He would feel uneasy. He would not want anybody to point him out, but he would point himself out and he would say to himself, “I failed in that case. I know I did. I acted very wrongly. I ought to have been with Joshua chasing out those Canaanites. I received my own portion of the land and ought, therefore, to have helped others to win their portions.”

When conscience was thus awakened, they would also feel themselves to be *mean and despicable*. As king after king was conquered and the notes of victory were heard all over Canaan, they would think themselves mice rather than men to have shunned so glorious a conflict. They would feel disgraced by their own inaction. Their manhood would be held cheap by the other tribes—in fact, they would become a by-word and a proverb—as men do who are notoriously greedy and selfish. Surely it is an intolerable disgrace to anyone to profess to be a man of God and to have no care about the souls of others, while they are perishing by millions!

More than that, the tribes who went not to the war would be *enfeebled* by their own inaction. God would have His people learn war, but if these men did not go to the fight, they would not be soldierly and they would not be able to take care of themselves when their land was invaded. How much of sacred education we miss when we turn away from the service of

God! I believe that no man understands salvation so well as the man who, having tasted it for himself, has also preached it to those about him. If you want to know the evil of the human heart, try to do good to the unconverted and endeavor to guide the unbeliever to Jesus.

Get a dozen girls around you, my Sister, and watch the workings of their hearts as you seek to lead them to Christ—and you will learn much more than you knew before! My dear Brother, gather a number of youths about you and observe their feeling and conduct while you seek their conversion. You will soon know the depravity of human nature if you watch for souls for a little season—and if you get souls converted and act as a spiritual father to them—you will soon see how much they need the Holy Spirit to keep them and how much you need Him to keep you, also, for your patience will be tried! You will learn both the sweet and the bitter of the things of God by being engaged in Christ's service.

Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me"—service is a yoke we must bear in order to learn of Christ. The only way to learn to swim is to get into the water. To be a soldier and never know the smell of gunpowder is impossible! At least such soldiers are little to be relied on in case of war. No, no—our sin, if we do nothing, will find us out in our being enfeebled, in our being disgraced, in our feeling that we are mean and in the accusation of our conscience. Let us find this sin out and shake ourselves free from it before it finds us out!

Their sin would also have found them out, had they fallen into it, because they would have been *divided from the rest of God's Israel*. If they had not gone across the Jordan to fight, the ten and a half tribes would have always said, "What have we to do with you? The Jordan rolls between us and so let it. We do not want any connection with those who acted so basely to us in our hour of need." They would practically have cut themselves off from union with the Israel of God and they would have secured to themselves the loss of all fellowship with earnest men. Those who are non-workers lose much by not keeping pace with those who are running the heavenly race. The active are happy—the hand of the diligent makes rich in a spiritual sense. There is that which withholds more than is meet and it tends to poverty—I am sure it is so in a spiritual sense.

To come more practically home, beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you and I are not serving the Lord, our sin will find us out. It will find us out perhaps in this way. There will be many added to the Church and God will prosper it, and we shall hear of it, but *we shall feel no joy in it*. We had no finger in the work and we shall find no comfort in the result. We did not point out the way to troubled consciences. We never went to early morning Prayer Meetings, nor to *any* Prayer Meetings, to pray for a blessing. We never spoke a word or even gave a tract away and, therefore, we shall see the blessing with our eyes, but we shall not eat of it. While God's people lift up their loud hallelujahs of joy, we shall only mourn, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" It is no joy to see a harvest reaped from fields which we refused to plow.

It may be that you will begin to lose all the sweetness of public services. By doing nothing you *lose your appetite*. Many a person who has no appe-

tite needs a wise doctor to say to him, "Of course you cannot eat, for you do not work. Exercise yourself and your appetite will return." He that *earns* his breakfast, *enjoys* his breakfast. And he who labors for Christ finds that the services of the sanctuary are exceedingly sweet to him. I know some dear Brothers here who cannot get to a Sunday sermon because they have something to do for their Lord throughout the Sabbath—therefore they drop in to this Thursday evening sermon. Thus they gain a Sabbath in the middle of the week which is exceedingly sweet to them. They can only attend one service on Sunday, but that is doubly refreshing to them. They are engaged at the Ragged School, or at the corner of the street where they are accustomed to preach—and the Lord makes up to them their lost opportunities. Believe me, when they do get a meal, they heartily appreciate it, for they come with an appetite which they have gathered in the service of their Master! If you do not work, your sin will find you out in the loss of enjoyment when present at the means of Grace.

I have known this sin find people out *in their families*. There is a Christian man—we honor and love him—but he has a son that is a drunk. Did his good father ever bear any protest against strong drink in all his life? No. He, of course, did not like the blue ribbon. I will not dispute about total abstinence, but I do not feel much astonished at a boy drinking much when he sees his godly father regularly drink a little. Every man should labor by precept and example to put down intemperance and he who does not do so may be sure that his sin will find him out!

Here is another. His children have all grown up thoughtless, careless, giddy. He took them to his place of worship and he now enquires, "Why are they not converted?" Did he ever take them, one by one, and pray with them? Did he ever speak earnestly to each boy and each girl—and labor for the conversion of each one? I am afraid that in many cases nothing of the sort has been attempted! Certain mistaken individuals almost think it wrong to seek the conversion of their children while they are children—and their sin finds them out when they see them growing up in ungodliness.

Besides, if we do not look after God's children, it may be that He will not look after ours. "No," says God, "there were other people's children in the streets and you had no concern about them—why should your children fare better? You never opened a Ragged School for the poor, why should I bless you? There were men in your employment by whom you gained your living, but you never spoke to them about their souls, nor cared whether they were saved or damned. And I am not going to look after your family when you have no concern for Mine." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I do not know how this warning may come home to any Brother or Sister here who has been idling, but it is better that my warning should find him out than that his sin should find him out! I do not know whether there are any idlers here, though I have a pretty shrewd guess that there are. Friends, neglect of the Lord's work will come home to you and I will tell you when it will come to you, if it does not do so before. When you are sick and ill, your faith in Christ will bring you great comfort, but you will

be sorrowful if you have to say to yourself, “Oh, that I had served God while I was young!”

A friend said to me not long ago, “My dear Sir, you are often laid aside with illness and, no doubt, the reason is the imprudent manner in which you worked away in your youth. You preached 10 times in a week almost all the year round, year after year, and of course you wore yourself out.” “Oh, yes,” I said, “it may be so, but I do not regret it in the least! Thank God, I preached with all my might all over the land when I could do so. And I would, again, if I could only get renewed strength!” If I cannot work so much as in earlier days, I have not the misery of saying, “I wasted my opportunities and spent my best days in ease.” I do say to myself, “Would God I had done more, or had done it better, but I am thankful to be able to exonerate myself from all charge of sloth.” If those of us who do much have to whip ourselves a bit, what should those do who practically do nothing at all and discourage others? What can idlers do but fear that their sin will find them out?

Thus far have I spoken to God’s people and if you think that this is rather rough upon them, what shall I say to you who do not love the Lord at all? O Sirs, if the fan that is in Christ’s hand purges His own floor in this stern way, what will that fan do with you who are as chaff to the wheat? If He sits here as a Refiner and purifies the sons of Levi, and puts even the gold into the fire, what will become of the dross? “If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If the language of God is sharp, even, to His own Beloved because He says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent,” what will His language be to those who are not His children, but are living in open rebellion against Him?

Tremble, you that forget God! Hear His own Words—they are none of mine—“Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” God help you to flee from the sin of doing nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, lead you into the Father’s service! Amen.

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THE SINNER'S REFUGE

NO. 2621

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 7, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1857.

*“Then you shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you;
that the slayer may flee there, who kills any person at unawares.”*
Numbers 35:11.

YOU are aware that the principle of blood-revenge is a deep-seated one in the Eastern mind. From the earliest ages it was always the custom with the Orientals, when a man was murdered, or slain without malice aforethought, for the nearest relative, his heir, or any person related to him, to take revenge for him upon the person who, either intentionally or unintentionally, was the means of his death. This revenge was a very special thing to the Oriental mind. The avenger of blood would hunt his victim for 40 years—yes, until he died, if he was not able to reach him before—and would be on his trail all his life, that he might slay him. It was not necessary that the manslayer should have any trial before a judge—his victim was dead and if the one who killed him was not put to death, it was reckoned among some tribes to be legitimate to kill his father, or indeed any member of his tribe—and until someone in that tribe was put to death, as a revenge for the man who had been slain, by accident or otherwise, a deadly feud existed between the two clans which never could be quenched except by blood.

Now, when the Lord gave to the Jews this Law concerning the cities of refuge, he took advantage of their deep-rooted love towards the system of the revenge of blood by the nearest relative. God acted wisely in this, as He has done in all things. There are two matters mentioned in Scripture which I do not believe God ever approved, but which, finding they were deep-seated, He did not forbid to the Jews. One was polygamy, the practice of marrying many wives had become so established that, though God abhorred it, yet He permitted it to the Jews because He foresaw that they would inevitably have broken the commandment if He had made an ordinance that they should have but one wife. It was the same with this matter of blood-revenge—it was so firmly fixed in the mind of the people that God, instead of refusing to the Jews what they regarded as the privilege of taking vengeance upon their fellows, enacted a Law which rendered it almost impossible that a man should be killed unless he were really a murderer, for He appointed six cities, at convenient distances, so that when one man killed another by accident, and so committed homicide, he might at once flee to one of those cities. And though he might

have to remain there all his life, yet the avenger of blood could never touch him, if he were innocent. He would have a fair trial, but even if he were found innocent, he must stay within the city into which the avenger of blood could not, by any possibility, come. If he went out of the city, the avenger might kill him. He was, therefore, to suffer perpetual banishment, even for causing death accidentally, in order that it might be seen how much God regarded the rights of blood and how fearful a thing it is to put a man to death in any way. You see, dear Friends, that this prevented the likelihood of anyone being killed who was not guilty of murder, for, as soon as one man struck another to the ground by accident, by a stone, or any other means, he fled to a city of refuge. He had a head start from the pursuer and if he arrived there first, he was secure and safe.

I wish to use this custom of the Jews as a metaphor and type to set forth the salvation of men through Jesus Christ our Lord. I shall give you, first, an explanation and, then, an exhortation.

I. I SHALL ATTEMPT AN EXPLANATION OF THIS TYPE. Note, first, *the person for whom the city of refuge was provided*. It was not a place of shelter for the willful murderer—if he fled there, after a fair trial he must be dragged out of it and given up to the avenger. And the avenger of death was to kill him and so have blood for blood, and life for life. But, in case of an accident, when one man had slain another without malice aforethought and had, therefore, only committed homicide, the man fleeing there was perfectly safe.

Here, however, the type does not adequately represent the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is not a refuge provided for men who are innocent, but for men who are guilty—not for those who have accidentally transgressed, but for those who have willfully gone astray! Our Savior has come into the world to save not those who have, by mistake and error, committed sin, but those who have fearfully transgressed against well-known Divine Commandments and who have followed the sinful dictates of their own free will, their own perversity leading them to rebel against God.

Note, next, *the avenger of blood*. In explaining this portion of the type, I must, of course, take every part of the figure. The avenger of blood, I have said, was usually the next of kin to the one who had been slain. But I believe any other member of the family was held to be competent to act as the avenger. If, for instance, my brother had been killed, it would have been my duty, as the first of the family, to avenge his blood, if possible, then and there—to go after the murderer, or the man who had accidentally caused his death—and to put him to death at once. If I could not do that, it would be my business and that of my father and, indeed, of every male member of the family, to hunt and pursue that man until God should deliver him into our hands so that we might put him to death. I mean not that it is *now* our duty, but it would have been so regarded under the old Jewish dispensation. It was allowed, by the Mosaic Law, that those who were the relatives of the man killed would be the avengers of his blood.

We find the counterpart of this type, for the sinner, in the Law of God. Sinner, the Law of God is the blood-avenger that is on your trail! You have willfully transgressed—you have, as it were, killed God's Commandments, you have trampled them under your feet—and so the Law of God is the avenger of blood. It is after you and it will have you in its grasp before long! Condemnation is hanging over your head and it shall surely overtake you! Though it may not reach you in this life, yet, in the world to come, the avenger of blood, the Moses, the Law of the Lord, shall execute vengeance upon you and you shall be utterly destroyed!

But, further, *there was a city of refuge provided under the Law of God*—no, more, *there were six cities of refuge*, in order that one of them might be at a convenient distance from any part of the country. Now, there are not six Christs—there is but one, but there is a Christ everywhere. “The Word of God is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the Word of faith which we preach, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The city of refuge was a priestly city—a city of the Levites, and it afforded protection for life to the manslayer. He might never go out of it till the death of the then reigning High Priest, after which he might go free without being touched by the avenger of blood. But, during the time of his sojourn there, he was housed and fed gratuitously—everything was provided for him and he was kept entirely safe! And I would have you mark that he was safe in this city, not because of its walls, or bolts, or bars, but simply because it was the place Divinely appointed for shelter. Do you see the man running towards it? The avenger is after him, fast and furious! The manslayer has just reached the borders of the city—in a moment the avenger stops—he knows it is no use going any further after him, not because the city walls are strong, nor because the gates are barred, nor because an army stands outside to resist, but because God has said the man shall be safe as soon as he has crossed the border and has come into the suburbs of the city! Divine appointment was the only thing which made the city of refuge secure! Now, Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Divinely-appointed way of salvation! Whoever among us shall make haste from our sins and flee to Christ, being convinced of our guilt, and helped by God's Spirit to enter that road, shall, without doubt, find absolute and eternal security! The curse of the Law of God shall not touch us, Satan shall not harm us, vengeance shall not reach us, for the Divine appointment, stronger than gates of iron or brass, shields everyone of us “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” in the Gospel!

The city of refuge, I must have you note, too, had around it, suburbs of a very great extent. Two thousand cubits were allowed for grazing land for the cattle of the priests and a thousand cubits within these for fields and vineyards. Now, no sooner did the man reach the suburbs of the city, than he was safe—it was not necessary for him to get within the

walls, but the outskirts, themselves, were sufficient protection. Learn, then, that if you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole! If you do but lay hold of Him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," with faith which is very feeble, but is truly a living principle, you are safe—

***"A little genuine Grace ensures
The death of all our sins!"***

Get anywhere within the borders of the city of refuge and you are, at once and forever, secure from the avenger!

We have some interesting particulars, also, with regard to the distance of these cities from the habitations of men in ancient Judea. It is said that wherever the crime of homicide might be committed by any man, he might get to a city of refuge within half a day and, verily, Beloved, it is no great distance from a guilty sinner to the sheltering breast of Christ! It is but a simple renunciation of our own powers and a laying hold of Christ, to be our All-in-All, that is required in order to our being found within the city of refuge! Then, with regard to the roads to the city, we are told that they were strictly preserved in good order. Every river was bridged. As far as possible, the road was made level and every obstruction removed so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders of the city went along the route to see that it was in proper repair and to assure, as far as they could, that nothing might occur through the breaking down of bridges, or the blocking of the highway, to impede the flight of any manslayer and cause him to be overtaken and killed. Wherever there were by-roads and turns, there were legible sign-posts with this word plainly visible upon them, "Refuge"—"*Refuge*"—pointing out the way in which the man should flee if he wished to reach the city. There were two people always kept on the road, so that in case the avenger of blood should overtake a man, they might intercept him and entreat him to stay his hand until the man had reached the city, lest innocent blood should be shed without a fair trial—and so the avenger himself would be proved guilty of murder. The risk, of course, was upon the head of the avenger if he put one to death who did not deserve to die.

Now, Beloved, I think this is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the Law—it is no obeying this, that, and the other command—it is a straight road. "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard that no self-righteous man will ever tread it, but it is a road so easy that every man who knows himself to be a sinner may, by it, find his way to Christ and his way to Heaven! And lest any should be mistaken, God has set me and my Brothers in the ministry to be like hand-posts in the way, to point poor sinners to Jesus! And we desire to always have on our lips the cry, "Refuge! *Refuge!* REFUGE!" Sinner, this is the way! Walk you therein and you shall be saved!

I think I have thus given the explanation of the type. Christ is the true City of Refuge and He preserves all those who flee to Him for mercy. He does that because He is the Divinely-appointed Savior, able to save unto the uttermost all them that come to God by Him.

II. Now, in the second place, I HAVE TO GIVE AN EXHORTATION.

You must allow me to picture a scene. You see that man in the field? He has been at work. He has taken an ox-goad in his hand, to use it in some part of his farm work. Unfortunately, instead of doing what he desires to do, he strikes a companion of his in the heart and he falls down dead! You see the poor fellow with horror in his face. He is a guiltless man, but, oh, what misery he feels when he gazes upon the corpse lying at his feet! A pang shoots through his heart, such as you and I have never felt—horror, dread, desolation! Yes, some of us have felt something akin to it *spiritually*—we will not allude to the when and the why—but who can describe the agony of a man who beholds his companion fall lifeless by his side? Words are incapable of expressing the anguish of his spirit! He looks upon him, he tries to lift him up—he makes sure that he is really dead—what does he do next? Do you not see him? In a moment, he flies out of the field where he was at labor and runs along the road with all his might! He has many weary miles before him—six long hours of hard running—and as he passes the gate, he turns his head and there is the man's brother! He has just come into the field and seen his brother lying dead!

Oh, can you conceive how the manslayer's heart palpitates with fear? He has a little head start on the road—he sees the avenger of blood, with red face, hot and fiery, rushing out of the field with the ox-goad in his hand, and running after him! The way lies through the village where the dead man's father lives—how fast the poor fugitive flees through the streets! He does not even stop to bid good-bye to his wife, nor to kiss his children—but on, on, he speeds for his very life! The relative calls to his father and his other friends—and now they all rush after him. Now there is quite a troop on the road—the man is still ahead, there is no rest for him. Though one of his pursuers may pause for a while, or turn back, the others still trail him. There is a horse in the village. They mount it and pursue him. If they can find any animal that can assist their swiftness, they will take it. Can you not conceive of the manslayer crying, “Oh, that I had wings, that I might fly to the city of refuge”? See how he spurns the earth beneath his feet! What, to him, are the green fields on either hand? What are the babbling brooks? He stops not even so much as to wet his lips! The sun is scorching him, but still on, on, on, he runs! He casts aside one garment after another! He still rushes on and the pursuers are close behind him. He feels like the poor stag hunted by the hounds—he knows they are eager for his blood and that if they do but once overtake him, it will be a word, a blow—and he will be a dead man. Watch how he speeds on his way! Do you see him now? A town is rising into sight! He perceives the towers of the city of refuge—but his weary feet almost refuse to carry him further! The veins are standing out on his brow like whipcords! The blood spurts from his nostrils—he is straining all his powers to the utmost as he rushes on—he would go faster if he had any more strength. The pursuers are after him—they have almost caught him, but see, and rejoice! He has just reached the outskirts of the city—there is the line of demarcation—he leaps over it and falls senseless to the ground—but there is joy in his heart.

The pursuers come and look at him, but they dare not slay him. The knife is in their hands and the stones, too, but they dare not touch him. He is safe, he is secure! His running has been just fast enough—he has managed to leap into the kingdom of life and to avoid a cruel and terrible death.

Sinner, that picture I have given you is a picture of yourself, in all but the man's guiltlessness, for you *are* a guilty man! Oh, if you did but know that the avenger of blood is after you! Oh, that God would give you Grace that you might have a sense of your danger tonight! You would then not stop a solitary instant without fleeing to Christ. You would say, even while sitting in your pew, "Let me get away, away, away, where mercy is to be found," and you would give neither sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you had found in Christ a refuge for your guilty spirit! I am come, then, to exhort you to flee to Jesus now!

Let me pick out one of you, to be a specimen of all the rest. There is a young man here who is guilty. The proofs of his guilt lie close at hand. He knows himself to be a great transgressor—he has foully offended against God's Law. Young man, young man, as you are guilty, the avenger of blood is after you! Oh, that avenger—God's fiery Law—did you ever see it? It speaks words of flame! It has eyes like lamps of fire! If you could once see the Law of God and mark the dread sharpness of its terrible sword, you might, as you sat in your pew, quiver almost to death in horror at your impending doom! Sinner, I think if this avenger shall seize you, it will not be merely temporal death that will be your portion—it will be death eternally! Sinner, remember, if the Law of God lays its hands on you, and Christ does not deliver you, you are damned! Do you know what damnation means? Say, can you tell what are the billows of eternal wrath and what the worm that never dies are? What the Lake of Fire, what the Pit that is bottomless are? No, you cannot know how dreadful these things are! Surely, if you could, Man, you would be up on your feet and fleeing for life—eternal life! You would be like that man in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* who put his fingers in his ears and ran sway! And when his neighbors ran after him, he cried, "Eternal life! Eternal life!"

O stolid stupidity! O sottish ignorance! O worse than brutal folly that makes men sit down in their sins and rest content! The drunk still drinks his bowl—he knows not that in its dregs there lies wrath. The swearer still indulges in his blasphemy—he knows not that, one day, his oath shall return upon his own head! You will go your way and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and live merrily and happily, but, ah, poor Souls, if you knew that the avenger of blood was after you, you would not act so foolishly! Would you suppose that the man, after he had killed his neighbor, and when he saw the avenger coming, would coolly take his seat and wait to be slain, when there was a city of refuge provided? No, that consummate folly is reserved for such as you are! God has left that to be the top stone of the folly of the human race, the most glittering jewel in the crown of free will—the dress of death wherein free will does robe itself. Oh, you will not flee to Christ, you will stay where you are, you will rest contented and, one day, the Law of God will seize you—and

then wrath, *eternal wrath*, will lay hold upon you! How foolish is the man who wastes his time and carelessly loiters when the city of refuge is before him, and the avenger of blood is after him!

Suppose, now, I take another case. There is a young man here, who says, "Why, Sir, it is no use my trying to be saved. I shall not think of prayer or faith, or anything of that sort, because there is no city of refuge for me." Suppose that poor man, who had killed his neighbor, had talked like that? Suppose he had sat still, folded his arms and said, "There is no city of refuge for me." I cannot imagine such folly! And, surely, you do not mean what you said just now! If you thought there was no city of refuge for you, I know what you would do—you would shriek, and cry, and groan! There is a kind of despair that some people have which is a sham despair. I have met with many who say, "We do not believe we could ever be saved," and they seem not to care whether they are saved or not. How foolish would the man be who would sit still and so let the avenger slay him because he fancied there was no entrance for him into the city! But your folly is just as great and even worse, if you sit still and say, "The Lord will never have mercy on me." He is as much a suicide who refuses the medicine because he thinks it will not cure him, as the man who takes the knife and stabs himself in the heart! You have no right, Sir, to let your despair triumph over the promise of God! He has said it and He means it—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If He has shown you your guilt, depend upon it, there is a city of refuge for you! Run to it! Run to it! May God help you to take yourselves to it now! Oh, if men only knew how dreadful is the wrath to come and how terrible will be the Day of Judgment, how swiftly would they flee away to Jesus! There is not a hearer of mine here who would delay an hour to flee to Christ if he did but know how fearful is his condition out of Christ! When God the Holy Spirit once convinces us of our sin, there is no stopping, then! The Spirit says, "Today, if you will hear His voice," and we cry, "Today, Lord, today, we hear Your voice!" There is no pausing, then! It is on, on, on, for our very life! I beseech you, my Hearers, you who have sinned against God, and know it—you who want to be delivered from the wrath to come—I beseech you, by Him that lives and was dead, flee to Christ!

Take heed that it is to Christ you flee, for, if the man who had slain his neighbor had fled to another city, it would have been of no avail. Had he fled to a place that was not an ordained city of refuge, he might have sped on with all the impetuosity of desire and yet have been slain within the city gates. So, you self-righteous ones, you may flee to your good works, you may flee to your baptism and your confirmation—and your church or your chapel attendance—you may be all that is good and excellent, but you are fleeing to the wrong city and the avenger of blood will find you, after all! Poor Soul! Remember that Christ Jesus the Lord is the only Refuge for a guilty sinner—His blood, His wounds, His agonies, His sufferings, His death—these are the gates and walls of the city of salvation! But if we trust not in these, without a doubt, trust where we may, our hope shall be as a broken reed and we shall perish after all!

I may have one here who is newly awakened, just led to see his sin, as if it were the corpse of a murdered man lying at his feet. It seems to me that God has sent me to that one individual in particular. Man, God has shown you your guilt and He has sent me to tell you that there is a Refuge for you! Though you are guilty, He is gracious! Though you have revolted and rebelled against Him, He will have mercy on all who repent and trust in the merits of His Son! He has bid me to say to you, "Flee! Flee! Flee!" And, in God's name, I say to you, "Flee to Christ." He has bid me warn you against delays. He has bid me remind you that death surprises men when they least expect it. He has bid me assure you that the avenger will not spare, neither will his eyes pity—his sword was forged for vengeance, and vengeance it will have! God has also bid me exhort you, by the terror of the Lord, by the Day of Judgment, by the wrath to come, by the uncertainty of life and by the nearness of death, to flee to Christ this very moment—

***"Hasten, traveler, hasten! The night comes on!
And you far off from rest and home,
Hasten, traveler, hasten!"***

But, oh, how much more earnest is our cry, when we say, "Hasten, Sinner, hasten!" Not only does the night come on, but, look, the avenger of blood is close behind! Already he has slain his thousands—let the shrieks of souls, already damned, come up in your ears! Already the avenger has worked wonders of wrath—let the howling of Gehenna startle you, let the torments of Hell amaze you! What? Will you pause with such an avenger in swift pursuit? What? Young man, will you stop this night? God has convinced you of your sin—will you go to your rest once more without a prayer for pardon? Will you live another day without seeing to Christ? No, I think I see signs that the Spirit of God is working in you and I think I hear what He makes you say, "God helping me, I give myself to Christ even now! And if He will not, at once, shed abroad his love in my heart, this is my firm resolve—no rest will I find anywhere till Christ shall look on me and seal, with His Holy Spirit, my pardon bought with blood."

But if you sit still, young man—and you will do so, if left to your own free will—I can do no more for you than weep for you in secret. Alas for you, my Hearer! Alas for you! The ox led to the slaughter is more wise than you are! The sheep that goes to its death is not so foolish as you are! Alas for you, my Hearer, that your pulse should beat a march to Hell! Alas that yonder clock, like the muffled drum, should be the music of the funeral march of your soul! Alas! Alas that you should fold your arms in pleasure when the knife is at your heart! Alas! Alas for you, that you should sing and make merriment when the rope is around your neck and the fatal drop is about to be given to you! Alas for you, that you should go your way and live joyfully and happily, and yet be lost! You remind me of the silly moth that dances round the flame, singeing itself for a while and then, at last, plunging to its death—such are you! Young woman, with your butterfly clothing, you are leaping round the flame that shall destroy you! Young man, light and frothy in your conversation, joyful in your life, you are dancing to Hell! You are singing your way to

damnation and promenading the road to destruction! Alas! Alas! Alas that you should be spinning your own winding-sheets—that you should, every day, by your sins, be building your own gallows—that by your transgressions you should be digging your own graves and working hard to pile the firewood for your own eternal burning! Oh, that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end! Oh, that you would flee from the wrath to come!

O my Hearers, think of the wrath to come, the wrath to come! How terrible that wrath is! These lips dare not venture to describe it! At the very thought of it, this heart fills with agony! O my Hearers, are there not some of you who will soon be proving what the wrath to come really is? There are some of you who, if you were now to drop dead in your pews, must be damned. Ah, you know it! You know it! You dare not deny it! I know you know it! As you hang down your heads, you seem to say, "It is true. I have no Christ to trust to, no robe of righteousness to wear, no Heaven to hope for!" My Hearer, give me your hand! Never did father plead with son with more impassioned earnestness than I would plead with you. Why do you sit still when Hell is burning almost in your very face? "Why will you die, O house of Israel?" O God! Must I yearn over these people in vain? Must I continue to preach to them and be "a savor of death unto death" to them and not "a savor of life unto life"? And must I help to make their Hell more intolerable? Must it be so? Must the people who now listen to us, like the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida in the days of our Lord, have a more terrible doom than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah? O you who are left to your own free will to choose the way to Hell—as all men do when left to themselves—let these eyes run down with tears for you because you will not weep for yourselves!

It is strange that I should feel more concern for your souls than you do for yourselves. My God knows there is not a stone that I would leave unturned to save each one of you. There is nothing that human strength could do, or human study could learn which I would not seek after if I might but be the instrument of saving you from Hell! And yet you act as though it concerned you not, whom it should concern the most. It is my business, but it is far more yours. Sirs, if you are lost, remember that it is yourselves who will be lost! And if you perish, bear me witness that I am clear of your blood. If you flee not from the wrath to come, forget not that I have warned you. I could not bear to have the blood upon my head which some, even of those who like sound doctrine, I fear, will have at the last day of account! I tremble for some I know who preach God's Gospel, in some sense idly, but who never warn sinners. A member of my Church said to me lately, "I heard So-and-So preach—he is called a sound-doctrine-man. I listened to him for nine years and I was attending the theater all the time. I could curse, I could swear, I could sin and I never had a warning from that man's lips during the whole nine years."

Ah, me! I would not like one of my Hearers to say that concerning my preaching. Let this world hiss me! Let me wear the coat that sparkles, and the cap that garnishes a fool! Let earth condemn me and let the fools of the universe spurn me, but I will be free from the blood of my Hearers!

The only thing I seek in this world is to be faithful to my Hearers' souls. If you are damned, it will not be for lack of faithful preaching, nor of earnest warning. Young men and maidens, old men with gray heads, merchants and tradesmen, servants, fathers, mothers, children—I have warned you this night—you are in danger of Hell! And, as God lives, before whom I stand, you will soon be there unless you flee from the wrath to come! Remember, none but Jesus can save you! But if God shall enable you to see your danger and give you Grace to flee to Christ, He will have mercy upon you and the avenger of blood shall never find you! No, not even when the red lightning shall be flashing from the hands of God in the Day of Judgment! His City of Refuge shall shelter you forever! And in Heaven with Jesus, triumphant, blessed, secure, you shall sing of the blood and righteousness of Christ who delivers penitent sinners from the wrath to come. God bless and save you all! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-14.**

Verses 1-4. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that you be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.* The history of Israel in coming out of Egypt was a very instructive type of the history of the visible Church of Christ. They were in slavery in Egypt as all men are in bondage to sin and Satan. They were brought out of Egypt as all the redeemed are delivered by the almighty Grace of God. With a high hand and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought Israel out of the house of bondage and, by a very wonderful Baptism, "in the cloud and in the sea," they commenced their career as God's separated people. Then they all shared in the same spiritual ordinances—"They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink." Yet, for all that, they were not all God's people. They were so nominally and visibly—but they were not all really so. And, as there was a mixed multitude that came up out of Egypt, together with the true Seed of promise, so is there an alien element in every Church at this present day. Among those who have been baptized into Christ, there are still some who, while they eat the spiritual meat and drink the spiritual drink, yet for all that have not been brought into true communion with Christ and do not, in reality, know the Lord.

5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* There was no evidence of faith in many of them and, "without faith it is impossible to please God." Is it not a sad thing that in a people so highly favored as they were, there should have been so large a proportion of those who had not the faith which renders men pleasing to God? So they did literally come out into the wilderness to die there—and they never entered into the rest of God.

6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we.* We professed Christians—we, Church members.

6. *Should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.* They gave way to their carnal appetites. They craved for meat when God had already given them angels' food. Now, if we act like this, we cannot be pleasing to God.

7. *Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* That is, to go through those unclean rites and ceremonies before their idols which are here called, "play." Ah, dear Friends, may God keep us from the worship of anything which we can see with our eyes, or hear with our ears! May we never become idolaters! You know we can very easily make idols of our children. We can make idols of our own persons! We can make idols of our talents, of our respectability and so forth. But, oh, it matters not what the idol is—it is no more pleasing to God if it is of silver and gold than if it were of the mud of the river. No—"Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them."

8. *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.* Fornication in God's people is peculiarly black and filthy. In the ordinary man of the world, it is evil enough, but when a man professes to be a Christian, he must flee from even the very *thought* of it, and keep himself chaste, for his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Oh, may none of us ever come anywhere near to this great evil, but in purity of heart may we walk before our God!

9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted Him, and were destroyed by serpents.* I cannot stay to mention the many ways in which we can tempt Christ, but we can still readily do so. What a dreadful doom it was to be destroyed by serpents! Yet is it not amazing that in connection with this great sin, and its awful punishment, the bronze serpent was lifted high, that whoever looked at it might live? And now, if any have tempted Christ by presumptuous sin, by their delay, or by their infidelity, let them bless God that they are not yet destroyed by serpents because Christ has been lifted up even as the serpent of brass was exalted above the camp of Israel! Remember our Lord's words to Nicodemus—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

10. *Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* It is a dreadful habit to get into—that of complaining against God. Occasional murmuring is doubtless sinful, but habitual murmuring becomes a very great evil! I am afraid that there are some who quibble at God's Providence and at His Word till they come to be quibblers and nothing else! And what good is a man who can do nothing else but carp, quibble and criticize? O Beloved, "neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer."

11. *Now all these things happened to them for examples.* They were like a book in which we might read our own history in large characters. We

see ourselves foreshadowed in them and we read our happiness or our misery in their behavior.

11, 12. *And they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* For if he begins to think that he stands, it may be that it is nothing but his own imagination—there may be no real standing about it. And there is no surer sign of the falsity of a man's estimate of himself than the fact that it is a high one. He that thinks himself good has not begun to be good, for the door of the palace of wisdom is *humility*, and the gate of the temple of virtue is *lowliness of mind*.

13, 14. *There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.* I would like to see this verse put over the top of every "sacramental" table in every "church" in England—"Therefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." If this text were properly understood, every crucifix would be broken to pieces and the altars, themselves, would be cleared away to make room for what should be there—the Table of the Lord—and we would have no more worship of visible things, which is idolatry! O you who are the dearly-beloved of God, flee from it! Keep as far from it as you can.

I remember reading of a man of God who was the rector of a certain parish and who had in the church a very ancient and famous painted window of which he was somewhat proud. In the design there was a representation of the Godhead—the Father was there, and oh, how blasphemous! He was represented as an aged man! And, one day, this clergyman, who had seen no evil in the window, heard a rustic explaining to a companion that that was the God whom they worshipped. The rector did not hesitate for a moment, but he threw a stone right through that part of the painted window. I suppose that was an offense against the law of man, but certainly it was not against the Law of God! He would never have that figure replaced on any account, whatever, and I think that he did well! "Dearly Beloved, flee from idolatry." Put it out of your sight! Do not tamper with it, but hate it with a perfect hatred! In God's eyes, it is one of the most fearful of sins. He has said, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God," and He will have nothing to come between us and the pure and simple worship of His own invisible Self.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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